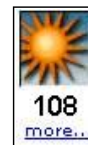


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## Field says budget problems call for drastic steps County facing \$2.6 million shortfall

By **JOHN GUTEKUNST**  
Parker Pioneer  
Tuesday, June 14, 2011 12:20 PM MST

The La Paz County Board of Supervisors has authorized County Administrator Dan Field to draft a plan to restructure county government in the wake of a projected \$2.6 million budget shortfall for fiscal year 2011-12.

The authorization came at the supervisors' June 6 meeting. Field also asked for authorization to implement the plan as soon as the supervisors approve it.

Field said the size of the shortfall means drastic measures are necessary. He said the county has two options: they can increase revenues or they can cut costs.

"We've been looking at a lot of stuff and we've done a lot," he said. "It hasn't been enough. We need to take drastic steps."

Field said the reasons for the shortage were declining tax revenues and the fact the state is providing less funding than they have in previous years. There is also the matter of the \$14 million court judgment against the county in the Yakima case.

"We're nowhere close to meeting the judgment," Field said.

Field said some rates had been increased, and the county had reached its state-mandated limit on property taxes. He said the only option left was to cut expenses from the general fund.

Field said several actions were needed, including a freeze on hiring new employees. Capital expenditures had to be curtailed, county departments needed to be restructured, and some management positions needed to be cut.

Other measures included having elected officials seek outside funding, contracting out misdemeanor cases from the Public Defender's office, restructuring the general fund debt, and reviewing all fees and charges.

"I'll admit this will be a hard pill to swallow," Field said. "It could lead to reductions in services."

He added these actions would also be helpful as the county seeks bonding to pay off the judgment to Yakima.

"If we're going to bond, we need to do some house cleaning," he said.

Community Development Director Scott Bernhart said he disagreed with the accounting, which led to the estimate of a \$2.6 million shortfall. He said the worst-case monthly scenario was used to reach that figure. He asked the supervisors to look at the figures more closely.

"You could be balancing the county's budget on the backs of county employees," Bernhart said.

On a related matter, the supervisors approved with Economic and Real Estate Consulting for an analysis of cash flow from the county sales tax as it relates to the collection of dedicated tax revenue to support debt service payments on bonds.

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Field told the supervisors Yakima had rejected the county's offer of \$9.2 million to pay off the judgment. The funds would've come from sales of bonds. The bonds were to be paid off through a half-cent sales tax. Even with this, Field said the county should continue to seek bonding to pay off the judgment. This was an important step in the process of obtaining a bond rating.

"It still behooves us to move ahead on bonding and getting a rating," Field said.

### Article Rating

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### Reader Comments

*The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of parkerpioneer.net.*

**northbound** wrote on **Jun 16, 2011 2:57 PM:**

" Well said King, How about cutting pay starting at the top of the food chain? That should be done before anyone's job is taken away. Yes I agree the pt rangers are a waste of money, they are only out during special events and go home about midnight. So if a fight or disturbance goes on at the park people are going to run around trying to find a ranger? Duh their going to call 911 and since the rangers are off duty at midnight the deputies are going to respond. I was told by someone that this board was handed a big mess from the old board it's name is Yakima, so ya all knew about this mess and all your so called attempts to deal with Yakima failed? How about getting rid of one of the board members and split the county in 2 with only 2 board members that would save a lot of money right there. It's not like this is their only means of income, maybe time for them to get off the top of the hill they live on and rent a place in Blue Water Lagoon. Just what does Cibola need another launch ramp for? They have like 4 or 5 of them now as it is ya all don't get that many boaters on holiday weekends, not like up river does and oh gee how many boat ramps are up river? Enough to handle the amount of boats/pwc's for that area. "

**DON'T TREAD ON ME** wrote on **Jun 15, 2011 7:55 PM:**

" HELLO AGAIN LA PAZ COUNTY, JUNE 15, 2011

SINCE I PUBLICLY "FIRED" THE LA PAZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS ON FEBRUARY 7TH, 2011, I HAVEN'T RETURNED TO THE BI-MONTHLY WASTE OF TIME THAT I REFER TO AS A "BORED" MEETING. I HAVE THOUGH, STAYED UP WITH MOST TOPICS OF INTEREST THROUGH THE LOCAL "PARKER PIONEER" NEWSPAPER, AS WELL AS THE "PARKER LIVE" WEBSITE ARTICLES AND BLOGS.

