

ADDENDUM MATERIAL

DATE 10-5-21 ITEM NO. ADD 8

Bernadette Russell

From: JoAnn diFilippo [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 4, 2021 1:56 PM
To: COB_mail
Cc: District1; DIST2; District3; District4; District5
Subject: BOS October 5, 2021 meeting: Addendum #8

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Please add this comment letter to Addendum #8 – Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Employee Compensation
Cc: Supervisor Christy

Supervisors Bronson, Grijalva, Scott and Heinz:

Recently, you approved an increase for Pima County employees (as noted in CHH's 9/29/21 memo to the BOS). Supervisor Christy rejected this increase for his employees (this is the second time that I'm aware of that his staff did not receive a county-wide increase). Kudos to Supervisor Christy for recognizing that while the county is in a "COVID pandemic" situation, he did not feel an increase was warranted while others in the county are suffering. Have none of you received your recent property tax statements? Did you not read CHH's 7/2/21 memo whereby he stated he would "be asking the Board of Supervisors to increase the primary property tax rate by 5.73 cents....?" As CHH recently informed you, the county has funding to grant this wage increase, but just because we have funds does not mean it is right to shove this in the fact of taxpayers who are working so hard to keep food on the table, finding creative ways to keep their children in school, and for the elders living social security check to social security check ... having to pay for a 5% wage increase while they have to tighten their budgets at the grocery store and gas lines.

Furthermore, in a recent discussion with Chairwoman Bronson, I asked her to confirm or deny if a select number of privileged county employees (salaried, unclassified, earning near or more than \$100,000 per year) were awarded 2021 COVID Incentive pay. Supervisor Bronson confirmed this did happen and that she approved the action. I thank Supervisor Bronson for answering honestly; however, it was still disheartening to hear her response. I'm not sure if other supervisors approved or not; however, the optics of this are not good. Looking at this from a Critical Race Theory (CRT) perspective, what you created is an air of "privilege." You clearly identified a select group of highly-paid employees to receive a benefit while denying others the opportunity to receive equal treatment. Where is the equity here? You constantly talk about equity and inclusion, but what I see here is the opposite: you denied equity and excluded other staff from receiving an incentive pay benefit. Roland Barthes (1964) in his award-winning text the *Elements of Semiology* explains how the meaning of "signs" creates a linguistic message for the "signifiers" and the "signified." In the instant case, the sign is the COVID incentive pay; the signifier is the power base awarding the COVID incentive pay (deciding who can and cannot receive the incentive) and the signified as those employees who received the incentive pay. Those who did not receive the pay are not "signified"—they are relegated to the status of "other" not considered worthy of being signified. These binary situations and definitions are how we identify power structures: those who can play in the game vs. those who must stand on the sidelines observing, hoping for an opportunity to be treated equally.

Let me give you an example: Parks & Rec Maintenance Technicians making between \$16-\$17 hourly wage/classified were not even considered for a COVID incentive pay—nor considered "Responders" during the pandemic (they were never regarded as a "signified" body). Many of these employees represent historically underserved and unrepresented populations. Yet, these are the very same employees who are required to clean public restrooms

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during the COVID pandemic period when parks were open—even today. Many of these Technicians were not able to telecommute; they were required to face the public and clean the abject items none of us want to touch (feces, urine, drug paraphernalia, trash bins, etc.). Thus, I ask each one of you: what is the distinction between the \$35,000 hourly/classified employee and the \$100,000+ salaried/unclassified employee in receiving a COVID incentive bonus (those actually signified by the power broker signifier)? Yes, the American Rescue Plan provides for certain types of incentives to be paid to employees generally who are front line service providers. And, I further ask each one of you:

1. I heard rumblings that a COVID incentive was awarded to a select group of employees; Supervisor Bronson confirmed this to me. However, I still find it hard to believe. Is this accurate?
2. Were you aware and did you approve a COVID incentive pay to a select group of **salaried, unclassified staff earning near or above \$100,000 in annual wages**?
3. If yes, what was the criteria used for including these individuals while excluding others who actually worked in the public sphere jeopardizing their health and that of their families and others?

Yes, everyone at any given time would like a wage increase. But given the fact that CHH just issued a memorandum on 7/2/21 asking the Supervisors to increase the primary property tax rate by 5.73 cents for FY 2022/23 Budget, do you honestly feel it was appropriate to grant a wage increase to employees who kept their jobs and benefits during the pandemic, and were able to telecommute as needed (for the majority)? And, penalizing employees who elected not to receive the COVID injection is just one more example of negative binaries (haves and have nots). You control the power to correct unjustified, exclusive binaries. Please think about the above before you initiate any further actions that serve to further illustrate binaries of “haves” and “have nots.” Do not penalize employees who do not want to receive the COVID injection. Do not award any further COVID incentives to salaried, unclassified employees earning more than \$100,000 annually—under any circumstances regardless of the incentive amount.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

JoAnn di Filippo, PhD