

## MAD BLOGGER

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### El Mirage: Swimming up stream on Luke issue?

El Mirage is layering itself with political consultants. The latest is former Congressman Matt Salmon.

It makes sense given the tough road the city has ahead of it trying to convince the world that they deserve some credit and compensation for the "sacrifices" they've made on behalf of Luke Air Force Base.

City officials in September hired Salmon and his firm, Policy Impact Communications. Salmon, who also served as chairman of the Arizona Republican Party and was a GOP candidate for governor, is representing El Mirage on "the local, state and federal levels on issues, including federal stimulus, Luke Air Force Base and other regional and national opportunities."

He brings with him a team of consultants, including Michael Haener, former Deputy Chief of Staff to Gov. Napolitano, and Mitchell Menlove, former Director of Government Relations for law firm Greenburg Traurig.

Still waiting on word for how much El Mirage is paying Salmon's firm.

The firms' hire was included in a press release about a Quality of Life and Sustainability Forum that El Mirage is planning 7 p.m. on Oct. 21 at Riverview Elementary School, 12701 N. Main Street.

Salmon is going to moderate the forum, according to Rose & Allyn, another heavyweight in the political consulting industry that is representing the city. They are making \$12,500 a month.

Looks like the city is pulling out the stops.

El Mirage's big push right now is to share its woes with the world about how the military base has dampened its economic development. And get something for it.

City officials are now talking about advocating for new state policies that would encourage appropriate development around military bases.

How the message has been polished up since city leaders first took flight to Washington, D.C. in March. At that time they were clear on what they wanted: \$400 million from the federal government because more than two-third of the city lies in land restricted to protect the military base.

Now, they talk more about the quality of life that would be disrupted if the F-35 is significantly louder and lands at Luke. But the underlying needs are the same: Make up the city revenues they believe they've missed out on because they can't fully or freely develop so much of their land.

They still point out, as they did then, that "no other Northwest Valley city, or any other city in Arizona, shoulders as great an impact as El Mirage."

To Arizona's delegation in Washington, D.C., they said that they deserved to be made whole because of the way Luke had "substantially and negatively impacted El Mirage."

Interesting that Salmon, once an Arizona political powerhouse, is talking on a client like El Mirage, a city that has been sharply criticized by other Valley leaders who believe that raising concern about Luke is akin to trying to destroy the base.

In 2002, when he was running for governor, Salmon told *The Republic*: "We need to have a governor who's going to use the bully pulpit, going to use the office of the governor to make sure that we do everything that we can to protect Luke Air Force Base."

Mayor Michele Kern and nearly every El Mirage official will vehement deny that harming Luke is the city's aim. But they will add that they have to do everything they can to protect the interest of the residents they represent.

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