



City of Mesquite

About

Mesquite, Nevada is 80 miles northeast of Las Vegas on Interstate-15 on the Arizona border. Mesquite has a population of 21,253 people and has been an incorporated city for 25 years. Its main industries are golfing, gaming, outdoor recreation and active retirement communities with renewable energy projects on the horizon.



The natural environment is strikingly beautiful with the Virgin Mountains towering to 8,000 feet to the south, sloping down to the Virgin River Valley below at 1,600 feet and up again to the majestic Flat Top Mesa to the west. Mesquite is in the Great Basin Desert and has an annual average rainfall of 7.7 inches. Nature has blessed this area with a precious balance of more than 310 days of sunshine annually, clean air and beautiful mountain and mesa vistas in a high desert setting.

Threat

An ominous threat to the environment and future of Mesquite appeared on the horizon. In 2006, Sithe-Global, a division of Blackstone Group, announced a 750MW coal-fired power plant at Toquop Wash, 12 miles northwest of Mesquite. The coal would be delivered from the Powder River basin in Wyoming via train. The site was on BLM land that had previously been granted a permit for a 1,200MW natural gas fired power plant.

Mayor Susan Holecheck

Susan Holecheck, then on city council, took action to create an Energy Task Force to see what forms of renewable energy were available to Mesquite and what impact different forms would have on the precious desert environment.

The study revealed Mesquite's most promising energy source would be solar. It also pointed out what a negative factor burning coal would be to the

environment due to the lack of sufficient water resources, and the air and soil pollution caused by the coal residue generated by 300 rail cars per day over the 60-year life of the coal plant.



Councilwoman Holecheck became Mayor to take action to protect the environment and to provide for a secure energy future. She took an aggressive stance to secure solar opportunities for Mesquite and have the council go on record opposing the coal-fired power plant.

She enlisted many state and federal agencies to help stop the Toquop Coal Power Plant and attract solar companies to Mesquite. The battle took many forms. She enlisted a group of dedicated local citizens to form "Defend Our Desert" to help stop Toquop and take on a larger role protecting the environment and water resources. The hard-working leaders of that group were Bob Davidow, George Michnick, and Michelle Burkett

Mayor Holecheck's diligent efforts have paid off handsomely. On March 22, 2010, Sithe Global and the Blackstone group announced they would abandon their plans for using coal at the Toquop Power Plant and return to natural gas, with the bonus of adding a 200MW solar component built prior to the natural gas power plant.

She is assisting, and is continuing dialog with, a number of industrial-scale solar power plants and other green energy manufacturers to locate in the immediate Mesquite area.

Senator Harry Reid has worked tirelessly to see Mesquite's battle brought to the negotiating table and resolved so all parties were winners. He was a major instrument in Mesquite's success.

Mayor Holecheck has the unique ability to bring diverse interest groups together in a positive environment that allows all concerns to be heard and accommodated. She embodies true leadership, holding fast to the goal of a clean, sustainable and wholesome environment.



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