

June 12, 2008

Friends,

This has been one of the more challenging weeks I've faced in office. Allow me to share a few thoughts with you.

- Tucson Police Officer Erik Hite was buried with full Air Force and Tucson Police honors Tuesday. He deserved no less. His impact on his colleagues, both in the Tucson Police Department and the US Air Force will be felt for decades to come. And his son is carrying on his tradition of excellence and commitment to community. He will be missed.
- We passed a painful, austere budget. There was no choice. Every City department has been forced to make major cutbacks with the exception of Police and Fire Departments. Contrary to some blatant misinformation that has been circulated, those two departments received budget increases. A few basic facts:
 - The police-to-citizen ratio in our community is 2.03 per 1,000 - the highest it has ever been. This is the result of the Council's sustainability program that began two years ago. Under that program, we added a total of 80 new officers over the last two years. There have been no cutbacks.
 - There is no hiring freeze on police officers, and because there is always going to be some attrition, we just graduated a class of 36 new officers, and another class is underway.
 - At this week's Council meeting, we set a policy directive to assure we will maintain our current public safety staffing ratio, so if our population increases, the manager will have to find the dollars to assure we take no backward steps.
 - We added 45 new firefighters in the last two years ... and two new Alpha trucks, which respond to non-emergency medical situations, thus providing excellent service in a far more efficient manner. [This is a program I hope we'll be able to expand.] We are making the same commitment to them that there will be no reduction in force.
 - No, there will not be a raise for police or fire, but NOBODY in the city is getting a pay raise. We simply do not have the money. Yes, that means we are falling behind the commitment to keep our police and fire within 95% of the Maricopa/Pima average, but again, the money simply is not there. [Though not part of the agreement, when you consider the other financial benefits we offer our officers, the total

package in Tucson is far more attractive than in most other jurisdictions.]

- A great link to see more detail about all of this is: <http://www.tucsonaz.gov/fs/>. Here you'll see our goals not only for Police and Fire, but also for street paving, improving our parks, and more.
- During our budget process, apples were frequently mixed with oranges in the public discussion. Please allow me to clarify a few things: We simply can NOT use any of the funds allocated for Rio Nuevo and downtown revitalization for any other purpose. It would not be legal. The money would disappear. That money can only be used for specific infrastructure needs within a very specific geographical area downtown ... and it doesn't even include all of downtown.
- Speaking of Rio Nuevo, we had lengthy discussions Tuesday about progress on both the West and East sides of I-10. Timing will be of the greatest importance to assure we use every dollar available to us in the best possible way. Clearly, however, there was specific direction that both sides of the river are critically important. To do only the historic recreations would not result in success. To do only the arena and new hotel/TCC expansion would not result in success. We need the heart and soul of the Convento complex along with the museums on the west side to honor our past and build our future. We need the financial engine provided by a revitalized convention center, new hotel and new arena to expand our financial base and revitalize downtown's economy. Simply put, we need both. And that's what we're working to do.
- We also heard an update on downtown progress. To highlight just a few of those projects now underway:
 - One North Fifth [the former MLK apartments] should be open this fall, along with significant retail additions on the ground floor.
 - Depot Plaza planning is proceeding. The parking garage is designed and ready for construction, which will be followed by the new MLK building and, eventually, another market rate apartment complex.
 - Planning for Maynard's Restaurant and Market in the Historic Train Depot are moving forward in a timely fashion.
 - The north side of the 4th Avenue Underpass is under construction.
 - Modern Streetcar tracks are expanding along Congress and down 5th Avenue.
- We asked staff to bring back the final Neighborhood Preservation Zone, allowing neighbors a stronger voice in maintaining the quality of life in their own neighborhoods. Coupled with that will be plans to encourage greater density and transit-oriented buildings along the major corridors. It's a balance

that will benefit us all.

These are just a few of the actions taken. I have come to realize it's hard for people not directly involved in the process to keep tabs on everything that is happening ... and there is so much underway. I'll do my best to offer you some highlights each week after our meeting. Please do let me know if you find this helpful.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nina".

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