

MARCH 2008 NEWSLETTER COLUMN

Ah, the month of March – in like a lion and out like a lamb? Or is it the other way around? Whatever the saying, we're just about at the point of slipping from Winter straight into Summer. But since hope springs eternal in the human condition, I hope that we'll get at least one month's worth of Spring this year!

As we continue to weather the softening housing market and wonder whether or not Arizona and/or the country is in a recession, Pinal County and its consultants continue to forge ahead with the public processes involved in the review and revision of our Comprehensive Land Use Plan and zoning ordinance. The Comp Plan has reached the point where public input/presentations were held in various major communities around the County last month. But we're not content to stop there so a series of additional public involvement opportunities are planned for later this month so that we can accept even more comment on the three alternate models for guiding growth and development in the future. A complete listing of these input opportunities and the timeline for the entire review and revision process can be found at <http://pinalcountyplan.com>.

The revision of the County's zoning ordinance is also still in the formative stages with a second draft of a new document now out for review and comment. It too can be found on the County's web page: go to <http://co.pinal.az.us> and click on the County Departments link, scroll down to the link to the Planning & Development and once you're there, you'll find a link to the second draft of the Zoning Ordinance. We are continuing to have small group meetings with various stakeholder groups in order to fine tune this important policy – I don't anticipate that it will be ready for the Board of Supervisors' consideration until sometime late this summer or early fall.

And lest you think that the County's asleep at the switch with regard to transportation issues, we continue to work on a wide variety of planning studies: the Eloy Small Area Transportation Study (SATS), the Coolidge-Florence SATS, the Routes of Regional Significance, the Pinal County Regional Transportation Study, the Hidden Valley Transportation Framework Study, ADOT's Rail Corridor Study, and the I-10 Phoenix-Tucson Freight Bypass Study. However, there's another transportation program that is now, immediate, and yet regional in nature – it's called Pinal Rides.

Pinal Rides is a cooperative effort of the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens, the cities of Casa Grande, Coolidge, Eloy, Florence, and Maricopa, ADOT, the US DHHS, and Arizona's DES. The service's mission is to “improve the availability of quality transportation services in the Pinal County area, building upon and expanding existing resources. [Their] vision is an affordable system that meets individuals' transportation needs and supports the human services, medical, business, educational, and recreational goals of the area.”

The net result of the above statements is a van service that is designed to transport residents (ages 18 and older) from designated pickup points to medical, dental, vision, social services, pharmacies, and some limited shopping opportunities. The service is

divided into four days' worth of schedules: Mondays are devoted to moving folks around the Casa Grande area; Tuesdays are arranged to collect and deliver residents from Florence and Coolidge to Casa Grande and back again; on Wednesdays, it's the turn for residents of Eloy, Arizona City, and Toltec to be ferried back and forth to and from Casa Grande; and the week concludes with a run between Maricopa and Casa Grande.

Pinal Rides is currently using grant funding from ADOT and so the residents of western Pinal County need to help Pinal Rides demonstrate the very real need for this intra-city transportation service. Advance registration for your ridership is required (24 hours in advance of the trip): calls can be made to 1.800.293.9393 or 520.836.2758. More information on this service can also be found at <http://www.pgcsc.org> . Please remember – we need to use this or we'll lose it!

Property owners in Pinal County should have received a Notice of Valuation from County Assessor Paul Larkin sometime shortly after March 1st. That postcard notice is designed to let property owners know how much their property values have risen or declined since this time last year. Depending on your point of view, many property values in our county may have declined somewhat due to the softening housing market. The important thing to note as you look at your Notice is to know that if you don't agree with the values established by the Assessor's Office, you must petition the Assessor for a change in valuation by April 29, 2008. Since property taxes are generally driven by the valuation of property (real estate), this is an important notice. For more information on the Petition process, go to www.co.pinal.az.us and click on the link to the Pinal County Assessor's Office.

Finally, although there are lots of things clamoring for your attention and calendar this month (antique plane fly-in events, state chili cook-off competition, the Red Cross Rock-A-Thon at the Cracker Barrel, multiple events in Maricopa's Pacana Park including their Stagecoach Days, and the Casa Grand Fine Arts Explosion) – you have to get out to the Pinal County Fairgrounds for the 52nd Annual Pinal County Fair which runs from March 26 through the 30th. It's a great value for a little money and a chance to see what County Fairs, 4-H Livestock displays and auctions are all about! I hope to see you all out and about during this most excellent month.

David Snider, Supervisor
Pinal County District 3