

Ward 6 Staff



Steve Kozachik
Council Member



Ann Charles



Donovan Durband



Teresa Smith



Christal Ferree



Bonnie Medler



Ward 6 – Newsletter

A Message from Steve

JUNE 8, 2011

If you looked at the agenda for this week's M&C meeting, you might have thought it'd have been a sleeper. When we're spending your money, I don't think that description applies. Some of the items we addressed have to do with our five year Transportation Improvement Plan, Rio Nuevo and non-payment of local sub contractors, how we manage downtown performance venues, the streetcar and more. All of it has implications for the budget and for your pocketbook.

The City is represented on the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) by the Mayor. Today we were presented a package of items that PAG is considering, one of which is a five year transportation funding package. What happens is that we approve these master plans, watch more bond money be borrowed, hope the projects are delivered in some reasonable time frame, and hope they come in as budgeted. While I fully understand the complexities of projecting costs for and managing a construction budget, I find it intolerable to watch projects begin with acquisition of property in anticipation of work that all too often is years away from happening. Especially on projects for which some of the underlying assumptions on which initial voter approval of the bonds are no longer reflective of reality. Even so, we seem to continue to push project plans forward, take on more debt, create ghost zones along corridors and never sit back, take a deep breath, and think about what we're doing with your money.

Today, I believe our Mayor got the clear message that when the next PAG meeting convenes, he is to take back the message that we're not satisfied with business as usual. We are serious about wanting a more transparent public process, more strategic progress in how projects are brought up out of the ground, and an understanding that this Council will no longer simply acquiesce to inertia and not question the directions we're headed in regard to transit projects. I specifically questioned the public process that surrounds the Broadway expansion, suggesting that the traffic volumes originally predicted are not coming to pass and that we're making early acquisitions of property when we have not even vetted the design/alignment with the public. In the process, we are setting up neighborhoods for blight along their perimeters pending the start of construction. There will be much more on this as we look at individual projects. So, I was encouraged, until we got down to approving one project in particular later in the evening.



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

That project is the Udall Park Master Plan - good so far - and the associated Kolb Road Extension - not so good. The park master plan is excellent. The troubling part of what was approved tonight (another 5 -1 vote) is the contention that all we did was to approve what the voters had asked for when they signed onto the RTA plan several years ago. In fact, the voters approved a \$9M project (that has now ballooned to over \$20M), is still in design, has not gone through the required environmental processes and will explicitly remove 3/4 of a mile of natural habitat on the west side of Udall Park to accommodate cars driving through an established neighborhood. What ever happened to the desire of both the RTA and the Council to incentivize people to ride the bus? The RTA threatened to condemn homes through eminent domain if we did not approve the extension as designed.

I offered a substitute motion to approve the park plan, but to hold off on the Kolb extension until all of the environmental studies had been completed and the public had a chance to weigh-in. No second to the motion, so we will move forward with the road extension. I believe we owe it to the taxpayers to continually reassess the bases on which project design and approval come about. As things change, it is prudent to take a second look and in the rare occasions when things are radically different, give you the right to voice your feelings. RTA's income is down - they plan on bonding another \$152M to keep projects moving. There needs to be a moderating voice. I had hoped this council would provide that in this case, but the winning sentiment is the fear that people will accuse us of not accomplishing anything. I'm very Type A - I want to turn dirt, too. But I also want to do it in a fiscally prudent and in a procedurally transparent manner.

Over 2 years ago, the then City Council and members of the Rio Nuevo Board decided that they needed to build a new entry to the east side of the TCC or we'd lose the Gem and Mineral Show. Several millions of dollars were spent on the project - it is still not finished (disputes over punch list items, retention dollars, change orders, etc.). What is also still not finished is that the local sub contractors who performed the work have not been paid in full. I presented to M&C a partial list of those unpaid invoices that total over \$325,000 - I'm still gathering the full list. Those bills are due to the subcontractors from either Rio Nuevo, Turner/Sundt or Garfield Traub. Two things are true. First, the work was done and the bills are due and payable. Second, the money is not owed by the City and therefore any suggestions that the City front Rio Nuevo the money in payment, and leverage it back later on is appallingly similar to the thinking that got us into the Rio Nuevo mess that still exists. I understand that council wants our local subs to be paid, but we cannot use your money to pay other peoples' bills and I was surprised to hear that advanced as a possibility.

