

Editor, Yuma Sun:

Budget season is always a special and fun time at One City Plaza. One never knows what new and imaginative ways that creative cabal on the 3rd Floor will contrive in order to justify their ever deepening reach into the pockets of the good folks of Yuma. This year did not disappoint.

At the beginning of the time-honored ritual a Yuma Sun editorial put forward a challenge of sorts, asking readers to put themselves in the council's place and what they would do to produce a balanced budget that was fraught with uncontrollable dilemmas (unfunded public safety retirement, state sweeping of HURF funds and federal minimum wage mandates) thrust upon them through no fault of their own.

Rather than what one would do, the more relevant question is what one would "not" do. None of the hand wringing crises were surprises. To the contrary, they were known quantities. Yet, undeterred they undauntedly heaped multiple millions more in additional bond debt on the backs of the taxpayers (absent voter approval), for projects that are best described as "nice to have."

Space will not permit a complete enumeration of the financial foibles of the public treasury guardians, i.e., uncollected loans (now exceeding \$2 million), the awarding of more than \$3 million in restricted 2% hospitality tax funds for riverfront development that after a decade has never found its way into any construction project - the list goes on.

This year was exceptionally unique, however, and all employers in Yuma, Arizona will be "shocked" (to borrow from a speaker addressing the council) to learn that the employer portion of health insurance provided to their employees is not considered to be part of an overall compensation package; so says the city administration intelligentsia.

These guys crack me up. In out-and-out contradiction to a prior acknowledgement that any change embellishing city council member's compensation would require voter approval, now in Oceania newspeak (George Orwell must be smiling) our betters inform us, "Health insurance benefits are not taxable by the IRS and because of that, we came to the conclusion it is not considered compensation. "We came to the conclusion." One must ask the identity of "we?" Moreover, did "we" arrive at that well reasoned conclusion at a posted public meeting as an agenda item?

So, in addition to an earlier City Charter violation awarding themselves elected official's retirement (absent voter approval), this usurpation of charter authority bestows on the "part-time" position of city council member the very health insurance that is denied to other part-time city employees - not to mention the citizens they presumably represent.

Phil Clark