



# RECOM

Retired Employees City of Mesa



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RECOMAZ.org



Recom Executive Board

## Message from the Board

In last month's newsletter Board President John Gendron stated that future columns would periodically be written by other Board members. Whether that was his effort to introduce all of us to the membership, or just to share the workload, here goes.

By way of introduction, I'm Frank Mizner, former Planning Director for the City. I retired in 2003 after 15 years. I then managed the Dobson Ranch HOA for 2 1/2 years before retiring again. Before coming to Mesa I worked in Waco Texas, Pueblo and Aurora Colorado, and Gilbert, AZ. I was born in Tacoma WA and grew up in Tucson, graduating from the U. of A. (Go Wildcats!).

Today, I'd like to talk about volunteering in the community. Wikipedia, the interesting (and free) on-line encyclopedia, defines volunteering as "the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without the expectation of pay or other tangible benefit".

While many services and aspects of modern life are provided by the public and private sector, it is often said that volunteers ensure our true quality of life. In fact, past Mesa mayors in their State of the City addresses have often referred to Mesa as a community largely run by volunteers.

According to several sources, there are three main benefits from volunteering:

1. Economic: Volunteers carry out activities otherwise funded by government or the private sector, so volunteering adds to the economy and reduces government spending.
2. Social: Volunteering helps to build more cohesive communities, fosters greater trust between individuals, and strengthens overall stability.
3. Personal: Volunteers feel a sense of contributing to the overall good of the community, while utilizing personal talents and helping others.

Motivations for volunteering are varied and may include a desire to improve the community, a wish to use personal skills or talents, a sense of "giving back", a sense of duty, religious conviction, a desire for social connection or the altruistic desire to help others.

The City of Mesa has a very active volunteer program. In 2006 volunteers contributed a total of 237,915 hours valued at almost \$4,300,000. There are opportunities for youths, individuals or groups. Volunteer programs exist in many City Departments, from the Arizona Museum for Youth to the Municipal Cemetery, from the Fire Department Community Response Team to the Mesa Arts Center. There are also opportunities on over 20 city advisory boards and committees (for example, I serve on the Planning and Zoning Board).

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**"The most basic of all values is people helping people."**

If you've been inspired, but don't know where to start, try these three:

[www.volunteerphoenix.org](http://www.volunteerphoenix.org)

[www.makeadifference.org](http://www.makeadifference.org)

[www.1-800-volunteer.org](http://www.1-800-volunteer.org)

Volunteering is a wonderful way to give back to the community, to share your skills and knowledge, and to meet others. It doesn't have to be with the City. There are opportunities with your church, your school, and literally hundreds of local and regional organizations. You could pick fruit for the United Food Bank, lead tours at Desert Botanical Gardens, clean campsites for the State Parks Department, or help mentor kids at the local elementary school. You will gain a lot, but more importantly, so will your community.



Doug Nintzel, Media Relations Director for the Arizona Department of Transportation.

## Guest Speaker

At our October meeting Doug Nintzel of the Arizona Department of Transportation gave us a look back as well as a look into the future of the freeway system in Maricopa County.

The first rumor he quashed was that there is actually someone at ADOT whose job it is to figure out which highway closures would be most inconvenient to the motoring public each weekend and then make sure that they do indeed get closed! Not true! They actually work very hard to have the least impact on the traffic on the freeways and provide a website for motorists to check before setting off: [www.azdot.gov](http://www.azdot.gov) or [www.az511.com](http://www.az511.com).

Doug brought a number of maps to show the growth of Phoenix and Maricopa County. On the 1950 map Phoenix looked like a very small red stain on the desert made with an eyedropper – on the 2000 map it looked like someone spilled a bucket of red paint that splattered in all directions! In 1950 there were about 107,000 people in Phoenix (They didn't call it the metro area then!) and about 332,000 in all of Maricopa County.

In 2000 there were approximately 1.3 million in Phoenix and 3 million in Maricopa County – and counting. By 2030 the numbers will be 2.2 million in Phoenix, and 6.1 million in Maricopa County. Doug explained that “managing the state’s transportation needs as they relate to this growth, coordinating land use and transportation planning and working on multi-modal solutions is part of ADOT’s job.” This writer interprets the last sentence to mean that ADOT tries to anticipate growth to avoid having two-lane roads go into areas with hundreds of thousands of residents (Queen Creek and Pinal County?) and needs to think about light rail and other mass transport along with highways.

