

JANUARY 2011 NEWSLETTER COLUMN

Here we are – once again ready (?) to face a new year, armed with resolution(s) and cautious optimism about the local economy, the high school football team's chances of a title, new jobs locating in Pinal County, and even more new jobs in Pinal County. It may – or may not – feel as though we all took a pause last month to celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, and/or Kwanzaa but it's time to strap on our roller skates, roll up our sleeves, and get on with this brand new year of 2011.

In light of last fall's elections, it is now time to celebrate our democratic process and inaugurate those newly elected public officials. The ceremonies begin with the oath-taking in Phoenix on January 3rd by Governor Brewer and a number of other statewide office holders. Pinal County's newly elected judges, constables, and the Clerk of the Superior Court will be installed in Florence on January 5th at 3:00 p.m. in the Superior Court Building (971 Jason Lopez Circle). Congratulations to all who will take their respective oaths of office.

Once of the big challenges for all elected and government folks in the first half of 2011 will be How To Budget. The chorus of voices for "Lower Taxes/Less Government" has grown in volume and pitch; however, the value of property continues to decrease as do revenues from other sources (*i.e.* state and federal programs and/or grants, etc.). Your Pinal County government continues to strive to provide residents with effective, efficient, and responsive services consistent with our commitment to keep tax rates as low as possible.

Despite the guarded hopefulness of Arizona's pundits (regarding our economy), I believe that FY2011-12 will test the mettle of all locally elected budgeteers. Belts will need to be tightened even more and across the board. The Board of Supervisors will be commencing its budget process this month and management will be briefing the Board on current and projected expenses and revenues on a monthly basis. We will be doing our best to construct that budget but the actions of the State Legislature will ultimately have a significant impact on the final shape and size of our new operating budget.

Last month's year-end winter storm brought little enough rainfall to western Pinal County and District 3. However, Pinal County and several local governments, landowners, and tribal communities have decided not to wait for another flood to prod the US government into action. We've banded together, under the chairmanship of Mark Killian, to form the Lower Santa Cruz River Alliance to "to advocate for a regional flood control solution to eliminate or mitigate severe flood damage from the lower Santa Cruz River, and to support flood control-related regional enhancements, including but not limited to, recreational amenities, ecosystem restoration, Native American cultural resource preservation, and agricultural protection." I'll share more on the Alliance next month.

Now let's take a quick look at the calendar for things to do. In addition to the inaugurations, the 25th Annual Agri-County Bluegrass Festival will be cranking out toe-

tapping music for three days at the Pinal County Fairgrounds. This truly awesome event takes place January 28, 29, and 30. Admission is only \$6 (parking is free!) – for more information go to

<http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/Departments/PRF/Fairgrounds/Pages/Bluegrass.aspx>.

Speaking of culture, the Casa Grande Valley Historical Society sponsors a series of interesting talks by noted local experts on the second Monday of the month, 10 a.m. in the Dorothy Powell Senior Center. This month's speaker is Rick Gibson, Pinal County Ag Agent, who'll talk about "Add Water & Stir: another view of our history." Rick's a great speaker and the topic is always timely.

The Chambers of Commerce for both Casa Grande and Maricopa will be holding their annual award dinners as they fete local people and businesses for their contributions to their communities. The Casa Grande Chamber's dinner is January 7th (call 520.836.2125 for more info) and Maricopa's event takes place on January 21st (call 520.868.9573 for more data or tickets).

I'd like to close with a comment and a salute to Arizona State Representative Frank Pratt. As you may know, he was savagely attacked on Christmas day when he checked on his local business office that afternoon. Despite his injuries – which were thankfully not life-threatening although they were certainly painful enough – Frank has kept his good nature intact and is daily reporting to duty at 1700 W. Washington. Politics is a tough business ... but you shouldn't get real bruises or broken noses. I know we are all exceeding grateful that he's OK and continuing on as our Representative.

David Snider, Supervisor
Pinal County District 3