

**SEIC Meets with Pinal County Staff**  
**Reported by Betsy Levenson and Bill Hooks**  
*February 2009*

On Tuesday, January 6, SEIC members Betsy Levenson and Bill Hooks conducted a follow-up meeting with Pinal County staff members Ken Buchanan, Assistant County Manager for Development Services; Lester Chow, Development Section Chief for the Department of Public Works; and Jerry Stabley, Planning and Development Director. The purpose of the meeting was to receive new and updated information relating to the county's planning, development and financial initiatives.

**Economic Issues**

Assistant County Manager, Ken Buchanan reported on the county's economic situation, specifically the projected shortfall of approximately 6 million dollars within the current fiscal year, and a significantly larger shortfall for the fiscal year that begins July 1st. For years Arizona has lived on growth. Although the County knew bad times were coming, and in anticipation of reduced revenues, did not fill 2,007 vacancies, the size and depth of the problem surprised everyone. Contributing factors include reductions in property and sales tax revenues, development fees, and income from the state. In an attempt to balance the current budget, county managers are looking at all options, ranging from four-day work weeks to wholesale elimination of programs. Unless the economy improves significantly, next year's outlook will require additional strong measures. The County's economic problems are mirrored to an even greater degree at the State level, with a projected 1.5 billion dollar shortfall in the current fiscal year, and a 3 billion dollar shortfall projected for the next fiscal year.

**Pinal County Comprehensive Plan**

The Pinal County Comprehensive Plan will soon go to the Planning Commission for review, at which time Planning Commission members will make a recommendation to the three-person Board of Supervisors. The members of the Board of Supervisors will then vote on whether or not to adopt the plan. The old plan, which currently governs development in the county, is viewed by officials as too loose and unstructured, with few requirements and restrictions. The proposed new plan is the product of extensive public input, with over 2,000 people participating at 46 events. It lays out a carefully thought out plan and process for growth and development over the next several decades.

The two most controversial aspects of the Plan are 1) the requirement that developers demonstrate the availability of an adequate water supply at the time of zoning, and 2) the proposed dedication of fifty square miles in Coolidge for a regional airport. Both have generated significant controversy, with opposition from some developers who think the water requirement will inhibit growth. There is concern that the size of the airport will take too much prime development land away. A third area of controversy relates to whether or not the county should have toll roads. Some are advocating this approach as a new source of income; the county, however, believes that toll roads are not a realistic option in this region.

For more information on the Plan, go to [www.PinalCountyPlan.com](http://www.PinalCountyPlan.com). Those who want to register either support or opposition to the Plan should contact any of the members of the Board of Supervisors: Peter Rios (district 1 – which includes SaddleBrooke), Bryan Martin (district 2) or David Snider (district 3). A vote by a minimum of two of these three members will determine whether or not the Plan is adopted. (If you plan on contacting members of the Board of Supervisors, you can get their addresses and phone

numbers by going to the Pinal County website at [www.pinalcountyaz.gov](http://www.pinalcountyaz.gov) and clicking on “elected officials”.)

### **Development**

New or revised initiatives and updates in this area include:

- A Kansas company (Cyprus Realty) has assumed ownership of some of the Eagle Crest property, with DR Horton now only controlling a small piece.
- Eagle Crest Boulevard will be completed by DR Horton, as planned.
- An increasing number of developers appear to be at risk of bankruptcy; however, when a developer has a project approved, s/he must sign a performance bond with the lending authority, assuring that public infrastructure commitments are completed.
- Most of the proposed development in our area appears to be on hold, a by-product of the current economic climate.
- The proposed Pederson/Sears project at the SaddleBrooke entry is still at the conceptual level.
- It was confirmed that the County owns and maintains part of SaddleBrooke Boulevard, from the main entry to the point in the road which is just past Desert Bluff and before the entrance to the strip mall. Robson has an easement on this road.
- Alltel is planning a new cell phone antenna above SaddleBrooke, north of the intersection of Catalina Hills and Peregrine. It will be concealed in fake cactus.