

New Citizens Group Works with City on Budget Cuts

KFYI



They support many of the city's proposed cuts, as well as the food tax, but not cuts to certain programs

It just formed about a month ago, but "Citizens For Phoenix.org" has already managed to meet with Phoenix City Manager David Cavazos and his team on proposed city spending cuts.

At a news conference on Wednesday, the group announced it supports many of the budget reductions proposed by Cavazos. They also voiced support for the recently-approved 2 percent food tax, saying it's the lesser

of two evils when the alternative is major cuts to police and fire services and highly-utilized city services such as parks, senior centers, after-school programs, and libraries.

Cofounder Paul Barnes said the impact of the food tax on the the average Phoenix family is about \$2 per week, which nearly everyone can afford. However, he said the community as a whole can't afford to lose facilities like entire libraries and senior centers, nor uniformed police officers and firefighters.

Citizens for Phoenix.org plans to remain involved in the budget process, and suggests city government undergo an audit to find services or duplications in service that could be reduced without a major impact on city government. They also want the city to pursue additional sources of revenue, such as in-arrears water bills and municipal court fines that are still outstanding.

The news conference also included a statement by David Hernandez of the Maricopa Area Labor Federation, on behalf of all city employee unions except the Fire Department. He said the unions will be making concessions in the next round of contract talks, to help the city save money. Hernandez said the unions want to be part of the solution to the city's budget crunch.

Additionally, Mark Spencer, the president of the Phoenix Law Enforcement Association (PLEA), which represents most city police officers, has already sent a letter to city manager Cavazos indicating that the union's members on the police force are already open to a 3.2% wage concession to do their part in bridging the deficit.

The group's website is www.citizensforphoenix.org .



PHOTO: Citizens for Phoenix.org cofounder Ann Malone addresses supporters and reporters at Wednesday's news conference.