

## Phoenix Councilman DiCiccio sees no conflict of interest in freeway route

by **Scott Wong** - Dec. 19, 2009 07:00 AM  
The Arizona Republic

He's been consistent since the topic was broached during the fall campaign.

Phoenix City Councilman **Sal DiCiccio** said he has no conflict of interest related to his aggressive efforts to move a proposed freeway from Ahwatukee Foothills onto tribal land.

DiCiccio, who runs a small commercial real-estate firm, is leasing 75 acres from the Gila River Indian Community at 40th Street and Pecos Road. It's a prime piece of property along the proposed South Mountain Freeway alignment.

But DiCiccio contends there is no benefit to him from moving the freeway: Shifting the route south onto tribal land still would require the freeway to pass by the councilman's property to link with Loop 202.

City Attorney **Gary Verburg**, too, has advised the councilman that everything appears aboveboard and that he sees no conflict.

That's why DiCiccio's actions this week are so baffling.

DiCiccio declared a potential conflict of interest on two council votes relating to upgrades of a park-and-ride facility at, you guessed it, 40th Street and Pecos Road. Right across the street from DiCiccio's 75 acres.

This time, the councilman said, Verburg advised him to recuse himself and declare a possible conflict on anything having to do with physical improvements to the area. The difference between a park-and-ride and, let's say, a freeway is that DiCiccio had a direct vote on the carpool facility, he said. He doesn't have a vote on the location of the freeway.

"Do I think I have a conflict on that (the park-and-ride)? More than likely not," DiCiccio said. "But I'm doing this just to be safe."

\* \* \*

Thanks in part to DiCiccio's "persistent work," negotiations are moving forward between the state and Gila River Indian Community to relocate the freeway.

Gov. **Jan Brewer** has given her "enthusiastic

Advertisement



**Get Health Insurance As Low as \$49/mo**

**Get Your Free Quote Now & Save!**

Get The Inside Scoop At:  
**HealthQuoteInsiders.com**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

support" to the talks, as have U.S. Rep. **Harry Mitchell** and Arizona House Majority Leader **John McComish**, an Ahwatukee resident like DiCiccio.

The current proposed alignment would run through a ridge of South Mountain, continuing along Pecos Road through Ahwatukee neighborhoods.

But officials from the tribe, Arizona Department of Transportation and Maricopa Association of Governments, along with DiCiccio and representatives for Congressmen **Ed Pastor** and Mitchell, met last week to discuss starting negotiations to move the freeway route south.

"I pledge the full engagement of the Arizona Department of Transportation in working with you to consider the opportunities that may exist with the economic development potential of this much-needed transportation corridor," Brewer wrote in a letter to the tribe's governor, **William R. Rhodes**.

"While there is much work still to be done regarding final alignment of the route," she added, "I am pleased to know that your team is part of the conversation and that there is a path forward for ongoing talks about how the Community might consider getting

involved."

Added McComish, in a letter to ADOT Director **John Halikowski**, "Thanks primarily to the persistent work of Councilman Sal DiCiccio, it appears that the Gila River Indian Community is open to exploring an alternative on their land."

**Scott Wong covers Phoenix City Hall. Reach him at [scott.wong@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:scott.wong@arizonarepublic.com) or follow him online at [phxbeat.azcentral.com](http://phxbeat.azcentral.com).**



But DiCiccio contends there is no benefit to him from moving the freeway: Shifting the route south onto tribal land still would require the freeway to pass by the councilman's property to link with Loop 202.

Advertisement



**Get Health Insurance As Low as \$49/mo**

**Get Your Free Quote Now & Save!**

Get The Inside Scoop At:  
**HealthQuoteInsiders.com**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

City Attorney **Gary Verburg**, too, has advised the councilman that everything appears aboveboard and that he sees no conflict.

That's why DiCiccio's actions this week are so baffling.

DiCiccio declared a potential conflict of interest on two council votes relating to upgrades of a park-and-ride facility at, you guessed it, 40th Street and Pecos Road. Right across the street from DiCiccio's 75 acres.

This time, the councilman said, Verburg advised him to recuse himself and declare a possible conflict on anything having to do with physical improvements to the area. The difference between a park-and-ride and, let's say, a freeway is that DiCiccio had a direct vote on the carpool facility, he said. He doesn't have a vote on the location of the freeway.

"Do I think I have a conflict on that (the park-and-ride)? More than likely not," DiCiccio said. "But I'm doing this just to be safe."

\* \* \*

Thanks in part to DiCiccio's "persistent

work," negotiations are moving forward between the state and Gila River Indian Community to relocate the freeway.

Gov. **Jan Brewer** has given her "enthusiastic support" to the talks, as have U.S. Rep. **Harry Mitchell** and Arizona House Majority Leader **John McComish**, an Ahwatukee resident like DiCiccio.

The current proposed alignment would run through a ridge of South Mountain, continuing along Pecos Road through Ahwatukee neighborhoods.

But officials from the tribe, Arizona Department of Transportation and Maricopa Association of Governments, along with DiCiccio and representatives for Congressmen **Ed Pastor** and Mitchell, met last week to discuss starting negotiations to move the freeway route south.

"I pledge the full engagement of the Arizona Department of Transportation in working with you to consider the opportunities that may exist with the economic development potential of this much-needed transportation corridor," Brewer wrote in a letter to the tribe's governor, **William R. Rhodes**.

"While there is much work still to be done

Advertisement



**Get Health Insurance As Low as \$49/mo**

**Get Your Free Quote Now & Save!**

Get The Inside Scoop At:  
**HealthQuoteInsiders.com**

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

regarding final alignment of the route," she added, "I am pleased to know that your team is part of the conversation and that there is a path forward for ongoing talks about how the Community might consider getting involved."

Added McComish, in a letter to ADOT Director **John Halikowski**, "Thanks primarily to the persistent work of Councilman Sal DiCiccio, it appears that the Gila River Indian Community is open to exploring an alternative on their land."

**Scott Wong covers Phoenix City Hall.**  
Reach him at [scott.wong@arizonarepublic.com](mailto:scott.wong@arizonarepublic.com) or follow him online at [phxbeat.azcentral.com](http://phxbeat.azcentral.com).

Copyright © 2010, azcentral.com. All rights reserved. Users of this site agree to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy/Your California Privacy Rights](#)

Advertisement



**Get Health Insurance As Low as \$49/mo**

**Get Your Free Quote Now & Save!**

Get The Inside Scoop At:  
[HealthQuoteInsiders.com](http://HealthQuoteInsiders.com)

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™