



COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

PIMA COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL CENTER
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C. H. HUCKELBERRY
County Administrator

April 2, 2004

Steven Hulland, Sr., Fire Chief
Elephant Head Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.
P.O. Box 6385
Amado, Arizona 85645-9561

Re: Your Letter to Sharon Bronson, Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Regarding the County May 2004 Bond Election

Dear Mr. Hulland:

Chair Sharon Bronson asked me to respond to your letter. In your letter you raised questions regarding the Public Safety Communications System, particularly with respect to our affiliation and integration of a Regional Public Safety Communications System with private or volunteer organizations. It is perfectly permissible for the County to enter into agreements with those who provide a form of public service, such as a volunteer fire agency, to obtain or borrow equipment. The County may lend the equipment by any number of arrangements. The County may also contract to expand public services through this equipment. Intergovernmental agreements are between governmental entities as defined by state law. Therefore, that is the simple reason the County cannot enter into an intergovernmental County mutual aid agreement with volunteer fire organizations.

Grant monies are obtained by any number of police and fire agencies in this state every week. It is important that all agencies diligently pursue federal and state grants for these same purposes in order to minimize the costs of providing a system on the local taxpayer. Therefore, the potential unfunded cost is of little concern.

Regarding other counties, yes, Pima County can enter into an intergovernmental agreement with Santa Cruz, Cochise and Pinal counties. Further, it was the desire of the Bond Advisory Committee to expand the applicability to even Southern Arizona. Attached please find a description of how the project will be administered and its specific benefits and goals as now enumerated in the Bond Implementation Plan.

Steve Hulland

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May 2004 Bond Election**

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Regarding the issue of open space, the discussion regarding open space acquisition has been an ongoing matter for nearly 30 years. The first County bond issue in 1974 led to the creation of Catalina State Park. The present emphasis for Question 1, which is the open space question, began in 1998. There have been nearly six years of meetings regarding a Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and the importance of the Plan in complying with the Federal Endangered Species Act.

I hope the information contained in this letter and attached to it answers your questions regarding the bond issue, specifically Questions 1 and 3. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

CHH/jj

Attachments

- c: The Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
- The Honorable Clarence Dupnik, Pima County Sheriff
- Chief Bradley Gagnepain, Operations Bureau
- Larry Hecker, Chair, Pima County Bond Advisory Committee



ELEPHANT HEAD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT
INC

March 26, 2004

Ms. Sharon Bronson, Chair
Pima County Board of Supervisors
District 3
130 West Congress Street, 11 Floor
Tucson, Arizona 85701-1317

Dear Sharon:

On May 18, 2004, I and every other citizen of Pima County will have a chance to vote for or against the 2004 Bond Proposal. As with many citizens, I have not made up my mind concerning this bond issue. However, considering the poor state of our counties economy and the potential long-term debt that this bond issue will create for taxpayers, I am leaning towards a NO vote. I have several concerns with the bond issue:

Question number three concerning **Public Safety and Justice Facilities:**

In his March 11, 2004 letter to me, Captain Paul Wilson of the Pima County Sheriff's Department stated that the project will provide voice and data communications for nineteen fire and nine law enforcement agencies and that these agencies unanimously supported the public safety communications project. Captain Wilson further stated that the general obligation bonds, if authorized would not exceed a principal amount of \$185,500,000 (\$105,000 of which will be used for the Regional Communications System).

- I could not attend any of the planning meetings and have not tendered my support for the Regional Communications System. I know of at least one other Volunteer Fire Department that has not attended any of the meetings or given its support. How does the Sheriff's Department figure it has "Unanimous Support"? They may have had the support of everyone at the meetings, but that does not mean they have unanimous support from nineteen fire agencies.
- I have serious concerns with the Sheriff's Department becoming the lead agency for this program. The Sheriff's Department spent many millions of dollars, including cost overruns; to put their existing communications system in place and it still does not offer the quality communications that they envisioned.
 - What has changed that will convince me, or any citizen, to give them another try?
 - How will the county ensure that they take all agencies, public, private, industrial and volunteer into account and ensure that the system serves every emergency response agency?
 - Who will pay for the radios that the users of this system will need. Elephant Head VFD alone would need at least 22 radios.
 - Who will determine each agency needs, the agency or some "higher" authority? I do not believe the Sheriff's or any other county or city department should have the ability to determine our needs.