I'm the person who has been bird-dogging this issue, so it is undeniable that I want our local subcontractors paid. I'm also the person who asked for a standing weekly agenda item on Rio Nuevo so we can stay current with things such as this and not fall back into poor financial decision making (the Auditor General called it "gross financial mismanagement"). I am not a lawyer, so I cannot point at the responsible party. What I can do, and what I did was to draft a letter for all of M&C to sign and send to the Rio



Important Phone Numbers

Senator John
McCain (R)
520-670-6334

Senator Jon Kyl (R)
520-575-8633

Congresswoman
Gabrielle Giffords
(D)
(8th District)
520-881-3588

Congressman
Raul Grijalva (D)
(7th District)
520-622-6788

Governor Janice
Brewer (R)
Governor of Arizona
602-542-4331

Toll free:
1-800-253-0883

State Legislators

Toll Free
Telephone:
1-800-352-8404
Internet:
www.azleg.gov

Mayor Bob Walkup
791-4201

City Infoguide
[http://
cms3.tucsonaz.gov/
infoguide](http://cms3.tucsonaz.gov/infoguide)

Board urging them to make whole the sub contractors who did the work on a good faith basis. These are not mega corporations who can float \$20K - \$30K in unpaid invoices. They need the money to pay their workers. I thank the rest of M&C for signing the letter, and I am hopeful that Rio Nuevo does the right thing and makes proper and prompt payment to all who are still owed the money. They can sort out the legal details with their partners in the project on their own dime.

The TCC, Leo Rich Theatre, and Music Hall are operated by the City. The Fox Theatre is owned by the Rio Nuevo Board. None of the venues is attracting sufficient events to be financially solvent. A part of that is how we schedule events and how we give priority to non-profits ahead of prospective tenants who could make some money for the City. As an example, Broadway in Tucson took "Wicked" to Centennial Hall on the UA campus last year because the TCC could not give them the dates they needed. That cost the City significant dollars. What I have asked the City Manager to do is to get together with the Rio Board and begin discussions about outsourcing the management of Leo Rich, Music Hall and the Fox. The three venues could attract a management company that might find synergies in the varying sizes and attributes of the venues. The TCC staff could then focus on hosting arena/exhibition hall events and properly staff them. Two issues - outsource management of the three venues and take a fresh look at how we preempt "for-profit" events when we book any of the venues. We plow over \$6M in general fund money into TCC operations yearly. That is not sustainable. While that is being considered, it is also very important that existing tenants in the downtown performing arts community have a seat at the table to discuss how to build critical mass into attracting crowds to all of those venues. The Tucson Museum of Art, MOCA, Arizona Theatre Company, Rialto, Beowulf Alley Theatre, and more - all play roles in the successful revitalization of downtown. I look forward to the report back from the City Manager as he begins to look at the entertainment portion of downtown economic development and how we manage the various venues under our purview.

The Streetcar could be a wonderful economic boon to the City. It could also be a horrible economic drag on the general fund. If we don't stop talking about how we're going to zone and develop the corridor on which it runs - if we don't get through design and fix the costs - if we don't identify funding sources, the project will end up costing taxpayers in a way that mirrors what Sun Tran already does. We cannot afford that. I suggested to staff at the M&C meeting that I could not continue to support the project if all we did was hold out rosy hopes and promises and did not get down to the hard work of securing proper funding, fixing costs, and zoning where it will be needed. They're already talking about future phases - extending the routes. Such talk is foolishly premature. Let's see if we can run the first phase efficiently before we start to look down the road - literally and figuratively.

Sincerely,

Steve Kozachik
Council Member, Ward 6
www.tucsonaz.gov/ward6

Meet Me at the Library

Meet and speak with Council Member Kozachik on Saturday, June 11 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at Joel D. Valdez Main Library, 101 N. Stone Ave. For additional information visit, <http://www.library.pima.gov/about/news/?id=3379>

Sundays on the Strip, June 12

Sundays on the Strip gives you, your friends and family a great Sunday out in Tucson! Merchants displaying the Sundays on the Strip logo offer a specially-priced items, events throughout the year and a FREE shuttle looping Speedway Blvd. Starts at 12 to 8 p.m. Campbell Avenue to Wilmot Road. For more information visit: <http://www.sundaysonthestrip.com/>



Community Food Bank to Relocate Growing Santa Cruz River Farmers' Market

The Community Food Bank's Santa Cruz River Farmers' Market will move to Mercado San Agustin (MSA) on June 16, 2011. The market, which has gained national recognition for serving low-income communities in Tucson, is responding to an increase in vendors and the need for more space. Market hours will remain 4:00 to 7:00 PM on Thursdays.

Founded in 1976, the Community Food Bank provides education, advocacy, and food for people throughout Southern Arizona including Pima, Santa Cruz, Cochise, Graham and Greenlee Counties. For more information about the Community Food Bank, visit

<http://communityfoodbank.com/>

