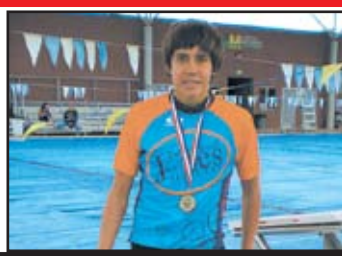


serving
Northern Pinal County
ARIZONA
Superstition Mountain Country



Presidents Day
Feb. 16th
NO SCHOOL



Not Your Typical 16-year-old
see Sports, page B-1

Apache Junction Gold Canyon NEWS 50¢

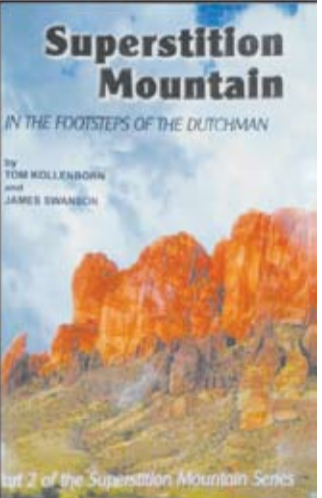
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CLASSIFIEDS
see Section B

Public Meetings
Apache Junction City Council regular meeting
7 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2009
300 E. Superstition Blvd.

AJFD Governing Board
6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, 2009
Fire District Boardroom
565 N. Idaho Road

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City Council To Consider Fee Waiver

Preliminary pizza/pub charges total \$52,948

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The City Council during its Tuesday, February 17, meeting will consider a development fee waiver for a proposed pizza/pub to be located in a 2,800-square-foot warehouse attached to the Dash-In Mini Mart.

Mehmood Mohiuddin is requesting the waiver for the property at 2341 N. Apache Trail. The appealed development fee amount is \$52,948. A public hearing will be held during the meeting.

On January 20, Mayor John

Insalaco and the City Council held a public hearing on the matter pursuant to the Development Fee Ordinance and unanimously directed staff to negotiate a development agreement with Mohiuddin, taking into consideration the waiver request. Two weeks ago, staff met with Mohiuddin and will now present Insalaco and the City Council with a development agreement as directed.

Brad Steinke, director of Development Services, said he could not reveal before the City Council meeting the new development fee.

"The City Council did go into executive session and the city attorney (Joel Stern) is working with the applicant on a development agreement," Steinke said. "The hope is that at the next council meeting that we will all be in agreement."

The contractor for the project is former councilman Joe Severs. He said during a recent Call to the Public that the development fees were too high. The council agreed. During the January 20 meeting, Mohiuddin explained he believed a reasonable development fee would be \$7,140,



Former councilman Joe Severs

a figure he arrived at by subtracting fees that benefits the likes of roads, open spaces and the library.

There is a second public hearing during the meeting regarding case AN-1-06, an annexation of approximately 123 acres of vacant private land at the southeast corner of West Southern Avenue and South Meridian Drive

Also on the City Council agenda, Library Director Pamela Loui will provide a presentation on the available youth programs and services at the city's library. And Kathleen Lewis and Nancy Schultz will discuss Packages from Home Program, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the U.S. men and women serving overseas.

New Presiding Judge Simply Loves To Work

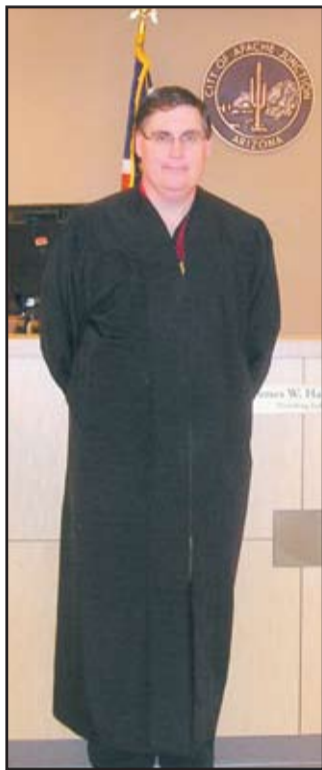
Hazel plans to 'improve' Apache Junction Municipal Court

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

For Apache Junction Municipal Court Presiding Judge James Hazel Jr. it's simple: He loves to work.

"I think people who work with me will tell you that," said Hazel, who took over for Judge David Alexander who retired in mid-January. "I have a good time. I enjoy doing court. I enjoy helping people and I enjoy talking. If you treat everyone with respect and understanding, they'll do the same to you. I've been very impressed with the people who come into court. They seem very respectful and they all want to get their cases resolved."

Hazel's court handles misdemeanor criminal cases, civil traffic violations and city code offenses that occur within the city limits of Apache Junction. Any court in Arizona can hear petitions for Order of Protections or



Judge James Hazel took over for David Alexander in mid-January.

type of civil matters (person versus person) heard in the Apache Junction Municipal Court. Apache Junction Municipal Court operates under the authority of the Arizona Supreme Court.