In his December 23, 2004 Memorandum to you and the members of the board, Mr. C. H. Huckelberry detailed his recommendations concerning the Regional Communications System. Among his recommendations was that "all Public Safety Agencies in Pima County, including Tribal Agencies, will execute intergovernmental agreements in which they commit to participation in the system and do not operate any other communications systems that will deter from or otherwise impede the operation of the unified, regional system, etc." Mr. Huckelberry goes on to say "participating public safety agencies will commit to an aggressive and continuing effort to obtain federal and state grants for this purpose." And finally, Mr. Huckelberry, in his Recommendation 1 concerning the Regional Public Safety Communications System desires to place some stringent provisos and conditions on participating agencies – yet leaves out volunteer, private and industrial agencies, while inviting participation from area counties, state and federal agencies.

- How can Elephant Head, or any other all – volunteer, private or industrial fire department sign an intergovernmental agreement? The Pima County Attorney has advised the Pima Fire Chiefs Association that volunteer, industrial and/or private fire departments cannot sign an intergovernmental agreement dealing with the countywide mutual aid agreement. I must then assume that the same will hold true for the Regional Communications System.
- Finding grant monies for any emergency response item is very hard and the available funding is limited. How can Mr. Huckelberry, the Board of Supervisors or anyone else expect participating agencies to make an

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aggressive and continuing effort to obtain federal and state grants for this purpose when there are many other needs that are just as important?

- Mr. Huckleberry suggests that title to modems and handheld equipment could be passed to participating jurisdictions pursuant to their execution of the intergovernmental agreements associated with the Regional Communications System. How can this be if, according to the county attorney's office, some participating agencies cannot even sign such an agreement?
- Private, volunteer and industrial fire departments serve a large segment of Pima County, just as they serve citizens in Santa Cruz, Pinal and Cochise counties – are they too going to be excluded?


Although I was not able to attend any of the Regional Communications Planning Meetings, I did receive several briefs from folks who were there. Unless some of the issues that I have brought up are adequately addressed, I cannot offer my support for the Regional Communications System portion of the bond issue. Further, I believe that I should advise the citizens of my community and the members of our volunteer fire department to vote against the bond issue – unless we receive assurances that our agency and other s like it as well as the citizens we serve will not be left out of the system.

I have kept my comments in this letter focused on the public safety issue – specifically the need for a regional communications system. If time permits, I will address some of my other concerns with the upcoming bond issue in a future letter.

Suffice to say, I have serious concerns about the eventual cost of the Open Spaces portion of the bond issue. I do not believe the issues have been properly researched or presented to the citizens of our county in a way that will allow them to make a logical and reasonable choice. I believe far too much of the bond money will be used for projects within the City of Tucson and other jurisdictions that have their own taxing authority. I believe there are too many “open ended” items on the bond issue – that is, the funds are earmarked for a specific project, thus leaving the door open for future boards and or county staff to spend bond monies for “other” items.

Frankly, should this bond issue be passed I believe it will financially strap the county for many decades to come – despite the assurances of Mr. Huckelberry, yourself, members of the board and many others. There are just too many questions that have not been answered.

Sincerely,


Steven R. Hulland Sr.
Fire Chief

CC: Members, Elephant Head Volunteer Fire Department
Tilda Martinez, Fire Chief, Arivaca Volunteer Fire Department
Alan Karnas, Fire Chief, Helmet Peak Volunteer Fire Department
Jim Bush, Ajo Gibson Volunteer Fire Department
Captain Paul Wilson, Technical Services Division, PCSO
Chuck Huckelberry, Pima County Administrator
Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors