

July 2008

FROM THE DESK OF SUPERVISOR DAVID SNIDER

July – the halfway mark of the summer, marked by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July and the sudden gasp of recognition that the resumption of school is almost upon us, is here in all its monsoon glory! It's also the month that municipal budgets are finalized, along with tax rates for all of the taxing entities in the county.

This month, the Pinal County Board of Supervisors will meet on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July to adopt its final budget for the coming fiscal year after adopting a tentative budget of \$450,605,898 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June. The FY2008-09 tentative budget – which is a budgetary ceiling or upper limit – is approximately \$25M less than the budget adopted for the fiscal year just ending. And the primary tax rate is also lower than the previous rate: \$3.4355 per \$100 assessed value (AV) as opposed to the primary rate of \$4.0183/\$100 AV. That rate of \$3.4355 is the lowest Pinal County's primary property tax rate has been since 1981!

So what are the budget priorities for this leaner County budget? We continue to focus on our vision – “Pinal County government provides progressive and proactive leadership in the areas of economic development, state-of-the-art technologies, growth management, and public services to promote healthy and safe communities.” The new year's budget includes funding in the following areas:

- Public Safety – aggressive program of purchase and installation of Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) in as many patrol vehicles as possible; establish a Superior Court Division Ten; expand the Animal Care & Control facility; continue replacement programs for deputy ballistic vests and vehicles.
- Health Care – continue to actively pursue opportunities for Long Term Care facilities in Pinal County; expand monitoring of and education programs about communicable diseases; continue active financial support of the Arizona Meth Coalition and participation in the Pinal Meth Coalition; continue to improve the percentage of Pinal pre-school children enjoying immunization protection.
- Transportation – reconstruct Thornton Road (between Peters Road & I-8) in conjunction with the City of Casa Grande; begin Phase One of improvements to the Hunt Highway; complete the resurfacing of the Park Link Parkway (between SR 79 & I-10); replace the bridge at Schnepf & Kelvin; chip and fog seal 142 miles of road; continue regional transportation planning initiatives on all levels.
- Growth – adopt revised Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code updates; expand library assistance to affiliated communities; partner in the opening of a library facility in the San Tan area; continue program of installing flood control warning gauges to improve emergency readiness; complete the Area Drainage Master Plan (Phase D) and embark on the Santa Cruz River Flood Plan study in conjunction with regional partners.
- Jobs & Economic Development – continue support of and participation in regional development organizations; explore development incentive programs; develop and implement expedited permissions (plan review, permitting, etc.).

- Accountability – implement Managing For Results strategic business plans for all departments; expand the availability of public information and services on the Internet via the County webpage (<http://pinalcountyaz.gov>).

Some final comments on the budget before we move on to other topics. For a very good and graphic explanation of residential tax bills, please go to the County web page (see above) and click on the News & Information link – in the list of Hot Topics, you will see a PDF file entitled “Where Do Your Tax Dollars Go?” that can be downloaded and printed. Finally, in the waning days of 2007, the County’s financial operations, track-record, practices, and philosophy were evaluated by the firm of Standard & Poors. I am very proud to announce that our county’s continued economic diversification and strong finances have led the rating agency to upgrade our rating to a level of ‘A’ from its previous rating of ‘B’. “The County’s overall net debt burden is a below-average \$886 per capita, or 1.9% of market value,” is the statement in the S&P Ratings Direct report dated December 2007.

Meanwhile, back in hot and humid July I’d like to urge everyone to practice the utmost caution around traffic, water and fire. Despite the absence of our visitors from Northern and Midwestern states, traffic congestion continues to be a concern for all of us. I know that slipping through residential neighborhoods is sometimes an attractive option; however, although it may reduce your frustration with traffic, it also increases the likelihood that kids playing in those neighborhoods can be accident victims. So please use extreme vigilance (and lower your speed) when you take those shortcuts.

As for water and fire – we have been incredibly fortunate in our western Pinal County communities of Casa Grande, Maricopa, Ak-Chin, Tohono O’odham, and Gila River in avoiding child drowning, for the most part. Let’s all work hard to make sure that by the time we conclude 2008, we’ve added another water safe year to our tally! Finally, the recent Ethan Fire in the far northwestern reaches of the Gila River Indian Community and the extended Laveen area is proof that the danger of fire is very much with us this summer. The good news/bad news of this winter’s wetter than usual season is that we have a bumper crop of fuel for fires (brush, wild grasses, etc.) ... but the moisture wasn’t nearly enough to end the drought and therefore everything that can burn has dried out. Fire hazard warnings have been elevated to the Extreme Danger level so practice caution with fires, smoking materials and anything else that could start a fire.

In the meantime – enjoy July!

David Snider, Supervisor  
Pinal County District 3