

## PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLES JANUARY 2010

As always, the start of a new year brings moments of introspection, a mixture of optimism, trepidation, uncertainty, and – hopefully – a determination to make this New Year of 2010 the best year ever. I'm of the opinion that given what we endured during 2009, this New Year has got to be better ... but I've got my fingers crossed. There are plenty of challenges and obstacles ahead of us in 2010.

What are some of the tasks that lie ahead for Pinal County? After a brief holiday respite, our intrepid Planning Department will be plunging back into a very public and intensive process to review and revise the County's 1962 Zoning Ordinance. Lots of changes have taken place in the last 45 years in Pinal and now that we have a brand new Comprehensive Plan – and a big THANK YOU! to all who participated in that 3 year long process – it's time to bring the zoning ordinance into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

In addition to that task, our Air Quality Department will be working with various stakeholder groups to address the declaration by the Environmental Protection Agency that our county is in Non-Attainment for PM<sub>10</sub> dust and particulates. This will be a prolonged and complicated exercise to determine the scope of the Non-Attainment area as well as developing mitigation measures that are both effective and acceptable to the EPA.

And if that's not enough to do, County staff and administrators are already engaged in fine tuning economic and revenue projections for the preliminary stages of our budget for FY2011. As they do so, they'll be keeping a weather-eye on the State Legislature, the economy, and the County's newly revised Strategic Planning Agenda. That agenda is created by the County's elected officials to identify our priorities and establish performance measures that result in a performance-based budget. Last year we reviewed the Strategic Agenda twice: once in January to allow newly elected officials input into the Agenda and then again in November to set the stage for the next budget cycle. The results of those deliberations can be found on the County's website: <http://pinalcountyz.gov>.

In closing, I've a word to the wise. Pinal County residents over the age of 65 should be thinking ahead to tax season and there are two programs that often benefit our seniors. First, the State of Arizona offers a Senior Property Valuation Protection (aka "Senior Freeze"). This valuation protection helps to freeze the full cash value of a primary residence owned by seniors based on income and age. Remember it is only the valuation is frozen, not the taxes. Unfortunately you still have to pay those! If you qualify for this freeze, you must renew your application every three years.

To qualify for this senior freeze you must meet the following qualifications:

- You must be on the Title of Property and a minimum of 65 years young.
- The property must be a primary residence for a minimum of two years.

- All sources of income from all Owners, including Taxable and Nontaxable monies cannot exceed \$32,352 per year per single owner; or \$40,440 per year for two or more owners.

Next is the Widow-Widower's and/or Disabled Person's Tax Exemption. This provision will exempt a portion of your taxes if you meet the following qualifications:

- Must be a permanent resident of Arizona.
- Total Net Assessed valuation in Arizona cannot exceed \$23,413.
- Income from all sources, excluding social security, cannot exceed \$28,713.
- If children under 18 years of age reside in household, the household income cannot exceed \$34,445.

Please note that you must file your request for the Widow-Widower's and Disabled Person's Tax Exemption every year. Furthermore, you need to know that first time filers for either one or both of the Senior Freeze and the Widow-Widower's and Disabled Person's Tax Exemption must file for it in person at the County Assessor's Office. For more information on either or both of these programs, contact County Assessor Paul Larkin's office (520.866.6361, [assessor@pinalcountyyaz.gov](mailto:assessor@pinalcountyyaz.gov) or go to [www.pinalcountyyaz.gov/assessor](http://www.pinalcountyyaz.gov/assessor)). Mr. Larkin's office has also published a brochure on the Arizona Property Tax Valuation system and process – copies are available in my Casa Grande office at 820 E. Cottonwood Lane (Building A) or from the Assessor's Office in Florence.

The best of the New Year to you and yours,

*David Snider*

Pinal County Supervisor, District 3