

Giving Back

Police officers are familiar with giving. City Manager Cavazos recently met two officers at the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association (PLEA) who had been shot and seriously injured in the line of duty – two of the many police officers giving up “health” concessions. In the PLEA lobby hang 36 pictures of fallen Phoenix Police Officers that remind onlookers of the “life” concessions they gave. The Gilbert mayor spoke to over 1500 police officers and citizens attending Lt. Eric Shuhandler’s funeral on Wednesday February 3, 2010. He spoke of Eric’s honorable years of service and his love for his family and friends. Looking at the casket, it was clear to all that, once again, another police officer in Arizona had made the ultimate concession. Along with their statewide peers, Phoenix Police Officers, day in and day out, concede their safety to protect citizens.

Due to the budget crisis, PLEA notified Phoenix Police Officers by mail on January 20, 2010 of another possible concession beyond their health, safety, and lives which extended to their wallets. They were advised that until the City Council had hard numbers on March 2 on which to make budget cut decisions, it was impossible to know what concession choices were available for their consideration. Like the sacrifices of Phoenix Police Officers, the food tax approved by the Council on February 2 also has a relevant bearing on the issue of police concessions and community impact.

Citizens for Phoenix.org was formed on Saturday, February 6, 2010 by Phoenix residents who want to maintain both citizen safety and the essential services they require for a reasonable quality of life; especially for the most vulnerable amongst us - the elderly, the disabled and our at-risk youth. PLEA shares these values. On February 2, PLEA communicated to the City Council similar core positions:

- A temporary, emergency food tax for the General Fund to maintain core and essential City services.
- Support for \$50M of proposed budget cuts while rejecting \$90M.
- Savings of \$27M through employee and management concessions and increased user fees.
- An expectation for the City to utilize an outside auditing vendor to evaluate the Phoenix budget and processes.

PLEA’s caution with concessions is not about saving jobs. We believe in our work. PLEA is willing to work with the City for the good of our citizens. At the same time, when we point out the ultimate concessions officers have made, we remind everyone that officers are indispensable to a safe and secure city. While we are supportive of quality of life, safety must remain our priority. In keeping with our officers’ priorities, PLEA continues to stand committed to cultivating safety for citizens and success for city services. Giving to the community is consistent with PLEA’s goals and is nothing new to the 2500 officers PLEA serves.

MARK SPENCER
PLEA President