

MAYOR'S NEWSLETTER

ATTENTION – IMPORTANT LOCAL NEWS

JEFF BELLAH, MAYOR

541-535-1955 EXT 305 (VOICEMAIL)

Jeff.bellah@phoenixoregon.gov



FELLOW PHOENIX CITIZENS,

In this newsletter, I want to update you on accomplishments and current issues facing Phoenix as well as some of the summer activities and projects being planned.

PHOENIX URBAN RENEWAL (UR) AGENCY PROGRESS: Since the last Newsletter the City Council and Urban Renewal Board have come to an agreement regarding improvements to best meet the needs of the citizens of Phoenix regarding the removal of blight and the economic stimulation of Main Street. This included appointing an additional Councilor to the UR Board, scheduling frequent updates between the Executive Director and the council, and improving other communication efforts. For example, as Mayor, I serve on the City Center Steering Committee to help represent the City Council perspective on designs for the land on Main Street where a multi-purpose center and the new Bicentennial Park will be developed. The new actions have been positive and we are moving forward on all fronts in UR.



Marla Cates, who has served as our Executive Director for UR for the past 5 years, has left PHURA to finish large projects she has remaining for the Talent UR Agency. I am grateful that Marla was able to step back and professionally assess the best approach needed for each of the two cities. She has been splitting her time approximately in half up until this point. As the longtime Executive Director in Talent, Marla rightfully wants to finish what she started and realizes that Phoenix now needs a full time Executive Director. We have been very fortunate to have Marla's expertise available to us for the past four years and wish her only the best in the future. While change is often difficult, we are optimistic that the UR Board will identify the next highly skilled UR Director for Phoenix. The planning and analysis phases are nearing completion for the Market Square and City Center land and the construction and visible improvement phases should be forthcoming in the near future.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA DISPENSARIES/FACILITIES: The Phoenix City Council has passed a moratorium to prohibit the operation of any business that possesses, processes or distributes marijuana until May 1, 2015. A possible agreement that would allow a facility to operate could happen before that period is up, but it will take major actions and approvals by the Council and City for that to happen. For example, our City Charter, approved by the Phoenix voters, expressly states that we will support federal, state and local law. This includes a very clear statement in the Oath of Office for elected officials that they must support federal law. The state legislature put us in an awkward position by passing a law that does not abide by federal law. This is difficult for cities such as ours when the courts clearly rule that federal law is supreme over state law. When and if we change our City Charter, it must then be approved by the voters. This cannot happen before the November 2014 election and possibly not until January 2015. We are putting together a combined committee of councilors and citizens to review our Charter and to make recommendations for changes. If you want to volunteer your time to be on this committee please apply at City Hall.



In addition to Charter changes, we need to negotiate local controls and oversight for marijuana businesses in Phoenix. We will need to ensure the city of adequate security, inventory controls, regulations, cost reimbursements, etc., for areas perceived to be inadequate in the state law and rules. To the majority of the City Council "**HOME RULE**" has always been and should continue as a bedrock of the established rights of Oregon cities.

The City Council has spent a great deal of time hearing testimony and discussing this issue over the past year. There has been a great deal of pressure to allow Dispensaries. Most of that pressure has in my opinion, came from people not living in Phoenix. As an example, at the last Council Meeting where testimony on Medical Marijuana was heard, 23 of the 27 people testifying did not live in Phoenix. Your input related to our long term plans for this issue are encouraged to assist us in making decisions that will be best for the citizens and the future of Phoenix.

INTERCHANGE AND FERN VALLEY ROAD CONSTRUCTION: The Interstate 5 Interchange Project is now in full swing! I am truly amazed at how much dirt they are able to move each day -- a fact any Tonka Truck loving child would surely find fascinating. Of interest right now, I am getting far fewer calls from citizens regarding potholes, delays, road obstacles and other annoyances than during the utility movement phase, attesting to the excellent job the contractors and state are doing. I am confident this professionalism and attention to causing as little disruption as possible will continue throughout the project. If you do experience any problems please feel free to contact me at City Hall or to visit the office that ODOT has established at the **Shoppes at 24**. The more you stay to Hwy 99 during periods that they are working with the on and off ramps, the smoother your trips will be.



The triangle area near Rays Food Market is shaping up with a new gas station/convenience store/car wash and newly-opened Dutch Brothers Coffee stand. Once completed this will help significantly with the appearance in that section of town. I hope you like the **15 new flower baskets** along Main Street. A small and relatively inexpensive gesture, but it helps a lot with the appearance and color of downtown. The Public Works Department is doing a great job of helping the flowers flourish with daily plant food and lots of water. Next up this summer is a plan to put PHOENIX BANNERS up on the decorative light poles on Main Street and possibly on the lower part of 1st

Street. I am working with Public Works to put together a proposal for Council this next month. The flowers will last until October and the banners can stay up year round. Plans for next year would be to increase the numbers of both with possible help being requested from Urban Renewal.

CAUTION! During the construction on the Interchange, Fern Valley Road and Hwy 99 on Main Street, the hazards will be consistent and challenging to drivers for at least the next two years. Because of these conditions, it is extremely important that everyone drive slower and ensure they obey all traffic laws while driving carefully and defensively. The Phoenix Police Department will increase traffic patrols in these areas and will be much less inclined to give warnings over actual tickets than normal.



