

## Phoenix Councilman Michael Johnson calls Councilman Sal DiCiccio a hypocrite

3 comments by [Scott Wong](#) - Feb. 5, 2010 12:55 PM  
 The Arizona Republic

As the Phoenix City Council's most vocal and perhaps controversial personality, **Sal DiCiccio** recently has picked public fights with Mayor **Phil Gordon**, city management and employee unions.

He's continued to beat the drum in public [meetings](#), TV and radio interviews, even on Facebook, highlighting figures that show the average cost of a Phoenix employee, including salaries and benefits, is nearly \$100,000 a year. And DiCiccio has talked relentlessly about outsourcing print shop, auto mechanics and other city jobs to pare back the payroll.

One colleague has heard enough.

Councilman **Michael Johnson**, a staunch union supporter, this week called DiCiccio a "major hypocrite" for developing tribal land that would return no sales-tax revenue to Phoenix coffers.

Johnson cited a recent Arizona Republic story that focused on DiCiccio's business deals along the planned South Mountain Freeway. One 75-acre development at 40th Street and Pecos Road would sit just across the Ahwatukee Foothills border on the Gila River Indian Community.

If the project is built, Phoenix would not collect any permit fees or tax revenue, dollars the city depends on to pay for services, Johnson said.

"It amazes me that he is so quick to get rid of city employees and departments, and at the same time he's working to build a mall through the Indian reservation," Johnson said. "That will suck revenue out of the city and cut money for fire, police, parks and recreation.

"His personal benefit and gain is much greater than any benefit of the city and would further deepen the city's budget hole."

DiCiccio dismissed Johnson's logic, saying it's too early to know what exactly will be built at the 40th and Pecos property..

At one point, a massive retail center had been planned for the parcel, but DiCiccio said the project has stalled due to the dismal economy and [commercial real-estate market](#)

"We don't know what's going to be there," DiCiccio said. "We don't know if it will be medical or retail or if it will even get built in the future."

\* \* \*

**Diane Scherer** was in disbelief when she got

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word Monday afternoon that the City Council was voting on a food tax the next day.

After all, City Manager **David Cavazos** met with her group, the Phoenix Association of Realtors, in December and said no action would be taken on any [tax](#) until at least March, after 15 public budget hearings.

"We really thought we had a lot of time to do a little more research, to talk about it with City Council members and the City Manager's Office," said Scherer, the association's chief executive. "We were really blindsided by it."

So were other powerful groups like the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce.

The 11,000-member Realtors association sent their lobbyist to the council meeting, but he didn't speak because the group's board of directors hadn't taken a position on the 2 percent tax. The tax was approved on a 6-3 vote.

Gordon had called the special meeting just 24 hours in advance. He explained that adopting the tax this week would mean an extra \$12.5 million this fiscal year for city services, which are slated for deep cuts due to declining [tax collections](#).

But one question still remained: Why would folks who sell homes care about a tax on food?

Residents "gotta eat before they gotta pay the [mortgage](#)," Scherer said. "This is a hard time. Do you really want to tie the tax to a necessity like that?"

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