

Dog Days of Summer – But We're Still Working

By Bob Barrett

We're in the dog days of summer and the City Council is on vacation. Each year the council meets generally on the first Tuesday of July and then takes a break to allow for vacations and just time off. The council will not meet again, barring emergencies, until August 23.

But that doesn't mean everything stops. The staff remains busy and so do the council members.

For example, the city's economic development staff continues to work hard to attract new businesses to the city to expand our tax base and, hopefully, provide much needed jobs for our residents. The City Council set goals for economic development that include getting a regional hospital to locate in the city, attract a university or private college to Peoria and begin finding large employers who would (hopefully) locate along the Loop 303 or occupy vacant land in south Peoria.

I'm happy to say discussions with various entities are underway and will continue despite the dog days.

In addition to that, work is underway on Centennial Park, located in the City Hall complex. Work also is underway on Osuna Park downtown. When complete, both parks will be a great addition to Old Town and I urge you to visit and perhaps take in a play at Theater Works.

I've been asked several times about what I do as mayor. Aside from dealing with city issues, I represent and coordinate Peoria's goals and policies with a variety of other municipalities, agencies and groups.

I serve on two committees for the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) and the Regional Council. The TPC deals with transportation issues such as light and commuter rail, freeway construction, funding for streets, etc. The MAG Regional Council has the last word on county issues that involve the city. One of the current issues is air quality, and more specifically, PM-10, which is a measurement of dust particles in the air. If we are not successful in reducing the level of PM-10, the federal government could withhold money for road construction.

I also was recently elected president of AMWUA, the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association. This is a coalition of Valley cities that deal with water issues on a municipal, county and statewide basis. Our mission is to enhance and safeguard city water supplies. We work with the state legislature and all state water agencies.

I am part of the Luke West Valley Council and we support Luke's efforts to get the F-35 as a replacement for the F-16. The next step in the process will be public hearings in support of the F-35 which are projected to be in mid-to-late September, though no date has been set. When we do get the dates, we will notify the public and ask you to come down and testify in favor of the F-35. If Luke becomes a training base for the F-35, the aircraft should begin arriving in late summer or fall of 2013.

I also am a member of the Executive Committee of the Arizona League of Cities and Towns. The committee consists of 25 mayors from throughout the state and we meet on a regular basis to give

direction to the League staff. The League staff spends most of its time trying to protect the cities from bad legislation introduced at the start of the each session. It also lobbies the legislature on bills we'd like to see approved. In late August we will meet and determine which resolutions submitted by cities will be approved for the League to lobby in the next legislative session which begins in January. City staff currently is analyzing the suggested resolutions that have been submitted by various cities to determine which ones they will recommend Peoria support or oppose. I am on the Resolutions Committee which makes recommendations of approval or disapproval of the resolutions. During the League meeting in August, the League's mayors meet and make the final determination.

That's not a complete listing of what I'm doing during the dog days but as you can see, while it looks quiet there's really a lot going on.