

serving
Northern Pinal County
ARIZONA
Superstition Mountain Country



**'Wiener'
Mania
Dog
Racing**
see page A-8



**Baseball Team
Wins Home
Opener**
see Sports, B-1

APACHE JUNCTION
Gold Canyon

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NEWS

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Governor Visits



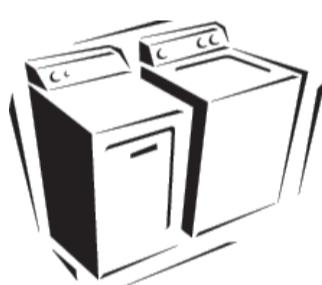
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'Incredible' Grand Canyon



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Waste Event



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Time Out



see Sports, page B-1

Public Meetings

AJUSD Governing Board (school board) regular meeting
6 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, 2010
1575 W. Southern Ave.

Apache Junction Planning & Zoning work session
7 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, 2010
300 E. Superstition Blvd.

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Council OK's Sales Tax Extension

Council unanimously approves six-year extension; manager warns action is not a cure-all

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The Apache Junction City Council voted unanimously at its regularly scheduled Tuesday, March 2, meeting to extend the two-tenths of one percent (.2 percent) sales tax. Vice Mayor R.E. Eck reiterated that this is not a new tax, but an extension of one that was scheduled to sunset later this year.

"We're trying to use whatever means we can to keep our head above water," Eck said about the City's financial situation. "I think it's very minimal—just about as minimal as you can get."

City Manager George Hoffman repeated the importance of renewing the sales tax.

"A month ago, I asked that you consider a means of addressing the known \$1.1 mil-

lion shortfall in State Shared Revenues which will occur for our next fiscal year beginning in July," Hoffman said.

"Specifically, I noted that the two-tenths of a cent utilized for the past 10 years for capital projects is set to expire on September 1 of this year and asked whether you would consider renewing it for the operating budget."

Two weeks prior to the March 2 meeting, the City Council gave direction to staff to prepare the ordinance.

Hoffman said a local paper recently made three public record requests with East Valley communities to better understand how much taxpayer money is being utilized for learning and lobbying. The newspaper's public records request pertained to members of city councils and city manager's offices.

City two-tenths of 1 percent tax

- Tax on \$5 purchase = 1¢
- Tax on \$10 purchase = 2¢
- Tax on \$50 purchase = 10¢
- Tax on \$100 purchase = 20¢

The article stated, "Mesa city officials asked to be reimbursed for \$31,009 worth of travel, lodging and registration fees for the last three months of 2009, records received show. Town of Queen Creek officials used up \$6,181.75 in the last three months of 2009 for, among other things, meals, parking, taxis, lodging and airfare for mostly a National League of Cities Congress of Cities and Exposition in San Antonio, Texas, records received show."

City of Apache Junction officials were not reimbursed for anything in that time period, records received show."

He cited a separate article that stated that Apache Junction has no employees who receive a car allowance.

"These two articles suggest what you on the council know to be true: this organization made the cuts described by the media, and we've made hundreds of others," Hoffman said.

"Those cuts resulted in a \$5.6 million reduction and the loss of over 30 positions in the last two years."

Hoffman said he heard in the afternoon of Tuesday, March

2, that in one of the proposed budget packages coming out soon, there is a transfer of \$22 million in State Shared Sales Tax from the city/town share into the county portion.

"Apache Junction's reduction would be \$154,077," he said. "The numbers can roll off the tongue easily. But \$154,000 is several patrol officers. It's patrol vehicles. It's library hours. This \$154,000 is in addition to the \$1.1 million reduction that is a certainty. The State's decisions will have a great impact on our future budgets and those impacts are largely unknown at this point."

"I'll repeat a comment for the public that I shared with you (during Monday, March 1, work session)," he said. "One of my biggest concerns is that our community might think that if the two tenths were to be retained, that services would be protected. If the two-tenths were to be passed, it might generate about \$740,000 for

One Arrested In Shooting

Illies found in Glendale area; Larson still at large

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

A man wanted in connection with a February 17 shooting and aggravated assault in the 1500 block of South Lawson was arrested Tuesday, March 2, police said.

