

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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OAKS STADIUM RENOVATIONS GOES TO COUNCIL: On Monday night, Feb. 25, the Visalia City Council will consider awarding the construction contract for Recreation Park Baseball Stadium improvements to Seals/Biehle of Visalia in the amount of \$7.74 million. Seals/Biehle was the low bidder on the project. The City also received a bid in the amount of \$8 million from Oral E. Mitchem, Inc. of Woodlake. A recommendation to award the contract to Seals/Biehle is being made by the Council subcommittee on Recreation Park Baseball Stadium Renovation. Committee members are Vice Mayor Bob Link and Council Member Don Landers, and it is staffed by Assistant City Manager Carol Cairns, and Special Projects Manager Phyllis Coring. The subcommittee and staff's recommendation is consistent with the City of Visalia's bidding procedures, which call for the award to be given to the firm which submits the lowest base bid for the project. A base bid is the cost to deliver the scope of work that is requested in the bid. In addition to the base bid, three bid alternates were requested for consideration for additional work to be performed or accelerated. There were three add alternates included for consideration in the project scope of work. The subcommittee is recommending that none of the add alternates be included in the project. These included a constructed groundskeeper shed, an accelerated construction schedule and brick columns at the entrance. The Recreation Park Baseball Stadium bid states the bid will be awarded to the lowest base bid, which is Seals/Biehle. That being the case for this specific project, the costs for these alternates provided by Seals/Biehle would be the ones to be considered if City Council chose to include any of them in the project. The subcommittee's recommendation is that none of the add alternates be included in the award of this bid because of budget constraints. Once completed, the stadium capacity would be about 2,350. Along with the recommendation to award the Right Field improvements in the amount of \$7.74 million to Seals/Biehle, the subcommittee also recommends to pursue construction of the new dugouts after the regular season concludes. The dugouts, which are required by Minor League Baseball, would be built in the existing concrete grandstand berm as the final phase of the stadium renovation. The design and contractor for the dugouts has yet to be determined, but Right Field improvements, and the dugouts would be within the project's overall \$11.6 million budget.

FIRE RESCUE EARNS CITY ACCLAIM: The heroic actions of five firefighters and two police officers were recognized at the Feb. 19 City Council meeting for their life-saving efforts Jan. 6 at a Crenshaw Street structure fire. "Every once in a while, the fire department is brought back to its roots when it is faced with and asked to perform its most basic mission: To race against the clock and save someone's life from an unimaginable fate—to perish by fire,"

Interim Fire Chief Greg Glass told Council members. "It's without question that the quick and heroic actions taken by the Visalia City Firefighters and Police officers are directly responsible for reducing property damage, stopping the fire spread, and above all, saving a life."

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Visalia Police Officers Daniel Ford and Jarred Hughes were the first to arrive at the scene of a structure



fire. Cries could be heard inside the home, but due to the rapid fire spread, intense heat and smoke, the officers were unable to enter. Medic Engine 52 and Battalion Chief Doyle Sewell were the first fire units to arrive. Chief Sewell took command of the incident and ordered the fire attack and rescue operation. Captain Darrin Hughes and Firefighter/Paramedic Dameon Malek took the shortest route to the victim—through a door in the garage and into the kitchen, where they encountered heavy smoke, flames and intense heat. While Capt. Hughes attacked the main body of the fire, Firefighter Malek searched for the trapped victim, who he found lying unconscious in the hallway. Capt. Miguel Oseguera and Firefighter/Paramedic Chris Fischer from Medic Engine 51 entered the rear of the home and, with Firefighter Malek, successfully removed the individual from the house. Once outside, Firefighters Malek and Fischer began patient care and assisted American Medical Response with loading the patient into the ambulance for transport to the hospital.

DUI CHECKPOINTS AHEAD: On Saturday, Feb. 23, members of the Visalia Police Department will be conducting a sobriety checkpoint within the city limits of Visalia. The purpose of this sobriety checkpoint is to deter drunk driving, not to make arrests. By letting your listeners know in advance of these checkpoints, we hope to discourage citizens from drinking and driving. By publicizing of these sobriety/Drivers license checkpoints, the majority of citizens in Visalia and the surrounding areas will be informed of our efforts and hopefully will make the choice **not to drink and drive**.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION COURSES COMES TO FRESNO STATE

CENTER: Orientation for students interested in taking core courses for a bachelor's in business administration beginning in the Fall will be offered at 5 p.m. Wednesday, March 12, in Fresno State Classrooms 1 and 2 at the College of the Sequoias campus, at 915 S. Mooney Blvd. Funded in part by the City of Visalia, the Fresno State Center at COS has committed to offering the Business core courses provided a cohort of 15 to 20 students can be formed. Students must meet course prerequisites to be eligible. Transcripts must be provided for verification purposes, and advisors will be available at the orientation.

CAPTAIN NAMED TOP CITY FIREFIGHTER: Captain Rob Henry was honored at the Feb. 19 City Council member as Visalia's Firefighter of the Year. He has served the City for 15 years, and has excelled in areas of fire ground emergency management, hazardous materials incident management, rescue, swift water, confined space, and extrication. In addition to his primary responsibility as Captain assigned to Truck 51/B, he has oversight for the Department's Reserve Program and is the training coordinator for all six companies on his shift. He has been involved in several on-duty rescues and was personally involved in two off-duty rescues. He saved the life of a swimmer in Mexico, and while on a cruise, he saved the life of an unconscious scuba diver. Always willing to share what he has learned at almost every level, those who know him in the community say that he's willing to share anything from produce in his garden to his expertise on the Fire ground. He and his wife, Stephanie, have three children, Kori, Cooper and Carson.

COUNCIL APPROVES INCREASE IN HEALTH CONTRIBUTION FOR

RETIREEES: The City Council Tuesday approved an increase in the health contribution for its retirees. Previously, the City had negotiated a health care premium increase for its employees. The increase of \$46.06 per month, effective May 1, will be shared equally by both the city and its 190 retirees. It is the same amount as the increase to be implemented in March with current employees. City policy states that retirees and their dependents are eligible for medical and vision benefits at a cost which is to be determined annually by the City. The City's self-funded health insurance plan is funded by both City and plan participant contributions. The City's contributions to the health plan on behalf of retirees varies, but averages almost \$800 a month, and is higher in comparison to retiree health benefits in other cities and

counties in Tulare and neighboring counties. Annually, the city now pays over \$2 million for retiree health benefits, according to Administrative Services Director Eric Frost. The City would need to continue to pay the \$2 million plus each year for actual health costs and begin setting aside another \$4 to \$7 million annually to fully fund the current and future cost of retiree health care. The City's share of the increase will raise its current \$2 million contribution by over \$50,000 annually. "The City can and will meet its commitment to allow retirees access to the City's health plan," said Frost. The Council will consider other proposed changes to retiree health benefits at its May 5 meeting. The changes may include the following: The contribution level the City would provide to retirees actively at work; and the length of service employees should have to qualify for retiree health contributions from the City.

ENERGY TIP—OH, THAT AMAZING FLUORESCENT: If every American household replaced just one incandescent bulb with a compact fluorescent, it would reduce electricity demand by more than 5 gigawatts—the average output of five nuclear power plants. Compact fluorescents screw into regular incandescent bulb sockets and give off the same light—for a quarter of the energy. They also last 10,000 hours, about 10 times as long as incandescents. While they cost more than incandescents—about \$4 to \$12 per bulb, they use so little energy that they can pay you back the purchase cost in less than two years. The City of Visalia's Natural Resource Conservation Division recommends installing CFLs in fixtures that are used at least 15 minutes at a time or several hours per day.

