

ASPTEA News

Message from the President

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Inside This Issue

- 1 **Message from the President**
- 2 **ASPTEA Comments on Proposed Budget**
- 4 **Colleen's Corner**

Your Board wants to wish everyone a very Happy New Year. Unfortunately as you all know the New Year has severe budget challenges that we must all face. Last January, ASPTEA presented several budget suggestions to city management in response to Ms. Seelhammer's request at a council meeting. The March 2008 budget came and went without any of our suggestions being taken even though we heard from many of you and from several in management that these were good ideas.

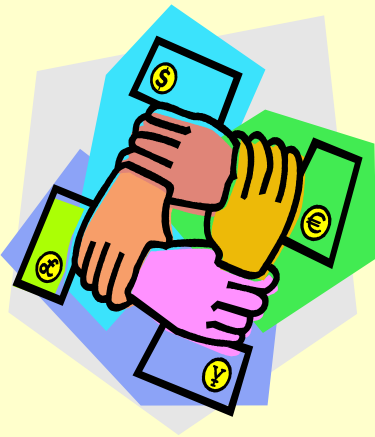
Although we were not directly asked by management for any more suggestions, ASPTEA sent out a survey to our 1200 members and asked for your thoughts. The response we received was amazing! We had over 900 responses, or an 80% response rate. Besides clearly giving us your opinions, we heard many additional suggestions to try and alleviate the budget shortfall. We took many of the suggestions we received plus more of our own and put these into a CCR format for both management and City Council. This document is available on our website at www.asptea.net. We know that there are some tough items in this document, some that could negatively impact even those we represent. However, we felt tough times call for tough measures and we believe the suggestions we submitted we are logical, reasonable, and fair.

On December 31, 2008 all of the union/association presidents met with the City Manager where we received the draft budget which included position cuts. We have spent the past 20+ days reviewing the draft budget and unfortunately, it does not appear to include any of our suggestions. We feel it does not cut some areas enough and cuts other areas too much. The draft budget would also make most departments more top heavy with management, not less.

Management tells ASPTEA often that they consider us part of management. It is clear by their actions during the budget process and for several years with regards to personnel matters that they do not. Your Board has worked hard to be part of the team and work with city management but our soft approach has yielded too few results and too much frustration. We are tired of being held strictly to one set of rules while management holds itself to a looser standard.

Many of you are contacting us to ask what you can do at this point. First, as a citizen you have the right to contact your elected officials and give them your input into the budget. Encourage your family and friends to do this as well. Also, if you know other citizens who are concerned about some of the service cuts, refer them to our webpage and our suggestions. They may agree with many of the proposals we are making. These are tough times and it is important that all our voices be heard.

Our reason for existing is to represent all Unit 7 employees and make sure that everyone is treated fairly and professionally. ASPTEA has tried to be a quiet voice that works cooperatively with management but we are Learning, Changing, and improving to better serve you. If we are not being heard, we will have to get louder. We hope you will all work with us more than ever to make the city a better place to work, and help us lead in providing better service to the citizens of Phoenix.



ASPTEA Comments on Proposed Budget

First and foremost we would again ask the Mayor and Council to consider our previous budget suggestions. The suggestions we have provided would cut top heavy areas, improve efficiencies, cut favoritism for the few, and result in fewer service cuts to the citizens of Phoenix. We do not have the resources or time to go through the budget as thoroughly as we would like. However we felt it was important to provide you with what information we have been able to ascertain.

Our budget suggestions of December 2008 included an attachment showing management to staff ratios for all city departments. We have revised this document based on the trial budget and it now shows the previous information as well as what the ratios would be if the draft budget were approved. In almost all cases, departments will be more top heavy after the budget cuts. We think this is fiscally irresponsible and self serving.

Up front for the record, we want to state we have no personal issue with any of the people named in this newsletter. We do have a serious issue with the double standard and favoritism that has been going on far too long.

A couple of notable examples include:

Management/Staff Ratios

The Budget and Research Department (B&R) is responsible for developing the budget. B&R has 1 Director, 4 Deputy Directors, 10 Management Assist. II's, 2 Budget Analyst III's, 5 Budget Analyst II's, 3 Management Interns, and 2 Secretaries. Their proposed budget cuts would eliminate 3 MA II's (Unit 7). Should additional cuts be necessary, B&R would cut 3 more positions: 1 MA II and 2 Budget Analysts (Unit 7) "threatening the ability to meet state and city legal requirements for budget adoption and reporting" according to the City Council Report prepared by the Budget Director. We are stunned that B&R would consider keeping Interns over Budget Analysts that are critical to meet legal requirements. We think B&R should cut 3 Deputy Directors, 3 Management Interns and hire an Economist so that we may better foresee future budget trends.

The General Fund Balanced Budget CCR states "The hiring freeze that began a year ago has not been lifted, and only critical positions have been filled." We still fail to see how Management Interns are critical to the citizens of Phoenix. We have enough comments on the Management Intern program that we wrote a separate article on this subject. See article at www.asptea.net

The City Auditor Dept. has 1 Director, 1 Assistant Director, 5 Deputy Directors, and 28 workers. This department is proposing to cut 5 workers and no managers. The positions being cut are: Secretary II, AAll, and 3 Internal Auditors. This will leave 7 Managers to manage 23 workers. A department this small should be consolidated and several Management positions should be cut instead of those who do the work.

The Office of Environmental Programs has 15 total staff, 4 of them are in Management. This very top heavy function within the City Manager's Office is planning to cut a Secretary in the budget. This leaves 4 Managers for 10 workers.