Before Hazel arrived in Apache Junction, the Gilbert resident served as a judge for six years in Mesa. The 1986 University of Toledo (Ohio) graduate said he applied for Alexander's position because "it was a wonderful opportunity."

"It's a challenge to be the presiding judge," Hazel said. "When I came out to meet Judge Alexander and his staff, I saw what great people they were and then it was an easy decision."

He said he believes Alexander did a "great job" and he doesn't plan on changing anything about the court but rather improve upon his predecessor's work.

"No matter what we can do, we can always work to improve," Hazel said.

He explained he plans on reducing paperwork by making electronic-based forms "so we don't have to print a piece of paper every time we do something. That'll save the taxpayers money, especially if we don't use multiparted, pre-printed forms. Those are very expensive."

"When I left Mesa, the division I worked in, we had no files. Everything was electronic," Hazel added. "If a person wrote a letter to the court, it would be scanned and then I'd read it on the computer and I'd respond to it electronically. Then somebody else would generate a piece of paper if we needed to."

Hazel said it would happen

"instantaneously."

"If you wrote a letter to the court, and I got it back and then ruled on it, it would be in the computer. So if you called and said, 'What happened?' then they could tell you. It sped up the process. So that's what we're working on here. We're working on a process so we can be more efficient and serve the taxpayers better."

Hazel, who has a wife and five children, will also work on improving the court's collections process.

"If people owe money, we want to find ways to make them pay it, even if it's in paper if we needed to."

see Hazel, A-5

16 Cats Seized From Home

Animals discovered after dead horse reported

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

Sixteen cats were seized from a home in the 500 block of South Starr Road January 30 after a neighbor reported seeing a dead horse laying in a corral for some time, police said.

"We received an anonymous call about a dead horse in a corral," said Sgt. Jeff Robinson, the Apache Junction Police Department's public information officer. "It had been there a couple of weeks."

An animal control officer made contact with the owner, a 68-year-old woman who has not been identified because she has not been formally

charged, and she reported the horse had been dead for a week and a half.

"She kicked dirt over it and put plywood on top of it," Robinson said. "She's elderly so she couldn't bury the horse."

She then asked the animal control officer to leave.

Animal control returned with the investigations unit and a search warrant to check the welfare of the two other horses and cats. A 37-year-old horse had to be euthanized on the spot and buried by road crews because of its ill health. A 32-year-old horse was left at the home.

The woman has 13 animal cruelty charges pending against her.

AJUSD Board To Select New Superintendent

Governing body decides not to renew Wyman's contract

The Apache Junction Unified School District Governing Board, meeting on Tuesday, February 10, declined to renew the 2009-10 contract of Superintendent of Schools Dr. Greg Wyman.

The vote was 3-2 following the conclusion of an executive session called for the purpose of contract discussions. Board President Wendy Moore cited

philosophical differences between the superintendent and the board concerning the future direction of the district.

Board members Moore, Linda Newkirk and Debbie Skinner voted not to renew. Lucy Young and Jeff Cranmer voted in favor of a new contract.

"The board will initiate measures to move forward with

the selection process of a new Superintendent of Schools in the coming days," Moore said.

"The board wishes to thank Dr. Wyman for his service and contribution to our district."

Dr. Wyman is completing his fourth year with the district as superintendent of schools. His contract will end June 30, 2009.

AJ Eyed For Old West Town

Band leader Pioneer Pepper leaving decision to investors

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

Pioneer Pepper, the band leader for the group the Sunset Pioneers, is eyeing an unspecified downtown Apache Junction location for Pepperton Pass Dinner Theatre and Wild West Town.

"I really would like to see it here," said Pepper, who performs at Gold Canyon United Methodist Church on Friday, February 20.

"But we're looking for investors and I value their opinion."

Pepper said he is also looking at space in Scottsdale.

The East Mesa resident describes his future project as a "unique and exciting Western entertainment adventure venue that includes several different opportunities of entertainment, eating, retail and conference venues."

Pepperton Pass will feature an Old West opera house dinner theater, a full Wild West town street, a dance and convention hall, gun fight arena, saloon, sweet and sundries shop, old-time photo

shop, blacksmith, gold panning, sheriff's office, print shop, church/school, recording studio, museum and other western-related retail shops.

"The most unique and exciting element of the Pepperton Pass Project is that the entire complex is indoors in a completely enclosed 'movie set sound stage'-type facility," said Pepper.

see Old West, A-8



The News Kidcast

Clear and cooler with highs in the upper 70s and lows around 50 degrees.

This week's Weather "Artoonist"
Brad Jimenez
Age 5
Avalon Elementary School

