

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

Volume 22

October 17, 2007

GREAT LAKES BRINGS AIR SERVICE TO VISALIA:

Hopes of finding a partner to make air service a success again in Visalia were realized with the awarding of a subsidized two-year contract to Great Lakes Aviation. Visalia Municipal Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez said he hoped Great Lakes can begin service in mid-November, taking over from Phoenix-based Mesa Air Group and its subsidiary, Air Midwest. Great Lakes will fly two direct, nonstop round trips daily between Visalia and McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas, as well as two daily round trips between Merced and Las Vegas. In addition, the airline has discussed offering a third daily Las Vegas flight picking up passengers in both Merced and Visalia. Like Air Midwest, Great Lakes' service will be aboard 19-seat Beechcraft 1900D turboprop airplanes that can make the trip from Visalia to Las Vegas in about 90 minutes.



VISALIA'S '911' RESPONSE RATE BEATS STATE STANDARDS:

Visalia Police Department's dispatch bests the state in its response rate to "911" emergency calls. State representatives revealed that Visalia's rate of response to calls within 10 seconds is 96.1%. The state's standard is 90%. Representatives commended staff for doing an excellent job in getting the 911 calls answered in a timely manner.



MOONEY BOULEVARD FAVORED ROUTE FOR LIGHT RAIL: Mooney Boulevard is the route of choice for the City Council for a system of electric commuter trains that someday may run between Visalia and Tulare. The possible route was the favorite of three options as a possible route for a light-rail transit system to help ease congestion between the two cities. Visalia Transit Manager Monty Cox said the key is to increase residential and commercial densities along the route. Concentrating as many as 4,000 new homes and businesses within a half-mile of station hubs makes it easy for people to live and work near transit.

IN OTHER COUNCIL NEWS: The council approved a \$5 increase in the charge for riders of the Sequoia Shuttle, a seasonal bus service that takes tourists from Visalia to Sequoia National Park. Round-trip rides will increase to \$15 . . . The purchase of two solar-powered "Big Belly" compactor trash receptacles was approved for Downtown, allowing more trash to be collected and held between pickups. The two units cost about \$10,000, and funds will be used from Solid Waste reserves . . . The expenditure plan for the 2007 Citizens Option for Public Safety (COPS) Program was approved. The \$226,411 will continue to fund one detective position in the Property Crimes Unit and two part-time Crime Prevention Assistants, add one new Police Records Specialist position, and enhance multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional enforcement detail with 12 new analyst's notebooks to assist in identifying and curtailing gang activity and other crime.

RECREATION PARK RENOVATION GIVEN GO-AHEAD: Work may soon get under way on the renovation of the Recreation Park baseball stadium. The Visalia City Council voted on Oct. 15, to award a \$144,808 contract to Hobbs Construction of Fresno for demolition and site preparation along the right-field line near Giddings Street to get ready for the first phase of improvements. The first phase of a two-phase project calls for a two-story building for concessions, a team store, hospitality lounge, office space, ticket booth and a new stadium entrance. Work under the Hobbs contract will begin in November. Construction on the building itself is expected to be completed in Spring, 2008. The Oaks' first 2008 home game will be in mid-April. The second phase of renovation will happen between the 2008 and 2009 seasons, when the grandstand will be demolished and rebuilt with new suites and a press box.

OTHER OAKS NEWS - NEW LEASE APPROVED: The City Council also gave a preliminary green light to a new nine-year lease, with a six-year option, for the Visalia Oaks to use the stadium. The lease, expected to receive final approval from the council on Oct. 29, replaces a lease signed last year. The new lease includes a ticket surcharge and revenue sharing, both to help the city recover a portion of its investment in the stadium over the life of the lease. In exchange, Top of the Third Inc. -- the owner of the Oaks -- is committing to keeping a Single-A California League team in Visalia for the term of the lease and to maintain the stadium and grounds on a year-round basis. The city will receive a portion of the team's gross receipts from tickets, concessions, advertising, naming rights and special events held during the season. Assistant City Manager Carol Cairns estimates the city expects to recover about \$6.1 million over the next 20 years. The improvements will boost the stadium's capacity to about 3,100 seats; it currently holds about 1,800 people. In other cities where stadiums are either built new or renovated, attendance is boosted by some 92%.

ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF TAPPED FOR TOP POST IN POULSBO,

WA: A congratulatory reception will be held Nov. 13 for Visalia Assistant Police Chief Dennis Swiney, who has been appointed the new Police Chief in Poulsbo, Washington. In a vote Oct. 10 by the mayor and seven-member City Council, Swiney was appointed to the position, effective Nov. 26. Poulsbo is located along the shores of Liberty Bay near Puget Sound. "Dennis is an outstanding leader and has done a wonderful job for the City of Visalia," said Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden. "While I'm sorry to see him leave, I'm excited for this opportunity and what it means for Dennis and his family. He's the right person for that job and I know he's going to find success in Poulsbo." Visalia City Manager Steve Salomon added, "Chief Swiney is a very talented individual, and it's great to see him recognized and get this opportunity. It's a very positive reflection on our Police Department and the talent that we have." The reception for the public and city staff will be held from 3 to 5 p.m. in City Council Chambers.



LAND ACQUISITION FIRST STEP IN WATERWAY TRAILS: A mile of waterway trails along Packwood Creek took a big step toward reality Oct. 15, with the approval by the City Council of the acquisition of nearly 3 acres along Cameron Avenue, between Woodland Street and Mooney Boulevard. As part of the ongoing development of trails along major waterways throughout the city, this acquisition will allow a 12-foot wide, mile-long trail to be built. The project also will include landscaping with native trees and drought-tolerant plants. Project Manager Don Stone said the design of the trail is to be completed in the Spring, with construction to begin in the Summer. This project is the first to utilize funding from the recently approved County road tax assessment. Over the next 20 years, the City plans to complete over 20 miles of new trails along waterways.

TRANSIT ANALYST NOMINATED AS ‘RISING STAR’: Visalia Transit Analyst Gamaliel Anguiano was one of 27 individuals nominated for the “Five Under 40 Rising Stars” award by ROI Sequoia Valley. Anguiano manages the Sequoia Shuttle, monitors contracts with the transportation company that carries more than 1.45 million passengers annually in and around Visalia, and writes grants to attract further funding for transit programs. The award winners, announced at this year’s Biz Talk Conference, are: Nate Wobrock, owner of Hoops, a Porterville child-care center; Marisa Simoes, owner of Three Sisters Farmstead Cheese in Lindsay; Patricia Stever, executive director of the Tulare County Farm Bureau; Adam Peck, administrator for the Workforce Investment Board; and Matt Seals, director of project management for Seals/Biehle General Contractors.

CITY, COUNTY TO HOLD GANG SUMMIT: The City of Visalia and Tulare County will host a Gang Summit on Thursday, Dec. 6, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Ave. Representatives from San Jose and Fresno, both successful in their gang prevention efforts, will share details of their programs. The summit will help non-profit and community-based organizations, law enforcement, government and the public raise awareness and develop strategies for suppressing, preventing and intervening in gang activities. For information on the summit, contact Jed Chernabaeff at 733-6271.

BOY SCOUTS HONOR VISALIA’S ‘DISTINGUISHED CITIZEN’: Visalia City Manager Steve Salomon was honored Oct. 10, as the Sequoia Council, Boy Scouts of America’s Distinguished Citizen. Salomon received the honor at an annual fund-raising awards dinner attended by almost 200 business and community leaders. In presenting the award, Sequoia Council Past President Allan Fisher noted Salomon’s commitment to residents of Visalia of all ages. “It’s fitting that the Boy Scouts give Steve this honor for all he has done to help local youth,” said Fisher. “A community doesn’t thrive without tremendous commitment and passion from many people,” said Salomon in accepting the award. “The city has over 700 full and part-time employees. Very little would happen without the dedication of all those people.”



GET INVOLVED, HERE’S HOW: A community is only as good as the sum of its parts. Take part in making Visalia a great community. Interested citizens are asked to apply to serve on the Citizens Advisory Committee, which currently has three openings. The committee has made recommendations to the City Council on the allocation of grant funds to local non-profits, compensations for City Council members, and has conducted the annual public opinion survey of city services. Openings also exist on the Airport, Historic Preservation and Transit Advisory Committees. To apply, visit the City of Visalia’s website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us.