

## Avondale lays off 20, shelves projects and programs

by **David Madrid** - Dec. 8, 2008 06:20 PM  
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To address an anticipated \$3 million budget shortfall next fiscal year, Avondale will eliminate 47 positions, which includes laying off 20 people, and will delay the operation of a new fire station, among other cuts.

"Due to continuing poor performance in the economy, which has severely affected sales-tax revenue collections, it is necessary to make further cuts to our budget," City Manager Charlie McClendon said.

The 20 employees who will be laid off received 30-day notices Monday.

"We had people from virtually every department of the city," McClendon said, referring to where the layoffs occurred.

Of the other 27 positions, 12 were already vacant and 15 were fire positions that would have staffed the postponed fire station, McClendon said.

The laid-off employees will receive a minimum two weeks base pay, an additional one week of base pay for every full year of consecutive service up to 12 weeks, 90 days of health and dental benefits and outplacement services.

The proposal follows a previous \$3.2 million reduction in the city's 2008-09 budget.

The city will save about \$1.1 million by delaying the 2010 opening of a new fire station at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale. The fire station will be built as planned and Avondale police and the college will use the facility, but fire services will be delayed.

Avondale, Litchfield Park and EMCC are partnering on the \$6 million, 18,200-square-foot, public-safety building. The project, which is in the design phase, will house a fire station, an Avondale police substation and emergency-medical-technician classrooms.

Litchfield Park residents will continue to receive fire and emergency medical coverage from Rural/Metro Corp.

Other plans include:

- Converting the Cashion Senior Center into a police substation and consolidating senior-services programs at the Avondale Community Center in Old Town. McClendon said this will allow the city to delay expanding the main police station. The Cashion facility offers 2,000 square feet of office space, which the city needs for police.
- Temporarily suspending major special events.
- Temporarily suspending the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program. The city will honor the neighborhood petitions that are already in the pipeline, but it won't accept additional requests.

The city's financial situation is further complicated by preliminary estimates from the Arizona Revenue Department that state-shared revenues for cities and towns will be down by nearly \$100 million in fiscal year 2009-10.

That comes on top of sharply declining revenues from local sales taxes.

"We believe that our estimates for the rest of this year and for next year are very realistic, and it assumes that we continue to lag behind what we have received in revenues in previous years," McClendon said. "So we believe that barring a significant worsening of the problem of the economy from what it is today, that this will cover it. If that's true, if our projections prove to be true, there won't be any further layoffs."