The March 2008 budget shows 107 executives with 4 being cut for a new number of 103 in April 2008. The January 2009 draft budget shows 105 executive positions. We are unable to find any council action for the 2 executives that were added.

Special Revenue Tax Force

This task force has come up with \$7.5 Million in additional revenue and we commend their efforts. It was advertised as being comprised of Phoenix's best and brightest. No one from Unit 7 was included (we have more degrees, training, and education, than any unit including Management) nor was anyone from the other employee units included. If we are part of Management as we are often told, why are we not invited to participate?

ASPTEA Comments on Proposed Budget – Cont.

Retirement Severances

Besides not making as deep of cuts in management as we think they should, Management has created positions for themselves at times and places that seem questionable. Some high level examples include: International Economic Development Director in the City Manager's Office. This position was created for PJ Jasso in December 2007, one month before the hiring freeze. Ms. Jasso has recently retired and was given a severance package because this position is being cut.

Similarly, in January 2003, Special Executive Assistant Positions were created two weeks before that years hiring freeze and Dave Richert and Tom Callow were placed in those positions without competing. In March 2008 Mr. Richert's position was cut and he received a severance package. Mr. Callow promoted to a Deputy City Manager and now his position is being cut and he too will receive a severance package. None of these cuts will save a person from being laid off if the bumping rules had been applied.

In April 2008, one month after the Mr. Richert's position was cut, a new Executive Assistant to the City Manager appeared and Ms. Tammy Perkins was placed in this position. In March 2008 MA III Dennis Murphy was cut from the City Manager's office but somehow a new position was created within the Water Services Department and Mr. Murphy now has a home there, still working for the Manager's Office. Neither of these positions was included in the approved budget and neither individual had to compete for these new positions.

At the budget update meetings on January 2nd, the City Manager stressed that retirement severance packages are expensive and only offered to those people where they will be creating a position for them to bump into. Executives have no rights to bump because they are "not classified" which basically means they are on permanent probation and can be fired at any time. Management could have lead by example and implemented the bumping process for its own (under the City Manager's authority) rather than give them a golden parachute to leave.

PAP

One of the suggestions we are most perplexed by is our idea to eliminate the Performance Appraisal Program and have all employees rated the same more efficient way. To date, no one we have talked to, including many in management, think that the PAP system is anything but cumbersome and a huge waste of time. We didn't even go into other issues with the program such as how this program allows managers to rate each other with open surveys. We're sure everyone in Unit 7 would get better ratings on their PMG's if we all rated ourselves. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Also, PAP has a sliding scale instead of "Steps" like everyone else. Even though Management has offered to give up their 1.9% raise, they can still give each other substantial raises based on their ratings of each other.

MERP

It's too late now, but had this suggestion been taken last year, we know several people in our unit who would have retired in December. This would have cost \$600 per person to move it up 6 months. This is cheap in comparison to the severance packages being given.

Rule of 75 Early Retirement

Again it's too late to help immediately but this suggestion could have broadened the pool of people who could have voluntarily retired (at a reduced rate) or given the city more options to provide severance packages (at a reduced amount) to eligible employees. We were told it was too expensive even though our suggestion was to implement this in such a way that it would be revenue neutral to the retirement program. This suggestion still could help with future budgets if implemented.

ASPTEA Comments on Proposed Budget – Cont.

Consolidation of departments and functions

Although a couple of consolidations are proposed, we believe many more could still be made which would result in greater efficiencies. See our previous report on www.asptea.net.

In conclusion, ASPTEA does not want to see anyone at the City lose pay, benefits, or even worse, their job. We are City employees ourselves as well as citizens who use city services. We want to provide the highest level of service to the community, our friends and own families. For the past year we have tried to help and we still believe our suggestions could save millions of dollars and lessen the impact to city services and the people who provide those services. We are still hopeful that our voices will be heard.

Colleen's Corner – Health Care

The Health Care Task Force is a committee made up of representatives from each of the employee associations and unions as well as members of management. It is chaired by Mary Kyle, Deputy Personnel Director. We are meeting next week to vote on plan changes that will set our rate increase for the 2009/2010 plan year. These changes will include a rate increase as well as possible increases in co-payments for specialists' visits, outpatient surgery, emergency room visits and non-generic prescription drugs. In addition, the committee will be voting for approval of a "premium holiday". This will in effect give all subscribers (active employees and retirees) a month off from paying the medical premium. If the committee approves this, the City will be able to save approximately \$7 million that would be used to improve current budget shortfall situation. An update on the premium increase and plan changes will be published once the plan is finalized and approved.

Do you take maintenance drugs? Many City employees take maintenance drugs for high blood pressure, cholesterol or thyroid conditions just to name a few. Some of you probably take advantage of the mail order program through Caremark, but did you know that Walgreens has a great generic prescription drug plan that doesn't even require insurance? For \$20 a year, a single person can join the Walgreen's prescription plan, \$35 annually for a family. Generic prescription drugs only cost \$12 or less for a 90 day supply that you can pick up right at your nearest pharmacy location. Not only does this save the individual money, but it also keeps this cost out of the City's Health Care Trust Fund. If you pay \$10 per month for one prescription, the annual savings is \$52. Even at the mail in rate, there is a \$12 annual savings and the benefit of picking the prescription up, instead of dealing with all of the paperwork involved in mail order, is a bonus. Check out the details and see if your prescriptions are on the list of over 5000 drugs in the [Walgreens Prescription Savings Club](#).

Upcoming Events

***Visit our Website for Details: www.asptea.net**

Recruitment Incentive:

Sign up a new member and we'll send you **\$25** for helping to build a stronger ASPTEA.