PHOENIX BUDGET: The Phoenix Budget Committee comprised of City Council members and an equal number of citizen members recently passed the budget for the 2015-2016 budget period. Due to our successful efforts at austerity for the past few years as well as property values increasing in Phoenix, this was a more pleasant process this year. I am happy to report that the Phoenix Financial Outlook is very positive at this time, and pleased to announce that we have been able to add a Public Works Superintendent, a police officer, and a part-time code enforcement employee. Additionally, we just successfully recruited a full-time Planner to help us move forward with our economic development goals for the next 5 years. As I have explained

in the past, we have adopted a “**save before spend**” policy for the city much as people use in their household budgets. We are saving money each year in order to live within our budget and still improve the city. This year we are able to spend approximately \$750,000 on street and water maintenance and improvement projects without raising taxes or adopting further utility fees to pay for them. Improvements will include the resurfacing and water pipe replacements for the entire Coral Circle neighborhood area and maintenance on the streets in many other neighborhoods. By utilizing the least expensive source by joining with the county, we will be able to “**chip seal**” many of our streets. Chip Seal is more durable simply sealing a roadway. We have completed a project to rate all of our streets as either “**Red, Yellow or Green**” based on the condition with a goal of ensuring all are Green or Yellow by increasing maintenance schedules and resurfacing the relatively few that are **Red**.

To the best of my knowledge, we are possibly the only city in the Rogue Valley that does not have substantial fees added to utility bills to pay for parks, streets, police, fire and other operational type projects. In my opinion, these types of fees should not be used to meet day-to-day needs, but may be used when the citizenry want improvements made in parks and other areas of importance. We currently have only a \$2.40 charge per month for street maintenance while other cities charge as much as \$20 to \$30 per month. Outside of the valley, the City of Portland is proposing a new fee of over \$14 per month just to start addressing some of the needs of their aging and neglected streets. This is on top of already high fees. I believe we owe our fellow citizens on the Budget Committee, City Council, and our City Staff gratitude for turning the financial situation around in Phoenix. Our budget is balanced and we have paid off a \$350,000 loan while other cities must borrow money or raise utility fees to stay in the black.

CITY ACTIVITIES: The Community Dinner held at Blue Heron Park on July 12th was well attended and a lot of fun. In addition to the free dinner for all attendees, we enjoyed an “open mike night” with talented local folks volunteering to share their singing, instrumental and comedic skills. We plan to do more of these in the future. While this dinner was co-sponsored, the Community Kitchen serves free dinners at the First Presbyterian Church from 5-7 on the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month. This Summer Kick-off Dinner was co-sponsored by the Phoenix Parks Commission and the Community Kitchen. Ice Cream was provided by Schwann’s, Penny and LuLu Florists provided flowers, and the BBQ grill was managed by Jackson County Fire Department #5. I attend as many of these dinners as possible and encourage you join in the fun. Many wonderful people attend and volunteers are always needed.

Future events being planned for our Parks include:

- Dog Days of Summer Celebration on Saturday, July 26, 2014 at Colver Park from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. This will be a great day with free hot dogs for lunch, a dog parade with prizes/ribbons, and other fun activities for kids and their families.
- A Jazz Festival is tentatively scheduled for September at Blue Heron Park. More information will be published as we get closer.
- The tentative date for a Homecoming Parade is Saturday October 11, 2014. The parade will end at the high school, and be followed with a Carnival and Barbecue to kick off the beginning of Spirit week before the Homecoming game.



Once we get lights installed at Blue Heron Park (hopefully in the next year), we plan to have more evening events including concerts and movies.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES IN PHOENIX: There are many opportunities in Phoenix to get involved and help your city and fellow citizens. Listed below are just a few for you to consider.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

- **The Community Food Bank** is a successful local support service that operates out of the 1st Presbyterian Church on 2nd Street. They provide needed food products to many of the less fortunate in the community through donations and dedicated volunteer help. They could really use more help and/or donations. If this is something you would be interested in, please visit the food bank on Wednesdays between the hours of 1-3pm or Saturdays from 10 am-12pm, to inquire as to how you might help.

- **Planning Commission:** There are several vacant positions on this very important board. This is the group of citizens that works with the City Planning Department to help establish policy and enforcement processes for zoning, property acquisitions, and occupancy restrictions.
- **Parks Commission:** Two additional persons are still needed for this important board. This group is becoming more important as City Council asks them to develop future needs and improvement plans for our 3 current and future city parks. They are to gather public opinion, develop master plans, propose improvements and schedule special events.
- **City Water Commission:** This committee was started to evaluate water rates and completed their initial assignments about a year ago. They are now being reconstituted as an ongoing committee with a wide range of responsibilities related to evaluating and recommending resources including all aspects of the city water distribution, maintenance and improvement needs. This committee needs 3 members.
- **City Charter Ad Hoc Committee:** A short-term assignment with three citizen members to review and make recommendations to the City Council for changing the City Charter. Apply at City Hall.

Most of these boards and committees do not require an extensive amount of time. Other opportunities come periodically including openings on the Urban Renewal Board, PHURA and City Budget Committee and ad hoc task groups. If you have the time and desire, I would encourage you to run for elective office such as Mayor or City Council this November. The deadline for applying for elective office on the City Council closes on August 23, 2014. It is a relatively easy process to qualify and you can obtain complete instructions at City Hall. A primary requirement is that you must have been a Phoenix Citizen for the past 12 months. This is your chance to become part of the ACTION! Let's all contribute to making Phoenix a better and better place to live.

Thank you for your support and confidence. I can be reached by email at jeff.bellah@phoenixoregon.gov, phone **(541) 535-1955 x 305**, or drop-in hours at City Hall on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-3pm or other times by appointment. Feel free to contact any of our Council members with ideas, concerns and comments. Council is comprised of **Bruce Sophie (President), Karen Jones (Vice President), Stan Bartell, Carolyn Bartell, Terry Helfrich, and Chris Luz**. We are always glad to hear from you and would appreciate your opinions on issues we are facing.



Jeff Bellah
Mayor, City of Phoenix