SINCE THIS "BORED" TOOK OFFICE, THE YAKIMA COMPANY HAS MADE NUMEROUS GENEROUS PROPOSALS TO BRING THIS RIDICULOUS LAWSUIT TO AN EQUITABLE END FOR LA PAZ COUNTY TAXPAYERS. THESE WERE PROPOSALS THAT WOULD HAVE SHAVED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OFF OF THIS NOW \$14,000,000 JUDGEMENT AGAINST US.

BUT NO, NOT THIS "BORED"! THEY WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT. INSTEAD, THEY KEPT STRINGING YAKIMA ALONG, DRAGGING THEM AND LA PAZ COUNTY TAXPAYERS THROUGH MULTIPLE COURT HEARINGS AND ENDLESS MEETINGS, ALL IN A FUTILE EFFORT TO SEARCH FOR A LOOPHOLE TO REVERSE THE JUDGEMENT. REMEMBER FOLKS, THIS WAS A JUDGEMENT SET BY A LA PAZ COUNTY JURY. WHY? BECAUSE LA PAZ COUNTY WAS IN THE WRONG TO BEGIN WITH! I WON'T BOTHER TO DIG UP THAT STUPID MESS RIGHT NOW.

IN THIS WEEK'S "PARKER PIONEER", THERE IS AN ARTICLE WHICH BEGINS ON THE FRONT PAGE AND CONTINUES ON PAGE 7. THAT ARTICLE PROVIDES A BRIEF SUMMARY ON THE ENTIRE CASE. READ IT IF YOU CAN. YOU WILL SEE THE FINANCIAL DISASTER THAT WE, OUR CHILDREN AND OUR GRANDCHILDREN ARE FACED WITH.

THE THREE ELECTED LA PAZ COUNTY SUPERVISORS EACH EARN APPROXIMATELY \$64,000 A YEAR, PLUS EXPENSES AND VEHICLES. THEIR APPOINTED COUNTY "MANAGER" EARNS A WHOPPING \$104,000 A YEAR, PLUS PERKS. THAT BRINGS UP A COMBINED SALARY TOTAL OF APPROXIMATELY \$296,000 A YEAR, THAT'S ALMOST A THIRD OF A MILLION DOLLARS, PAID FOR BY OUR COUNTY TAX DOLLARS!

ARE YOU AWARE THAT APPROXIMATELY \$100,000 A YEAR IS SPENT FINANCING TWO COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY "RANGERS" FOR THE LA PAZ

COUNTY PARK SYSTEM? THAT IS TWO ARIZONA STATE CERTIFIED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS (ONE FULL TIME AND ONE PART TIME ), THAT ARE UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION AND WILL OF OUR COUNTY "MANAGER".

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF LA PAZ COUNTY IN 1983, THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE HAS HAD JURISDICTION IN AND OVER OUR PARK SYSTEM, AND HAS HANDLED ALL CALLS FOR SERVICE SUCCESSFULLY SINCE THEN. SINCE THIS "BORED" HAS TAKEN OFFICE, THEY HAVE DECIDED THAT YOUR SHERIFF'S OFFICE ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH TO HANDLE THE JOB ANY MORE, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE LAST SHERIFF WAS ELECTED. TO ME, IT SMACKS OF A PERSONAL VENDETTA AGAINST THE CURRENT SHERIFF, AT OUR EXPENSE. WHAT IS ESPECIALLY INTERESTING IS THAT, AS MOST OF US ALREADY KNOW, OR SHOULD KNOW, THE PRIMARY "RANGER" IS THE HUSBAND OF A "BORED" MEMBER, WHO IS ONE OF THREE SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY "MANAGER".

IN ADDITION, IF YOU HAVE A SCANNER, YOU WILL HEAR AN OCCASSIONAL CALL FOR SERVICE AT A LA PAZ COUNTY PARK. ALMOST EVERY TIME, THE RESPONDING OFFICER IS, YOU GUESSED IT, A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY, NOT A PARK "RANGER".

HECK, SPEAKING OF WASTED TAX DOLLARS AND SPECIAL INTERESTS, LET'S KEEP GOING. FOR EXAMPLE, CONSIDER THE RE-OPENED ½ MILE ROADWAY UPRIVER, SOUTH OF BUCKSKIN STATE PARK. AS I REMEMBER, THE PROPOSED AND APPROVED BUDGET FOR THAT WORTHLESS EXPENDITURE WAS APPROXIMATELY \$20,000. HAS ANYONE TAKEN AN OBJECTIVE LOOK AT THE FINISHED SURFACE OF THAT SECTION OF COUNTY ROAD, INCLUDING THE GAUGE AND LENGTH OF THE CHAIN LINK FENCE, CONSIDERED THE ACTUAL COST? I HAVE NOT PERSONALLY VIEWED THE FINAL BILL, BUT, HAVING EXPERIENCE WITH CHAIN LINK FENCING, I WOULD SAY THAT \$20,000 WAS BURNED UP IN THE FENCE FABRIC ALONE, NOT INCLUDING THE MASSIVE FENCE POLES DRILLED INTO THE SOLID ROCK AND FILLED WITH CONCRETE, THE ASSOCIATED HARDWARE AND OF COURSE, LABOR HOURS. AS WELL, THE FENCE IS ONLY PARTIALLY EFFECTIVE AT STOPPING ROCKS FROM HITTING THE ROADWAY. TAKE A LOOK FOR YOURSELF. COULD THIS WASTE OF MONEY BE ANOTHER SPECIAL INTEREST FOR A DISTRICT SUPERVISOR?