Stephen J. Illies Jr., 23, was taken into custody in the Glendale/Phoenix area, according to Capt. Tom Kelly of the Apache Junction Police Department.

"A joint investigation was coordinated with Mesa, Glendale, Phoenix and Apache Junction police departments," Kelly said.

"Surveillance and a perimeter team was established around the targeted location as investigators prepared a search warrant for the residence. A short while later surveillance officers noted several subjects rapidly exiting the target location. All subjects were subsequently detained and Illies was arrested with-



Stephen J. Illies Jr.

out further incident."

Illies was later transported to the Maricopa County Detention Center for further processing.

According to Kelly, a 25-year-old man was shot at a residence in the 1500 Block of South Lawson February 17. The victim told police that one of two men approached him at which time an altercation ensued. One man attacked the victim and the other began to strike the victim with a handgun. Moments later the victim was



Joshua L. Larson

shot and the offenders fled the area.

A second man is still wanted in connection with the crime. Joshua L. Larson, 26, is described as 5-foot 8-inches tall, 160 pounds, with brown hair and blue eyes. He is being sought for aggravated assault.

Anyone who may have any information on the whereabouts of this subject is requested to call the AJPD Criminal Investigation Division at (480) 982-8260.

State Parks Board To Meet In AJ

10 a.m. Wednesday, March 17, in City Council Chambers

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The Arizona State Parks Board will meet in Apache Junction's City Council Chambers at 10 a.m. Wednesday, March 17.

This is its regularly scheduled monthly meeting. The agenda was not available as of press time, but City of Apache Junction Economic Development Director Steve Filipowicz said he believes it's a positive move that the board accepted the City's invitation to meet there.

"It illustrates the growing relationship between the City of Apache Junction, the community of Apache Junction and the state parks staff and outreach to their board, as well as proximity to Lost Dutchman State Park," Filipowicz said.

Lost Dutchman State Park is slated to close June 3 due to State budget cuts. It is one of 13 state parks that the board voted unanimously to shutter in a phased series of closures that began February 22.

The group also includes Tonto Natural Bridge State Park near Payson, Alamo Lake State Park in Wenden, Picacho Peak State Park and

Red Rock State Park in Sedona.

The nine parks that will remain open are ones that generate the most revenue back into the parks' operating revolving funds. The parks that will remain open include Buckskin Mountain State Park in Parker, Catalina State Park near Tucson, Cattail Cove State Park in Lake Havasu City, Dead Horse Ranch State Park in Cottonwood, Fool Hollow Lake Recreation Area in Show Low, Kartchner Caverns State Park in Benson, Lake Havasu State Park, Patagonia Lake State Park and Slide Rock State Park in Sedona.

However, the Arizona State Parks Board has agreed to make capital improvements to Lost Dutchman State Park, which is a positive sign, Filipowicz said.

"Their decision to reallocate capital dollars into our park—if they don't get swept by the legislature—is probably the key item to making it economically self-sustainable," he said.

For more information about the Arizona State Parks Board, visit www.pr.state.az.us/board/index.html.

Spring Break Opportunities

Break for AJUSD is March 15-19

The City of Apache Junction Parks and Recreation Department is offering a series of low-cost activities for children to partake in during the Apache Junction Unified School District's spring break from March 15 to March 19.

Check out the below programs that will solve your child's spring break boredom.

Creative Kid's Workshops are fun classes that include your imagination to create fun projects. There will be four classes held over the break with different class themes. All classes held at the Multi-Generational Center. Class are for ages 6-12 year olds. Each class cost \$10. Birdhouse feeders: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Tuesday, March 16; Wacky Science: 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday, March 17; Food Creations: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. Thursday, March 18; and Kites from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. Thursday, March 18.

Eric Carle Creations is a two-day class in which children will paint and create pictures using the Eric Carle method.

see **Spring Break**, A-9



An Apache Junction child partakes in an art class during spring break.

The News Kidcast

Mostly sunny with highs in the lower 70's and lows around 50 degrees.

This week's Weather "Artoonist"

Karli Ruhnau

Age 5

Desert Vista Elementary School

