

# Councilman needs to leave wages, food tax alone

## DiCiccio is wrong to support budget which cuts pay to Phoenix employees

The conversation during a recent policy session was unfortunate. The City Council started the session by honoring the fallen heroes our public-safety families lost recently.



### My Turn

MICHAEL JOHNSON

We moved forward with my motion to approve the city manager's proposed budget, and then things took a turn for the worse.

Councilman Sal DiCiccio made a substitute motion to not only remove half of the food tax by July 1, but to also remove employees' step increases and longevity pay, effectively cutting their salaries.

The public knows I support keeping

the food tax until its official sunset date. Even though we've made changes to our budget and the economy is slowly recovering, we have still not been able to restore all of the critical programs and services we cut over the past few years. This is why the food tax is still important and necessary.

A key restoration we've not fully recovered is for our incredible staff. Our employees have endured a 3.2 percent wage concession for the past few years. They've only been given back half of that concession and many are still required to take mandatory furlough days. And if Councilman DiCiccio had his way, they would never see what is owed to them. He showed no respect for their sacrifices and willfully decided to recommend this devastating action.

Let me be clear. City employees do

not get pay raises like those who work in the private sector. Councilman DiCiccio keeps referring to "pay raises and bonuses." Our staff receives step increases and longevity pay, which are essential to their ability to keep up with the rising cost of living. This is a fair system we have used for decades, and it is part of the reason we are able to attract such qualified talent to serve our constituents, who deserve a competent staff.

Councilman DiCiccio claims he supports public safety, and the city could hire 350 more police officers if we got rid of step increases and longevity pay. Did you know that more than 70 percent of public-safety personnel rely on longevity pay to help them make ends meet? Proposing the elimination of longevity pay to this amount of personnel is a direct contradiction of saying you support public safety.

Our city's first responders are key assets to our communities. To put a value on their lives and dedication as a front for a political agenda is absolutely wrong. These men and women put their

lives on the line every day to protect us. The City Council's job is to protect them, and I applaud the mayor and council members who voted with me for the proposed budget.

Rather than protect our staff, Councilman DiCiccio, along with Councilman Jim Waring, would rather endanger and disrespect them, showcased through his proposed motions and continual use of derogatory terms like "union bosses." Union leaders, like the City Council, are elected into office by the people they represent to protect their interests.

The tactics we've seen in recent weeks only pit employees against one another and hurt the image of the city. Showing utter disregard to our incredible civilian and sworn staff is shameful and disrespectful.

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