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COUNCIL RETREAT TO FOCUS ON GANGS, BUDGET, PLANNING: The City budget, neighborhood preservation, gangs and City planning issues will top the City Council's agenda at a two-day Strategic Planning Workshop Jan. 25-26 at the Visalia Convention Center. Other topics: Strategic goal setting; priorities; and preliminary action plans. Council members and city staff will meet at noon Friday and 8 a.m. Saturday in the San Joaquin Room C & D. The meetings are open to the public.

FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING SCHEDULE: The City Council and Visalia Unified School District Board will hold a joint meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 29, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Visalia Unified School District office at 5000 W. Cypress. On the agenda: Update on gang intervention efforts; possible impact of the state budget on local resources; and Visalia community growth data. The Council will hold a special meeting at 4 p.m. in Council Chambers, and the agenda will be posted on the city's website at www.visalia.ca.us on Friday, Jan. 25. A special Council meeting will be held at 4 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11, in Council Chambers to review the Parks and Infrastructure Master Plan. The Council will hold its next work session and regular session on Tuesday, Feb. 19, beginning at 4 p.m. in Council Chambers. A joint City Council/Planning Commission meeting will be held at 4 p.m. Monday, Feb. 25, at the Convention Center.

CRIME DOWN BY 17% IN VISALIA: Even with a 6% increase in the city's population, Visalia Police reported a 17% decrease in crime overall in 2007, compared to 2006. Violent crime was down 8%, even though there were four more homicides, for a total of 12, in 2007 compared to 8 in 2006. Property crimes decreased 19%, rape down 24%, robbery down 26%, aggravated and simple assault down 6%, burglary down 19%, larceny down 13%, and the biggest decrease was in motor vehicle theft, down 41%. The number of calls for service increased by 5%. The Gang Suppression Unit made 534 arrests last year. Of those, 495 were directly related to gang activity. In addition, the Unit served 26 search warrants and 55 firearms were recovered. Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden attributed the overall decrease to increased efforts in community-oriented policing. The department revamped a system from one officer assigned to handle community policing in one sector of the city to teams of two to three officers working together in larger sectors. Hiring more officers through monies raised by Visalia's Measure T sales tax increases police presence in communities. Four more officers will be hired to the force, which presently numbers 136 officers.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT GOES DIGITAL: The City's bi-annual aerial photography project is getting off the ground. The scope of the project involves taking aerial photographs to produce ortho-rectified digital images, called "digital orthophotos." Anyone with a GIS program on their computer can create custom maps using the aerial photos and GIS data without worrying about importing, sizing and fitting all of the different pieces of information together. Hundreds of photos will be taken in early March over one to two days, a time of year which produces some of the clearest

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conditions. With the addition of 25 square miles, the coverage total will be 135 square miles and will include the City's entire urban area boundary and beyond by at least a half-mile in all directions. The raw digital photos will then be processed and stitched together which will result in one seamless digital orthophoto. Start looking for the new photos in the late spring or early summer.

CITY LAUNCHES NEWLY DESIGNED WEBSITE: The address is the same (www.ci.visalia.ca.us), but the look is all new. A year in the making, the City of Visalia's newly designed website was unveiled to the City Council at its Jan. 22 meeting. Staff has worked with Civica, a content management system, to create a new navigation process that makes the website more user-friendly for citizens, visitors, businesses, and others to access information. The new site has expanded search capability, more information available in the "Frequently Asked Questions" section, and more up-to-date and readily accessible information on City services. The home page has a more modern, friendly look making it more inviting to those visiting the website. Feedback is welcome. Email your comments to Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva at nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us.

MIKI CITY EXCHANGE PROGRAM SEEKS

STUDENTS: Applications now are available for a student cultural exchange to Miki City, Japan. A delegation of students will travel with City officials serving as chaperones to Visalia's Sister City and live with a family for nine days. They will see the cities of Kobe, Osaka, and Kyoto and experience the sites, sounds and history of the country while enjoying the hospitality of the people of Miki City. The trip is scheduled for July 17-28 and expenses are estimated at \$1,500 to \$2,000. The City will give up to \$500 per student to offset expenses. A full scholarship from the Carolyn Kruse Foundation may also be available to a student with financial need. Final dates and costs will be determined by student selection and flight availability. Deadline to apply is April 20, and applications are available on the city's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us. For information, contact Leslie Caviglia at 713-4317.



VISALIA POLICE NAME EMPLOYEES OF YEAR: Joe Paddock, who works in traffic and chairs the City's Special Events Committee, was named Police Officer of the Year by the Visalia Police Department. Others recognized include Judy Morgan-Ronding, Civilian Employee of the Year, Officer Robert Gonzales was named Latino Officer of the Year, Andrew Lockman was named Dispatcher of the Year and Chris Wilson was named Reserve Officer of the Year. All were chosen for their exceptional work ethic and dedicated service. Paddock will be honored Jan. 25 at the 25th annual Public Safety Night sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

'VISALIA TODAY' TO AIR TWO SHOWS MONTHLY: Beginning in March, the City of Visalia's 30-minute feature program, "Visalia Today", will air two shows a month on a variety of topics on City programs and services. The program airs on Comcast Cable Local Affiliate Channel 14 Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 7 p.m. February's program includes a segment on Measure T with Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden, Visalia Fire Battalion Chief Danny Wristen and former Citizens Advisory Committee Chairman Brian Summers. A second segment highlights the upcoming Father-Daughter Dance and other new programs offered through the City of Visalia's Parks and Recreation Department and features Recreation Manager Jeannie L. Greenwood and new Recreation Supervisor John Bradley.

JOBS PROGRAMS KEY TO GANG INTERVENTION: Community leaders overseeing the Step Up Job Training Program are targeting the Visalia business community to place selected youth, ages 12 to 17, into part-time training jobs. Visalia Police Sgt. Ernie Villa, who chairs the program's organizing committee, said the key to success will be for members of the business community to serve as mentors to youth. Mentorship training will be provided by Community Services and Employment Training. The program is under the auspices of Proteus' job training agency, which will pay the

youth a stipend and provide workplace insurance . There is a waiting list of 15 youth who wish to get into the program, and Pro-Youth has hired one juvenile through the program. “We’re in the process of doing a press release on this individual, the type of youth we are reaching out to, said Villa. “We’re also talking about getting some of the youth center directors—YMCA, Manuel Hernandez Center, etc. - to go out to Service Clubs to let them know about this program face-to-face.”

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT UPDATES: The City of Visalia has teamed up with the Visalia Times-Delta to provide weekly updates on city public works projects involving major city roadways on its website (www.visaliatimesdelta.com). For the week of Jan. 21, the following new and updated Public Works/Development projects are being conducted and may interrupt major routes of transportation within the City of Visalia.



- Road widening on Cameron Avenue from Vintage to Oakview Streets: Work being done Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; expected to be completed by Jan. 25, 2008 due to weather delays; work is being done for the new subdivision on the south side of Cameron Avenue; and the responsible contractor/contact is Gill/Reeves Construction, Bob Gill at 804-1577.

Road widening and median island installation on Walnut Avenue from Simon Street to Casablanca Street: Work being done Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., expected to be completed Feb. 8, 2008, due to weather delays; work is being done for the new subdivision on the south side of Walnut Avenue; and responsible contractor/contact is Crawford Construction, Russ Anderson at 908-9949.