



July 29, 2011, Danielle Switalski, Staff Writer, *Elko Daily Free Press*

## Planning for the future

ELKO —The future of Elko County was up for discussion at the annual Elko County Economic Diversification Authority retreat and workshop.

Guest speakers Juliet Fox and David Buerle from Innovative Leadership returned to Elko to host the discussion after leading the Summit of Mining Communities in April.

The speakers specialize in helping resource-based communities stay afloat should the resource industry go away. They work all over the globe and are currently helping Winnemucca plan a survival strategy once the gold industry dissipates from the area.

Executive director of ECEDA Pam Borda said the goal of the workshop was for the speakers to help the county's stakeholders brainstorm and plan for the future.

"What will we look like 25 years from now?" Borda asked, addressing ECEDA board members at the Wednesday workshop, including county, city, mining and business representatives.

The speakers presented their research to the board depicting what is occurring on a global level that may soon impact everything from energy to the way business is managed, trickling down to rural communities. Buerle said it is crucial to be prepared for global changes in technology, population, GDP, and China and India becoming work force powerhouses.

"We are going into a period of the most profound game-changing events and as leaders in a community we have a responsibility to position ourselves for stuff coming at us," Buerle said, urging those in the room to think about what will be best for Elko County.

The workshop was meant to get the group thinking of what the biggest challenges and opportunities are for Elko County. They also discussed strategies to keep the county afloat once the mining industry ceases to exist.

Elko County Commissioner Charlie Myers said building infrastructure, water rights and a trained work force are three elements needed to sustain the county.

One factor that must be countered is apathy, Borda said. "We can't just sit back, we have to step up and go after it. We also need diversification because we are so dependent on mining and mining support it's scary."



Buerle said global changes do not have to be negative. The county could take advantage of changes, such as a need for renewable energy and natural resources. He said it is necessary for the leaders in the community to work together to plan for the future.

“We are in this period of rapidly increasing change and we can’t put out heads in the sand,” Fox said. “We have to get on our games here because it’s coming at us.”

Specific elements members of the community can begin to think about when preparing for the future revolve around the energy revolution. Borda said Elko County has a high rating for potential renewable energy sources, which could bring a non-mining industry to the area.

Second, with a growing population, Buerle said water has the potential to become a precious resource, something this region can provide.

“We have a lot of land mass and have a lot of water compared to most, so we are very livable here and there is a quality of life attractiveness about this area,” Borda said.

She said another economic opportunity important to pursue and expand upon for sustainability is transportation. Because Elko is situated in a central location, Borda suggested capitalizing on the transportation industry as a way to diversify the county.

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