

## Ward 6 Staff



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# Ward 6 - Newsletter

## Tucson First

August 20, 2013

This week, instead of my regular weekly newsletter, I'm touching on a specific issue, one per day, with the intent of encouraging you to take part in next Tuesday's primary election. This week's issues will show that we're tackling some significant topics at the Mayor and Council table, and they're worthy of you taking a few minutes and casting a ballot next week—or earlier if you're doing it by mail.

### **Budget and Compensation**

*What are we facing in the next budget cycle, and what might that mean for our ability to fund compensation hikes for City workers?*

We've been through some tough fiscal times since I was first elected back in 2009. The deficits we've had to balance ranged from about \$20M up to in excess of \$40M. In the process, we implemented furloughs on City workers, cut back on services to the community, and didn't fill vacancies when people left. We're about 1,100 workers fewer now than back in '09.

This year's deficit was "only" \$15M – relatively less, and yet still a lot of money. We elected to avoid any further service reductions, eliminated worker furloughs and took a breather from impacting the community in how we balanced things. What we did was push some debt forward and planned on selling some land. Those are one-time fixes and do nothing to repair the structural issues we have to address with the budget.

In our homes, many of us have faced similar short term financial challenges. We cut back on nights out, cancel memberships, make minimum payments on our credit cards and certainly don't promise the kids increases in their allowances. We prioritize, make do with what we have, and when things start to look better we use our newly found discretionary income on some of the things we had to cut.

We can do no less at the Council. We're spending your money, and we're supposed to be spending it on providing essential services to you.

At the start of next fiscal year we're going to face some hard costs that will not simply vanish. Those include:

- Pay the debt we just pushed forward - \$13M
- Operations and maintenance on the streetcar – estimated at \$4M
- Increase in Pension costs – estimated at \$6M
- Wireless communication system – estimated at \$3M
- Police coming off from Grant funding – estimated at \$3M
- Hard cost for Police leaving on deferred pension - \$4.2M (end of '15)

What costs can we avoid? We could not promote cops to take the place of retiring commanders. But that's not going to happen, nor should it. We'll promote appropriately, and we'll hire in recruits to fill at the entry level. That'll be some millions of dollars in pensionable income.



**Important  
Phone Numbers**

- Tucson Police Department**  
911 or 791-4444  
nonemergency
- Mayor & Council Comment Line**  
791-4700
- Neighborhood Resources**  
791-4605
- Park Wise**  
791-5071
- Water Issues**  
791-3242
- Pima County Animal Control**  
243-5900
- Street Maintenance**  
791-3154
- Planning and Development Services** 791-5550
- Southwest Gas**  
889-1888
- Gas Emergency/ Gas Leaks**  
889-1888
- West Nile Virus Hotline**  
243-7999
- Environment Service**  
791-3171
- Graffiti Removal**  
792-2489
- AZ Game & Fish**  
628-5376

## Continued: A Message From Steve

Or, we could decide to not award the pay raises that the M&C voted to look at near the end of this calendar year. Those were estimated at costing about \$8M – also pensionable income. Adding this to the costs shown above puts us in a deficit situation of in excess of \$40M again. I don't want to go there and have to look at furloughs and/or service reductions again. Am I thrilled in telling our workers that we can't give them a raise again? Of course not. But I have already and the Police decided to yank their endorsement of my candidacy over it. Frankly, mine was the right decision.

When I asked our Finance Director what ideas she had to fill the budget gap next year, she didn't have any. When I asked the Fire Chief how he'd afford the raises, all he could come up with was service cuts. Those two are facing reality – so must we at the M&C do the same when we look at the pay raises again. Private sector managers have to do that all the time. Households act similarly when they must.

I'm beginning this week's 'issues papers' with the budget because it's by far the most important item we deal with. How we address it drives all of our decisions with respect to the provision of services. You've seen me make tough, and recently unpopular decisions in an effort to find a balance between the many competing forces laying claims on our expenditures. But this isn't a popularity contest. It's us taking your dollars and reinvesting them into how our community runs. That has been my orientation. You've seen me vote consistently in that manner. You may be assured that I'll continue to look at the numbers and not fall to the temptation of making a decision that might make people feel good in the short run, but that will put us further out of structural balance over the longer term.

The real solution is growing the economic pie. That topic's coming on Thursday.

The Primary election is one week away. It's your chance to get involved in the selection of who we have governing the City of Tucson.

Upcoming "issues"

- Wednesday - Pensions
- Thursday - Economic Development
- Friday - Land Use
- Monday - Spending Limit Proposition
- Tuesday – Advocacy

Finally, at 5:30 on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the day before the Primary, I'll be hosting a Council-on-the-Corner meet/greet at



...located at Speedway and Swan. I'm looking forward to sitting with those of you who'll be able to spend a part of that evening with me/us and talk about how our City is addressing those 'issues.' Come on over to the restaurant and let's share thoughts about whatever's on your mind.

Sincerely,

Steve Kozachik  
Council Member, Ward 6  
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