

For Immediate release

Commentary by Councilmember Matt Orlando

May 23, 2008

We are nearing the end of a very long and difficult budget process for the City of Chandler. The City's fiscal year begins each July 1, and staff has been busy working on the current budget since the middle of last year. We took input from residents during a January public meeting, and the Council also added comments during a daylong review of the budget with staff in April. In fact, the session with members of the public was one of our most well-attended budget meetings in recent memory. The thoughtful comments we received that evening went a long way in developing decisions about where to distribute funds.

It has been a challenging ride given the shaky economic climate we find ourselves in. The good news is that this budget will not cut any programs or services to residents. Chandler is a community that prides itself on providing excellent amenities to residents. Whether it is the maintenance of streets and parks, the recreational programs we offer or ensuring you have safe drinking water each time you turn on the tap, the delivery of these services is our No. 1 priority.

In fact, our own residents validated this in a scientific survey performed just last year that showed Chandler ranked first among larger cities in the nation in the satisfaction citizens have in terms of the services provided for their tax dollar. As a City of a quarter million people, Chandler's municipal employees aid this community in substantial ways. Consider that in fiscal year 2007-08 they will help to check out more than 2.2 million pieces of material at our libraries, go on more than 180,000 public safety calls, maintain more than 1,000 acres of developed parks and keep more than 1,000 miles of water lines in good repair.

And while we will continue to deliver, we have had to make some adjustments to ensure we remain financially sound. No new employee positions will be added next year from the general fund. Additionally, the City has eliminated eight unfilled positions, saving more than a half-million dollars in wages and benefits. We have also delayed a number of capital projects. All told, we have identified more than \$3.5 million in savings. These are non-critical projects that will be deferred a year or more until we are certain we will have the revenues to pay for ongoing maintenance and operational costs associated with the projects.

The City Manager is also taking a hard look at current operations to see where we may become leaner. That will include ways to deliver services more efficiently, setting

priorities on when capital projects are undertaken and streamlining the budget process itself.

Chandler's 2008-09 budget will again exceed one billion dollars. It is critical that we take the utmost care to ensure we are good stewards of those dollars. I encourage residents to better familiarize themselves with the City budget and where your tax dollars are spent. You can review a draft of the budget document on the City's Web site at [www.chandleraz.gov](http://www.chandleraz.gov). While we may still be in the midst of an economic downturn, I hope you will agree that Chandler continues to deliver a very solid financial plan for residents and for our future.