

Since having taken office in early December, the “honeymoon” period to get adjusted seems to have been put on hold. We were first faced with the challenge of getting our arms around the budget deficit and coming to terms with the fact that cuts of one nature or another would be necessary. With that in mind, I spent much of the Christmas break looking for any existing excess left in the budget midway through the fiscal year. While that effort didn't reveal all of what we needed to do in order to balance the books, I was pleased to have been able to bring enough to the table to allow us to protect public safety personnel as well as minimize the financial hit that many other city employees were asked to absorb.

Importantly, we were also able to focus the conversation on how to truly make our words "business friendly" into a reality. My staff and I led the fight to protect the Business Improvement District from having to take a larger cut in its funding than what would otherwise have been imposed on it - a move that protects local business operators in the downtown area who contribute their share through an annual property assessment. We led the fight against imposing a new tax on the purchase of developable land, and although we lacked one vote, we were vocal in opposition to increasing Development Services fees on businesses trying to survive in Tucson.

It is my hope that in the days ahead we will be able to continue to champion the needs of the private sector in our community in order to fuel the General Fund of the budget so we as a community can give an appropriate level of support to the many needs that surround us.

With that in mind, I am calling on members of the private sector to step up to the plate and support some of those needs by contacting me with checkbook in hand, ready to fund projects that I have identified through my contacts with Ward neighborhood associations and other agencies throughout the city. Thus far we have been able to fund over \$12,000 worth of work on the Mission Gardens (thank you, Lloyd Construction), had street lights installed in the Walnut Ave. Neighborhood Watch area (thank you, Wal-Mart) and, thanks to American Sports Flooring, we are getting an outdoor basketball court painted for one of the programs being run through Our Family.

Oh, and the dogs out at the Pima Animal Care Center will have extra time out of their kennels due to our having connected the Tucson Teen Challenge men with PACC and arranging for them to volunteer their time, taking on the very worthy task of walking dogs and getting them exercise.

We'll continue to be in touch. Please let the Ward office know your concerns, and if you have specific projects around the neighborhoods for which I can try to get private sector funding, let us know that, too.

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