

PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLE – AUGUST 2009

Ah August – its always somewhat of a bittersweet month: some folks are squeezing in last minute vacations while others are reporting in for classroom duties (some folks are in front of the teacher's desk while many others are on the other side of the desk); virtually everyone's gasping for relief from the heat while some are grateful for the fact that we've probably got only a month or so before the monsoon season's over; and we're one month closer to economic recovery and the Labor Day holiday.

Now that our local schools are back in session, let's all pay special attention to school crossing zones. In addition to state law which mandates 15 mph in the zone and prohibits passing, drivers need to remember that younger children are really excited (well – many of them are!) about returning to school. Occasionally they dart out and cross streets before they get to the crosswalk and it's up to us to be on the lookout. I don't believe we've EVER had a child killed or seriously injured in a school crossing zone accident – but let's not start now!

What's on the horizon for your County Board of Supervisors in the coming months? The first item on our priority list is the consideration and, ultimately, the adoption of a new Pinal County Comprehensive Plan. As many of you know by now, the road to a new Plan started in January of 2007 when ASU's Morrison Institute spent six months tapping the pulse of County residents from border to border and building a vision statement that has guided the hundreds of public meetings, design and input sessions, and the revision/editing/amendment/tweaking process that took place during the better part of the last 12 months.

After considerable discussion and debate by the members of the Citizens Advisory Committee and the County Planning Commission – and unanimous recommendations for Board approval by both bodies – the Board is ready to take up the draft Plan. Once the Plan is adopted and in place, the staff and Board will begin work on revising our Zoning Code (a document that's remained essentially unchanged since its adoption in 1964) which is basically the implementation component of the Comprehensive Plan. Also running on parallel tracks for the Board and staff's are a variety of transportation initiatives, including the Hidden Valley Corridor Study, and work on creating mitigation measures for pending regulations imposed by the EPA to improve our air quality by controlling PM 10 dust sources.

In closing, on June 24th the Board of Supervisors adopted its final FY2010 budget. Thanks in part to a last-minute one-time “windfall” of money from President Obama's stimulus plan (specifically \$3.8M in FMAP funds which go to assist in providing medical care to those who lack insurance or are in the AHCCCS program), we were able to offset what we would normally pay the state to provide care to AHCCCS clients. That contribution to AHCCCS normally comes from our General Fund.

As a result of the stimulus windfall, the projected \$5M gap in the budget will be covered by the stimulus money and drawing down the funds on reserve. The Board of Supervisors and County Manager believe that the combination of the stimulus funding and drawing from the reserve will not put the County's financial future at tremendous risk – at this point in time. This is where the

caution comes in. Our local economy and County budget are under assault from a variety of sources. We have limited “weapons” to use in the fight and our budget is still vulnerable:

- Money coming in could continue to decline.
- The FY 2010 budget includes several one time revenue items, such as the stimulus money.
- The economic decline could last longer than economists are currently projecting.
- The Governor and Legislature are proposing to hit cities, towns and counties with IOUs to balance the state budget. If the amount we have to pay exceeds what we have budgeted for, based on information we have at this point, we could be forced to make additional changes.

This has been a long, difficult road. Many Elected and Appointed Officials have had to complete the difficult task of laying off personnel but no future layoffs are anticipated at this time. The Board has requested monthly updates on the state of the budget at our meetings and will be keeping a close eye on revenues and expenditures as we move forward.

David Snider

Supervisor, Pinal County District 3