HERE'S ANOTHER ONE. THE BOAT RAMP SCHEME IN CIBOLA. YES, THAT'S RIGHT. AGAIN, FOR THOSE WHO AREN'T AWARE, A BOAT RAMP HAS BEEN OR IS BEING BUILT BY PRIVATE LAND OWNERS IN CIBOLA, WHO WILL TURN IT OVER TO THE COUNTY WHEN IT'S FINISHED. ANOTHER BOAT RAMP IN CIBOLA, NEAR AN ALREADY ESTABLISHED RAMP? COULD IT BE ANOTHER SPECIAL INTEREST FOR A DISTRICT SUPERVISOR?

FOR THOSE OF YOU THAT CANNOT ATTEND A SCHEDULED "BORED" MEETING AT 10:00 AM ON A MONDAY MORNING, KNOW THAT IT IS BY DESIGN THAT YOU CANNOT ATTEND. IF THE "BORED" ROOM WERE FILLED TO CAPACITY EACH MEETING, STUPID DECISIONS LIKE THE ABOVE MENTIONED YAKIMA CASE WOULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED. HOLDING MEETINGS AT SUCH A TIME SERVES ONLY TO PREVENT THE WORKING CLASS (WHOEVER'S LEFT) FROM HAVING A VOICE IN COUNTY BUSINESS, PERIOD!

SO. WITH ALL OF THIS DEBT THAT WE ARE FACING, WHAT DECISION HAS THE COUNTY "MANAGER" RECOMMENDED? PUT 13 COUNTY EMPLOYEES OUT OF WORK! HE IS QUOTED ON PARKER LIVE, IN PART, VER BATIM, AS FOLLOWS: "ALTHOUGH THIS IS NOT A PROBLEM CREATED BY THE BOARD, THE BURDEN NOW FALLS ON {THEIR} SHOULDERS".

CAN YOU SEE THE DECEPTION IN THIS STATEMENT?

HERE'S AN ANALOGY: YOU AND I ARE STANDING TOGETHER NEAR A HAYSTACK. YOU LIGHT IT ON FIRE AND WALK AWAY. I STAND THERE AND MAKE LITTLE EFFORT TO PUT OUT THE FIRE. WHO IS TO BLAME? ANSWER: YOU FOR STARTING THE FIRE AND ME FOR DOING BASICALLY NOTHING TO PUT IT OUT. BOTH OF US ARE EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE.

HERE'S A THOUGHT, RATHER THAN DESTROYING THE FAMILIES OF 13 COUNTY EMPLOYEES, HOW ABOUT TERMINATING THE RIDICULOUS WASTE OF \$100,000 A YEAR IN THE FORM OF THE COMPLETELY UNNECESSARY PARK "RANGER" POSITIONS AND LET OUR SHERIFF'S OFFICE DO THEIR JOB LIKE THEY HAVE DONE SINCE 1983.

ALL OF THIS INFORMATION AND MORE IS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE FOR A SMALL FEE BY GOING TO THE LA PAZ COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE DURING WORKING HOURS AND REQUESTING A COPY OF SUCH. THIS INCLUDES CD'S OF PUBLIC MEETINGS.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF HISTORY. ALL OF US, NOT JUST A FEW, NEED TO BECOME AND

STAY INVOLVED.

I WOULD ASK THAT IF ANYONE CAN CLARIFY OR CORRECT ANY OF THE ABOVE, PLEASE DO SO. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT CITIZENS OF OUR COUNTY NOT ONLY KNOW THE FACTS, BUT ARE AWARE OF THE TREMENDOUS DAILY WASTE OF OUR PRECIOUS TAX DOLLARS.

THANK YOU.

KING E. CLAPPERTON  
LA PAZ COUNTY TAXPAYER-PAYER-PAYER-PAYER-PAYER "