All the communities making up Maricopa County and the greater Phoenix area participate in approving plans for the regional freeways through the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). ADOT has the herculean task of following the blueprint that MAG outlines, designing and building the projects, tracking the costs, and advising MAG when adjustments need to be made. Lest one thinks the process of getting 10 or more municipalities to agree on freeway design is simple, there is also the State Transportation Board which needs to approve contracts and five-year building programs.

What does all this traveling convenience cost, one might ask. About 15.8 billion dollars over 20 years. Do you remember that we voted for an extension of the (original 1985) ½ cent sales tax (Prop 400) for another 20 years – to 2026? Well, it was a key component of the \$15.8 billion Regional Transportation Plan. The



legislature helped out in 2006 with a special \$307 million appropriation, of which the Greater Phoenix area received \$185 million. This allowed a number of projects to be speeded up – including the Williams Gateway Freeway. By working with the City of Mesa to buy right-of-way protection before the property is developed the costs could be somewhat controlled. It also allowed acceleration of additional lanes on I-17 north of the Carefree Highway. Those will go in 2009 instead of 2023.

One of ADOT’s current challenges is convincing people that roundabouts really are better than signalized intersections, and explaining to residents that the convenience of freeways cannot come without the inconvenience of noise and increased traffic, even though rubberized freeways do help a great deal.

The “Go play on the freeway” parties for the opening of various sections of the freeways have been very popular. And Doug said that Mesa can expect such a party in September of 2008 when the final section of the Red Mountain Freeway (Loop 2002) will be completed. That section runs from Thomas Rd. to University Dr. east of Power Rd.

And oh yes, the rest of the state also wants highways, hence the name **Arizona** Department of Transportation. But that’s another presentation.

## Reports

### Secretary

Lin Adams noted that the Board had been asked to look into the “membership tiers”, meaning different levels of dues for retired employees and for spouses. The Board discussed this and decided against tiers at this time.

## Treasurer

Chuck Wennerlund reports that the informal review of RECOM's finances authorized by the Board this summer showed that the organization's record keeping and books are in good order. Just so you'll know – we didn't hire a CPA – we asked a former member of the City's finance department to take a look. She found us reassuringly boring – and for financial records that's a good thing!

## Employee Benefits Task Force

The October Benefits Task Force meeting was devoted primarily to the nuts and bolts of online re-enrollment. However, Jean Young did distribute the Statement of Operations for the Employee Benefit Trust Fund and pointed out that in September there was a net increase in funds of approximately \$200,000. The total income of the fund for that month was about 3.8 million, and total disbursements were about 3.6 million.

## Program Committee

Regular meetings are held in the Community Room of the Fire Station at Mesa Dr. and First Street, on the third Wednesday of the month at 9:00AM.

Please note the unusual date of the November meeting!

Frank Mizner reminds members that the next meeting will be on November 14<sup>th</sup> due to the Thanksgiving Holiday. You'll want to be sure to hear Patrick Murphy, Mesa's Senior Town Center Development Specialist speak on "what's happening all over town in Mesa". And according to the recent newspaper articles – that's a lot.

Don't forget the Christmas gathering on December 19<sup>th</sup>. Two of the men on the Board are doing the shopping for the refreshments – hmmm. If you can, please bring a couple of cans or other non-perishable foods which we'll donate to United Food Bank. And not that you need an incentive to come to a party – but there will be three door prizes.

In January Pat Esparza, Director of "Mesa Life Options", will speak on this local program aimed at retirees who still have lots of interests and energy to invest in them. And looking a bit into the future: sometime in the late spring, RECOM will organize a "Pre-retirement Seminar". We know, we know, most of you reading the newsletter are already retired,

but we thought we might offer this service to our colleagues who are still laboring in the vineyard – but are looking forward to sampling the grapes rather than tending them. And this is where you come in. If you found something especially useful, or especially useless, or lacking in your own pre-retirement seminar, please let Frank Mizner ([planner1@cox.net](mailto:planner1@cox.net)) or Barb Seperich ([bseperich@aol.com](mailto:bseperich@aol.com)) know. You can also jot your thoughts on a piece of paper and give them to us at one of the membership meetings. You can include your name and contact information, if you like, or you can omit it if you prefer.

## Announcements

In **February** we'll host a **Candidate's Forum**. Once the filing deadline of December 12<sup>th</sup> has passed, RECOM will contact the candidates for mayor and council and invite them to address our membership. This will be just before the primary election, and will give you a great opportunity to see them up close and personal.

## Upcoming Events

Don't forget to vote on Nov. 6<sup>th</sup> regarding the Waveyard in Mesa. Whether you're for or against – make your voice heard.

## Happy Thanksgiving

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