

NEWSLETTER COLUMN for JUNE 2011

I can tell its June because: 1) the mercury in my thermometer starts to boil about 2 in the afternoon; 2) the school crosswalks are not flashing on the way to work in the morning; 3) the sky is no longer a deep, clear blue – it is a milky blue due to the heat; and 4) people start to be unavailable because they're up in the mountains.

In the meantime, the Board continues to work on the FY 2011-12 budget as I reported last month. Additional modifications (reductions) to the proposed budgets were made by the Board during the May 25th meeting. The Board has thus far sliced \$4.4M from the General Fund and another \$1.8M from other funds.

A tentative budget of \$357M is slated for adoption on June 8th – final adoption is set for a special meeting on June 29th. In summary, our challenges for this budget process were:

- Net value of assessed property in Pinal County declined 11.58% in FY 2010-11. The decline for FY 2011-12 is projected to be 15.19%.
- During each of the last two legislative sessions, the state swept funds and sent IOUs to cities and counties to help balance the state's budget. In the most recent budget, the negative fiscal impact to Pinal County taxpayers is \$6,221,911. AHCCCS costs have also risen, requiring the County to pay \$2.34 million more.

Our proposed budget process resulted in the following actions and decisions:

- The Pinal County Tentative Budget ceiling is \$357.1 million. This is 17% lower than the authorized budget ceiling for FY 2010-2011 of \$429.8 million.
- Reflects the ramping down and complete elimination (effective October 1, 2011) of Pinal/Gila Long Term Care and Horizon Home Care programs.
- All departments and elected officials were asked to submit budget reductions.
- No employee raises, step increases or cost of living adjustments. There have been no length of service increases since July 1, 2009 and no COLA adjustments since July 1, 2008.
- Adopted a policy to make the Pinal County Fairgrounds a self-supporting facility.
- Approved structural and staffing changes to Pinal County's Correctional Health by adopting a private sector operational model, resulting in a 13% reduction in operating costs.
- Restructured and consolidated various operations allowing for a reduction of staff levels to meet current economic situation in Pinal County.

On other news fronts, the County Recorder's Office installed a new electronic door system to their office in Building A at the Casa Grande county complex on Cottonwood Lane. The work and new equipment was funded with a Help America Vote Act federal grant through the Arizona Secretary of State's Office.

The Pinal County Library District has announced that they have launched their new, innovative website that features lots of audience-specific content in an easy-to-use format. Visit the Pinal County Library District site at <http://www.pinalcountyz.gov/library> or stop in at one of the district's 12 library locations (a.k.a. your friendly local public library). All of these library locations feature public wireless connections and personal computers for public use.

Speaking of access, the Arizona State Parks Department recently announced that Picacho State Park will be closed effective May 16th through September 14th. The closure affects access to all trails and to the park itself. Your "stay-cation" will have to look elsewhere for summer fun. I'd recommend a trip to Yellowstone National Park, but on May 27th – one of the major entrance roads was closed by authorities because the roadway was clogged with 25 feet of snow!

Finally, based on my calendar last month was a busy one indeed. In addition to the usual rounds of meetings with constituents, civic groups, and other organizations of interest and value to Pinal County, I was pleased to be on hand on May 5th to support the Gila River Indian Community as they celebrated the first shovels of dirt being moved in the construction of a domestic violence shelter.

A representative of the Maricopa Association of Governments spent some time talking with me in early May about a Sun Corridor freight study that they've been tasked to complete. The discussion included our vision for transportation-related economic development projects that lie just over the event horizon, our newly revised Comprehensive Plan, ADOT's three year study of intercity rail corridors, and my insistence that Pinal County be far more than a "pass through place for commerce" or a bedroom community.

I traveled to Florence on the 18th to participate in the annual Blue Ribbon event commemorating Foster Care Month. The celebration (a sobering discussion of the trials and challenges of mending broken families) was, as always, sponsored by the Pinal CASA group of volunteers and aided by Pinal's Superior Court judges.

Superior Court Judge Steve McCarville held a graduation ceremony for several residents who successfully completed the various rehabilitation and community service programs mandated by Pinal County's Drug Court. I was pleased to be on hand to talk with the graduates, their families, and others who are currently part of the program. The graduates certainly overcame enormous challenges to mend their lives and set their feet on a better, more productive course of life and they (and their families) deserve all the congratulations and encouragement they can get.

Finally, I was honored indeed to once again serve as the master of ceremonies for the May 30th Memorial Day event at Casa Grande's Mountain View Cemetery. Several hundred area residents turned out to honor the memories of those veterans who gave their lives in the defense of our country. We especially honored Pinal County veterans Velma (USAF) and Bill (USN) Anderson as well as Lawrence (USArmy) Senior and Larry (USAF) Abbott, Jr. My thanks and gratitude goes out to all of our veterans for their service on this and every day.

David Snider, District 3
Pinal County Board of Supervisors