

TUCSON & REGION

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Pima County's pothole of political dysfunction

You can only say "no" so long and expect people to accept it.

But Pima County supervisors seem determined to find out exactly when the public's patience wears out.

On Tuesday, the supervisors considered an ordinance that is the necessary first step to imposing a new, half-cent sales tax to pay for road repairs. They passed it, but by a 3-2 margin.

Any no votes now mean the ordinance is doomed when it



Tim Steller

receives final consideration June 19, in the final step to imposing the tax.

By state law, that vote must be unanimous, and the votes simply

aren't there.

So, years into our road-repair crisis, we remain stuck in a Pima pothole of political dysfunction. And voters should start taking a hard look at officials who complain about the roads but can never find a way to say "yes" to a solution, or demand too much in exchange for their yes vote.

Exhibit A is Supervisor Ally Miller. She has said for years that road repair is her top priority, lambasting the county for the terrible condition of its streets, but

no solution has met her exacting demands. She has been a consistent no.

Take what happened in the Legislature this year.

Sen. Bob Worsley, a Mesa Republican, wrote a bill that would have changed the way counties can pay for transportation projects. Pima County's board would have been allowed to refer to the ballot, by a majority vote, a proposal to add a half-cent to the existing half-cent sales tax for the Regional Transportation Author-

ity. Then that authority would have been able to use the resulting money for road repairs.

Miller opposed the bill, particularly the part that allowed the tax increase to be referred to voters with only a majority vote.

She wanted a unanimous vote — just for a referral to the ballot so that we could vote on it.

Tuesday's vote was also on a proposed sales-tax increase of a half-cent, but it was a different

See **STELLER, C5**



PHOTOS BY MAMTA POPAT / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Armando Alvarez started living on his own at 15. On Wednesday, he will graduate from Sunnyside High School. Here, he talks with Patricia Garcia, the Youth on Their Own liaison for the school, who helped him get food and services.

Future excites new grad, 19, who's been homeless, alone

By **Patty Machelor**
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

What's quickly apparent about Armando Alvarez is that he feels good about who he is and excited about how his life is unfolding.

That wasn't true a few years back, when he was struggling in school, often living alone, and coming to terms with his sexuality.

But Alvarez, 19, says "angels sent from heaven" changed all that.

Teachers and friends, guidance counselors and an evolving relationship with his mother have helped Alvarez finish high school —



Armando Alvarez, right, a quinceañera planner and budding choreographer, dreams of having his own venue for parties.

he will graduate from Sunnyside High on Wednesday — and embrace his dreams.

"Being alone so young was the worst experience," said Alvarez, who says he

started living largely on his own around age 15. "Now, I see a lot of success in my future."

Alvarez loves drag shows and choreographed dancing, makeup and clothing. He works part time as a party planner — primarily for quinceañeras — and dreams of having his own venue for parties and celebrations.

What's hard to believe, in light of his exuberance and ready laugh, is that he's been bullied and harassed for being gay, that he's gone

See **ALVAREZ, C2**

ATC deficit down to \$1.4M; 2 at top have plans to keep pay-down going

By **Kathleen Allen**
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Two years ago, Arizona Theatre Company almost shut its doors because of financial woes.

Instead, after a successful fundraising campaign, it opened the 2016-17 season — the company's 50th — which became one of ATC's most successful.

This year, that success continued with increased single-ticket and subscription sales, and a season that has been enthusiastically embraced by patrons.

But that doesn't mean everything is copacetic.

Going into the 2016-17 season, the company had an accumulated deficit of \$2.4 million. The summer '17 fundraising flurry that kept the theater's doors open, combined with the success of the 50th anniversary season, cut \$1 million out of that.

The current \$1.4 million deficit doesn't threaten clo-

sure, and Billy Russo, who served as interim managing director for about a year before accepting the position permanently last summer, expects that to go to zero by the end of the 2020-21 fiscal year.

But it does cut back on the big plans Russo and artistic director David Ivers had hoped to implement immediately, such as programs that allow for theatrical risks, build audiences and deepen roots in the community.

"I don't see challenges in terms of the work we do," said Ivers, who joined ATC in July. "I just see challenges in how we fund it. ... We can't get to the vision part until we fix the balance."

Russo agrees. "To me, the challenge is balancing our aspirations of where we want the theater to go with the resources we have," he said.

See **ATC, C2**

New fund is established to offer rapid assistance in S. Ariz. emergencies

By **Emily Bregel**
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Tucson now has another philanthropic funding source to assist in the aftermath of disasters.

The nonprofit Community Foundation for Southern Arizona has established the Southern Arizona Emergency Relief Fund. The goal is to facilitate immediate assistance following a natural disaster, from wildfires to floods, or an emergency like a terrorist attack, said Clint Mabie, president and CEO of the Community Foundation.

Previously the grant-making organization had responded episodically after a local disaster, connecting donors wanting to help with those involved in relief efforts, Mabie said.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

Donors can make secure, tax-deductible contributions online via the Community Foundation's website or by calling 520-770-0800.

Donors can also mail a check to: Community Foundation for Southern Arizona, 6420 East Broadway Blvd., Suite A100, Tucson, AZ 85710

Please note on the check: Southern Arizona Emergency Relief Fund

"What we haven't been is proactive in creating a vehicle to be able to respond in a quicker way," he said. "Ev-

See **FUND, C5**

Research suggests jaguars declining in Sonora

By **Tony Davis**
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

In one large swath of jaguar habitat in northeastern Sonora, researchers have documented a sharp decline in jaguar detections over six years.

In a neighboring swath,

other researchers have shown an up-and-down cycle of jaguar detections over eight years.

These findings caused concern and alarm, but also uncertainty and a broad discussion over solutions at a daylong session held

in Tucson last week on the large cat. The species is listed as endangered in the United States and Mexico.

The up-and-down trend occurred in a private jaguar reserve and its surroundings, lying at least 110 miles south of the U.S.-Mexico

border cities of Douglas and Aqua Prieta. There, conservationists have worked closely with neighboring ranchers to try to prevent jaguar killings.

The sharp decline oc-

See **JAGUARS, C6**



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