

Greetings!

It's been an eventful few weeks! Let me try to catch up on a few key issues ... mostly relating to budget. But before I dig into some of the more dismal sides of life on the Council, please allow me to share a few of the joys:

§ Thanks to the Mansfeld Middle School Student Council! The librarian invited me to read to members of the student council as a 'reward' for all their hard work in setting up readers for other classes during For Love of Reading Week. This amazing group of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders gives me such hope for the future. They are bright, articulate,

curious ... and fun. Thanks so much for the honor of reading to you! [I always read selections from A.A. Milne's "Now We Are Six" poems, from which my father used to read to me when I was a child. The 'real' Pooh has always been important to me. Kids of all ages [even me!] can enjoy these verses.]

§ Thanks to Liberty Elementary School! The librarian put together a morning of speakers for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes at Liberty.

Writers of all sorts [including me!] were invited to

talk with these youngsters about writing as a career. I had such fun in the two classes where I spoke. Actually, after a few minutes of background, I answered their questions ... and they were great, thoughtful questions!

§ Estrella Elementary School Love to Read! I loved reading to a kindergarten class at Estrella. In addition to reading the Pooh poems, I always read Jack and Jill ... in 5 languages ... as a way to encourage youngsters who speak another language at home to value their family's language at the same time they master English.

Every time I visit a classroom I become ever more hopeful for our future thanks to dedicated teachers/librarians/staff - and our fabulous next generation!

§ 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Rodeo Parade: Thanks to my wonderful steed, Zip, for a great ride along

Tucson's streets. Though he was a bit jittery at first [wagons and marching bands did NOT thrill him] he settled in and we had a wonderful time greeting the hundreds of folks along the parade route. What a perfect Tucson day for a parade!

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Jobs! Jobs! Jobs! That's the focus on so many levels for the Council as we work on next year's budget. How do we best encourage economic development [jobs] in these difficult times? How do we adjust the City's expenditures and become as efficient as possible with as little impact as possible on our 'human capital' [jobs]? How do we adjust now, while at the same time preparing for when we can begin digging out of this recession?

These questions form the foundation for so much of what we've discussed the last few weeks:

§ Amending the Land Use Code on Parking: How can we make it easier and less expensive for older buildings to be modified for modern use? My goal in this and earlier efforts associated with the Land Use Code is to change our regulatory requirements so that these structures can be open for business, creating jobs, providing goods and services and generating sales tax dollars that we need to provide city services. Mandated parking requirements seem to be the biggest impediment! Modified parking standards will be considered by the Planning Commission next week in hopes we have developed an approach that can relax parking standards without negative impact on adjacent neighborhoods. Our City staff has been working with a group of stakeholders to develop a workable solution that provides flexibility for small businesses while protecting our neighborhoods from encroachment. This is the next of a series of steps we have ... and will continue to take trying to make the Land Use Code a document that reflects our priorities and needs in Tucson.

§ Impact Fees: At the Feb. 10 Study Session, Councilmember Rodney Glassman presented an idea to waive development impact fees, except those for public safety, for one year. The majority of us did not support the concept as presented, with a preference for a possible deferral of fees until new buildings are occupied, which helps builders by requiring less up front money, but still protects our General Fund by having growth pay for itself. We all want to find a way to get people back to work in Tucson. I am not comfortable with the idea of suspending impact fees. Yes, we need to stimulate jobs, I believe this approach will put too much burden on the General Fund and all taxpayers. I also believe this is not the time to encourage further home production. Yes, construction jobs are important, but we already have a surfeit of homes on the market, driving down all home values in the area. We need to be creative, but also balanced and realistic. I look forward to seeing what an Economic Stimulus stakeholder group recommends in the next

few weeks.

§ New Look and Route for SunTran: You may have seen the new paint job on Sun Tran and Sun Express buses. The goal is to modernize the buses [riders told us they wanted "cooler" look!], encourage new riders ... and expand the system. I had the pleasure [despite the 6AM departure from Downtown] of accompanying my colleagues Shirley Scott and Bob Walkup as we rode the first official express bus from the Ronstadt Center out to Rita Ranch! It's about time the folks out there had access to bus service, something Shirley's been fighting for more than a decade! Congratulations to Shirley and the folks on the Southeast Side!

§ Budget Town Hall: More than 30 people came to Ward VI Thursday evening to learn about the budget process, upcoming decisions ... and to offer their perspectives on priorities and needs! Next Tuesday I'll summarize what I learned from them. We're tabulating the results of the feedback they provided. I love these forums. It's so important that we who make decisions are constantly informed by those we represent, and speaking thereof:

§ Feedback from my last Perspectives: Dozens of you wrote with your thoughts on budget priorities. I've put those comments into a document that I'll share with my colleagues and staff. Some great ideas came forward ... and I thank each of you who took the time to write. I read every single email! And there were many of them.

I'm now on Facebook! I'm enjoying finding my way through this new form of communication! For those of you already comfortable in the digital age, I'd love to have you join me there to continue our dialogue.

As always, please stay in touch!

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