

Candidate Statement

MIKE ZINKIN DISCUSSES WHY ORO VALLEY SHOULD NOT IMPOSE A PROPERTY TAX

“I pledge to reduce our costs to the “bare bone” before coming to the residents for any tax dollars.”

Mayor Loomis stated at his “State of The Town Speech” in October that Oro Valley needs a Property Tax. While it is true that revenues from Development Fees, Sales Taxes, and State Shared Revenues are down dramatically, do we really need a Property Tax, or any other tax for that matter, to balance our budget? My answer is NO.

There are many things that need to be evaluated and accomplished before I would ever ask for a penny from our citizens in the form of any tax. To start, balancing the budget is equating income to expenses, NOT robbing from the Contingency Fund and diminishing our assets. Due to the downturn in the economy, Oro Valley revenues are down. Oro Valley is not the only community facing this problem. It’s a reality for municipalities across our nation.

It’s easy to balance the budget when we are running a budget surplus. In lean economic times, like those we are experiencing today, tough decisions have to be made and a different thought process has to come forward. We need to think “outside the box”.

Here are some areas that I believe we need to consider:

Energy: Let’s reduce our “footprint”, reducing energy costs.

There’s plenty of waste when it comes to energy use in Oro Valley’s municipal facilities. Let’s cut back and save money at the same time. We could, for example:

- Install motion detectors so lights only burn only when needed. Right now our rest room lights burn “24/7”.
- Turn off computers at the end of the workday.
- Install “set back thermostats”
- Explore all avenues in the area in sustainable energy. (Interestingly enough Mr. Loomis voted against a Sustainability Commission

Stop giving Town money to non-profit organizations.

When we are running a surplus in our budget, then we can and should give to non-profit organizations. When we have a budget shortfall, however, “charity begins at home”. In addition, it would be good to see some “results” from some of our contributions. How about advising TREO that we will reward them with a contribution when they bring the Town an employer. Until that happens, we no longer afford to supplement them.

Keep closer vigilance on proceeds from surplus sales.

When the Police Department is involved in a "bust", the property sold from that "bust" becomes an asset of the Police Department. Currently, that money has become a slush fund for the Police Department to spend as needed. Public law usually restricts how this money can be spent. This money, however, should not be there for the unconditional use of Police Department Management. The Town should have the final say on how this money is spent. Many items now purchased through our Capital Improvements budget can be purchased from these monies.

Change the way Oro Valley compensates employee overtime.

Pay overtime as required by federal law. The Town is required to pay overtime only for any hours actually worked in excess of 40 hours per week. The Town's current policy is generous. It demands that overtime be paid even if an employee didn't actually work 40 hours that week. Under current Town policy, an employee can take a day off and still have that day count towards time worked for the purposes of overtime calculations. This wasteful spending has to stop! It makes no sense.

Reduce employee benefits

Currently the Town pays 100% of the employee health insurance and 75% of the dependent insurance. How much can be saved if we only contribute 85% of the employee and 50% of the dependant costs?

*Evaluate ways to reduce the Town's contribution to the employee retirement fund**Reduce the Town staffing*

The last thing I would want to do is lay people off. Doing this creates a domino effect on the entire economy; however, I would do this before coming to the citizens for any tax dollars. The last budget, created by the former Town Manger, David Andrews, called for a reduction in our staffing of 33 people.

Could we reassign employees? Instead of paying for a contractor to rehab Steam Pump Ranch, do we have employees that have the skills to perform that task?

As you can see, there are many items that need to be considered prior to considering a property tax. A recent article in the Explorer stated that, over the past 11 years, Oro Valley's costs have risen from \$1700.00 per resident to \$4600.00 per resident. Ouch! Do you think that government has become too expensive? I certainly do, and pledge to reduce our costs to the "bare bones" before coming to Oro Valley residents for increased tax dollars.