

PINAL COUNTY LIFESTYLES
JANUARY 2011

This is how I began my column a year ago in *Lifestyles*: “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 2011 the best year ever. I’m of the opinion that given what we endured during 2010, 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 this year.”

So much for my crystal ball. Although I’m not totally sorry to see 2010 in my rearview mirror, I am certainly ambivalent about the prospects for 2011. The national (and state’s) economy continue to sputter – but the good news is that there are some small signs of good news in some sectors of the economy – which means, in turn, that the 2011 Arizona legislative session will be fraught with opportunities galore for Murphy’s Law and unintended consequences to abound.

What are some of the tasks that lie ahead for Pinal County? We will continue to work on reviewing and revising our Zoning Ordinance. The Water Element Task Force (tasked to recommend further changes to the Comprehensive Plan’s water element recommendations) will be racing to make recommendation(s) by May.

Also on the list, our Air Quality Department will be working with various stakeholder groups to address the EPA’s pronouncement of Non-Attainment for PM₁₀ dust and particulates in western Pinal County. During 2011, we will continue to argue that the size and scope of the non-attainment map should be greatly reduced, while working on definitions and an inventory of which sources of dust generation contribute how much (percentage-wise) to the big picture.

And if that’s not enough to do, the County is already engaged in fine tuning economic and revenue projections for the preliminary stages of our budget for FY2012. As they do so, they’ll be keeping a weather-eye on the legislature, the economy, and our 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.

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 or go to 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