

serving
Northern Pinal County
ARIZONA
Superstition Mountain Country



Artists Wanted!
see Page A-7



More Little League All-Stars
see Sports, B-1

APACHE JUNCTION NEWS

Gold Canyon

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In observance of the
4th of July
The NEWS office will be closed
Mon., July 5th

Inside The News

Money Saving Monday



The Monthly Coupon Page
Only In The News see page A-3

Entertainment Classes



see page A-6

Public Meetings

- Apache Junction City Council work session canceled**
7 p.m. Monday, July 5, 2010
300 E. Superstition Blvd.
- Apache Junction City Council special budget hearing**
7 p.m. Tuesday, July 6, 2010
300 E. Superstition Blvd.
- Apache Junction City Council regular meeting**
7 p.m. Tuesday, July 6, 2010
300 E. Superstition Blvd.
- Pinal County Board of Supervisors**
9:30 a.m. Wednesday, July 7, 2010
Administration Building A, 31 N. Pinal St., Florence
- AJFD Governing Board**
6 p.m. Wednesday, July 7, 2010
Fire District Boardroom 565 N. Idaho Road

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Overnight Road Closures Set

Construction is on S. Ironwood

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The Public Works Department advises motorists that Ironwood Drive/Southern Avenue and Ironwood Drive/16th Avenue intersection closures will be in effect Tuesday, July 6, through Wednesday, July 7. Workers will finish grade paving to Ironwood Drive only at night between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m., so drivers will have access during the day to the roads. Southbound lanes will be paved on July 6. Traffic will not have access across fresh asphalt during closure times. Please see detour map for alternate routes. Northbound lanes will be paved on July 7. Traffic will not have access across fresh asphalt during closure times. Please see detour map for alternate routes. According to City officials, night time closure will have less of an impact on the driving public. Closing half of the intersections will allow the contractor

to pave through the intersections in a continuous pass, ensuring a better quality finish and product. School is starting soon. City officials say completing this project before the start of school is a high priority for the contractor and the City of Apache Junction. Traffic barricading is in place throughout the construction area to assist with traffic flow and provide safety to the public and the construction workers. Local access for traffic will be maintained for the duration of the project. Traffic barricading is necessary to control traffic flow and speed through the construction site to ensure safety of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. The barricading is monitored constantly by the contractor and by the City, and changes are made as needed throughout the workday. For further information motorists and local residents should contact the Public Works Department at (480) 982-1055.

IRONWOOD DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS
PROJECT: PW2009-13/14

INTERSECTION CLOSURES:
TUESDAY, JULY 6TH: 7PM - 7AM
WEDNESDAY, JULY 7TH: 7PM - 7AM

School Board OKs Override Election

Will be on Nov. 2 ballot

By Betty Swanson
The News

Against a backdrop of having to consider a 2010-2011 school district budget that was slashed \$4.5 million from last year, the Apache Junction Unified School District Governing Board members voted unanimously Tuesday, June 29, to put a 10 percent M&O Override budget question to voters on the November 2 election ballot. This will be the school district's fourth attempt in three years to gain local voter authorization to levy for the override funding. Last November's effort saw the question go down to defeat by a mere 49 votes. A financial boost from M&O Override funding was first approved by AJUSD constituents in 1999, and then renewed in 2003. Two unsuccessful efforts in 2007



School Board President Wendy Moore

and the one in 2009 necessitated the phase-out of those monies that was completed in this budget year, making a financial situation already challenged by declining student enrollment and decreased state funding even more difficult. During his presentation, Associate Superintendent Jim Lockwood called the 2010-2011 budgetary proposal "a

Voter Registration
11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, July 12, and 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, July 19, at the VFW Post 7968, 250 S. Phelps Drive, Apache Junction.
For more information, call (480) 671-6239.

numerical representation of many budgetary and educational challenges facing the district." He said that the necessary cuts were made with an eye toward providing the best educational environment and learning opportunities for students. He related that, faced with the necessity of cutting \$4.5 million to balance this upcoming year's budget, the decision was made to close two existing schools—Gold Canyon Elementary and Thunder Mountain Middle schools—

cut approximately 80 staff members districtwide, institute another employee salary freeze for next year, reduce school and departmental budgets, and utilize \$300,000 in health-care reserves and \$1.2 million in capital carry-forward funds. This year's budget is \$27,823,655, down from last year's number of \$33,390,237, a drop of approximately 16 percent. Lockwood said that assessed valuation of the property within AJUSD has fallen nearly \$1 million, from \$616 million to \$517 million this year, due to the faltering real estate market and the drop in home prices. This reflects a drop of 15 to 18 percent. When contacted after the meeting, Lockwood commented that he felt that the school district's 2010-2011 tax rate would rise this year by approximately 35 to 40 cents, about an 8-percent rise from last year's \$4.24 rate. Lockwood pointed out that, for the last 13 years, the tax rate has dropped each year; this is the first raise in 14 years. The primary rate will go up about 20 cents, primarily because the qualifying tax rate was raised by 20 cents this year by the Arizona State Legislature, as part of the shift of the property tax burden to local taxpayers, he explained. Despite the phase-out of the nonrenewed override levy, the secondary rate will rise approximately 18 cents due to the retirement schedule for bonds sold in the past. He noted that there were no new bond sales this year, but that the drop in Assessed Valuation within the district necessitates a rise in this rate to make up the difference. During the budget explanation to the board, Lockwood seemed to set the stage for the

Special City Budget Hearing Tuesday

Public hearing starts at 7 p.m.

By Christina Fuoco-Karasinski
The News

The Apache Junction City Council will hold a special public hearing at 7 p.m. Tuesday, July 6, in chambers to allow residents to voice their opinion on the fiscal year 2010-2011 budget. Apache Junction City Manager George Hoffman presented a draft general fund budget proposal for fiscal year 2010-2011 to the City Council on Monday, June 14, that calls for no layoffs or pay reductions. The general fund, which makes up 55.4 percent of the \$41,250,360 total budget, shows a \$1,803,990 decrease from fiscal year 2009-2010, according to finance director Donna Meinerts. During his prepared speech at the work session, Hoffman touched on revenues and expenditures; the City's level of

bonded indebtedness; what's on the horizon that can impact the City's budget?; public safety/city attorney/court employees; roads; investments/maintenance for the long run; grants and Superstition Vistas. "What we do know closer to home is that that our revenues have fallen dramatically in past years and that we've had to cut expenditures accordingly," Hoffman said. "We're cautiously optimistic that our sales tax numbers are beginning to bottom out. We do know that, because they're lagged, stated shared income tax will continue to decline, both for fiscal year 2010-11 and fiscal year 2011-12." For the current budget, the City budgeted almost \$3 million of its savings, Hoffman said. "It is our belief at this time that we will actually end up spending little—if any—of those savings," he said. "This



George Hoffman City Manager

budget again proposes the utilization of savings; we will again seek to spend as little of those savings as we are able." Hoffman said the City does not have a large mortgage payment. The pool/park/skate park, Multi-Generational Center, City Hall and Rodeo Grounds will be paid off this fiscal year. "Remaining is a small amount for the Public Safety building; that debt will be

paid of in 2012," he said. "Also remaining is the Library." The City has no road bonds, although it does have an inter-governmental agreement with the county for Ironwood Drive widening/bridge work with payment starting in 2015. There are several factors that could influence the budget in the future. • San Tan Valley—if it incorporates, there will be a \$1.6 million decrease annually or

The News Kidcast
Possible thundershowers Thursday & Friday. Highs near 110 and lows near 80.

This week's Weather "Artoonist"
James Stump
Age 6
Desert Vista Elementary School