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Ward 6 Newsletter

Tucson First

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Police Chief Interviews

We've whittled the pool of police chief candidates down to four finalists. At the end of the year, Chief Villasenor will end a career of over three decades with the City of Tucson Police Department. That's a lot of institutional knowledge to replace. We've begun the final stretch of the hiring process to locate his successor.

A few months ago, we contracted with a national search firm that specializes in hiring top cops around the country. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) conducted a nationwide search and screened the initial set of applicants. A group of 60 was presented to the City Manager. That group was pared down to four finalists. The City Manager will recommend a choice to M&C from that group.

In advance of that recommendation, the candidates will go through interviews with a few different groups. There will also be a public Meet and Greet. All of that's scheduled for Thursday, October 29th.

A few months back, M&C chose a citizen selection committee. That group of 15 individuals will interview the candidates at a meeting that will be open to the public. Those interviews will take place in the M&C chambers on the 29th, and the cit-

Some Good News on Domestic Violence

Although it may sound like an oxymoron, there is good news to report this week on the domestic violence topic. Tucson City Court has received a three year Justice for Families grant valued at just under \$500K. The grant comes from the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women. It's our second such grant.

The money is going to be used to continue the domestic violence court program. Judge Wendy Million launched that court back in 2013. She hears all of the domestic violence related cases and works with advocacy groups to provide the needed services to victims. By combining them all in one court, we can better provide the social safety network the women (and kids) need. This grant money will fund extra security in the courtroom, continuing education on domestic violence for judges, court staff, and attorneys who handle the cases, and it'll fund two victim advocates from Emerge! who'll work at City Court providing direct aid to victims. They'll also use the money to work with offenders, encouraging them to complete probation and to reduce recidivism rates. Here's a quote from Judge Million that's on point:

"During our first three years of operation, when offenders have successfully completed review hearings with the court and completed their domestic violence treatment, there have been very low levels of re-offense. This keeps victims safer and makes the offenders more productive members of society."

Congratulations to Judge Million, and thanks again this week to Ed and his staff at Emerge! for their hard work on this tough issue.

Development Incentives

A few weeks ago, I shared some graphs showing the effects of some of the development incentives we're offering. To be clear, each time we offer an incentive, it is required to pass a Gift Clause test. That means we cannot give financial incentives to a developer that exceed the value of the benefits that accrue to the taxpayers as a result of the project. The graphs and the narratives I shared suggested that we may have come to a point where we need to rethink the level of incentives we're offering.

In particular, we may need to consider the level of incentives we're offering through what's called the Government Property Lease Excise Tax (GPLET). These GPLET deals are where we take ownership of a property (making them technically government-owned) so they're off the property tax rolls for eight years – the term of the GPLET. My sense is that at some point, the market won't need that full level of incentive and the City (taxpayers) should retool the terms of the GPLET so we're not losing the full value of what's taxable – even on the property in its undeveloped state.

For example – let's say a developer has a building that's unoccupied, but he's interested in doing interior improvements to attract retail/housing/whatever. We're collecting some level of property tax even on the undeveloped property. One thought is to offer the GPLET, but instead of totally eliminating the tax they're already paying, charge "rent" on the building at a level matching or approximating the taxes they're already paying. It's no more out-of-pocket cash flow for the developer, and the City isn't writing off 100% of our tax revenues for eight years.