

Old, new Nevada clash over economic future

By Jason Hidalgo, Reno Gazette-Journal

On a clear September day in 2014, Nevada's brain trust for economic development gathered in Carson City to celebrate the turning of a new chapter in Silver State history.

Tesla's \$5 billion Gigafactory was coming to the Reno area, a coup for a state considered an underdog against formidable competition such as Texas. It was the perfect symbol for a new Nevada, one that embraced emerging industries – nothing like the outdated images of divorce and prostitution lampooned by shows such as “Reno 911.”

As Gov. Brian Sandoval and Tesla Motors CEO Elon Musk celebrated the partnership in front of a throng of local and national media, two people who played key roles in wooing the electric car and battery company to Northern Nevada smiled in the audience. One was Economic Development Authority of Western Nevada President and CEO Mike Kazmierski, whose organization was tasked with showing potential sites to Tesla. The other was Lance Gilman, principal of the Tahoe Reno Industrial Center, which Tesla picked as the location for its Gigafactory.

The partnership seemed unlikely at first glance. On one hand, you had Kazmierski, a buttoned-down West Point graduate and former garrison commander who prefers not to call attention to himself. On the other hand was Gilman, a colorful personality who shows up at events in a Stetson hat and knows how to work a crowd. Despite differences in personality, both established a symbiotic relationship.

Behind the scenes, however, some cracks were starting to show in the otherwise rock-solid partnership between EDAWN and Tahoe Reno Industrial Center.

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