

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

Volume 24

May 7, 2008

CORRECTION ON ITEM ON PARKING IN-LIEU FEES: City Manager Steve Salomon said the City is considering the elimination of parking in-lieu fees for new businesses or business expansion which involve a change in use in existing buildings in the downtown area. It was incorrectly reported in the May 7 issue of Inside City Hall that the proposed elimination of parking in-lieu fees would be those collected from new businesses.

CITY NAMES NEW FIRE CHIEF: City Manager Steve Salomon announced at the May 5 City Council meeting that Mark Nelson has been named to be Visalia's new Fire Chief, effective June 16. "The City has a long history of a professional Fire Department dedicated to serving and protecting the community," said Salomon. "I am confident that Mark is going to do an outstanding job as Chief and be the leader the Department needs to continue their fine work." Nelson, a native of San Jose, knew he wanted to be a firefighter as a boy. "My commitment is to meet the challenges of this growing community," said Nelson, "Providing great customer service is my No. 1 priority, and input from the community will be critical to the success of my vision for a community-based fire department responsive to the specific needs and concerns of the city." Nelson, who has 24 years of experience as a professional firefighter, was selected among a field of 26 applicants. His appointment by City Manager Salomon was unanimously endorsed by the Visalia City Council. Since September, 2007, he has been the assistant fire chief and fire marshal with the American Canyon Fire District, located in Napa Valley north of Vallejo. Nelson also served as Fire Chief of the Rio Vista Fire Department from June, 2005 until September, 2007, and implemented a firefighter paramedic program, enabling the department to offer full-time advanced life support services. He began his career with the South County Fire Authority, based in San Carlos, in 1983. He served as acting captain/engineer and firefighter with the hazardous materials response team of the South County Fire Authority in San Carlos from 1983 to 1990. He then served as a relief specialist, engineer and firefighter with the Modesto Fire Department from 1990 to 2000. He also served as captain, training officer and battalion chief for the Union City Fire Department, and assisted in the implementation of a regional communication center which handled fire calls for eight different agencies within Alameda County. He has an associate of science degree in fire science from Mission College in Santa Clara and bachelor of arts degree in organizational communications from California State University, Stanislaus. He is married and has four children. He and his wife, Mary Kay, enjoy hiking, golf, bicycling, and are active in their church.



TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE VACANCY: The City of Visalia is accepting applications from interested citizens for a vacancy on the Transit Advisory Committee. The committee researches and analyzes the community's continuing transit needs, reviews operations, markets the transit program and makes recommendations about the business affairs of the transit system. This is an unscheduled vacancy that has occurred since the last vacancy posting. For more information, visit the City

of Visalia's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us "Committees/Commissions" to view the informational handbook and application, or contact the City Clerk's Office at (559) 713-4512.

PLANNERS OK SENIOR HOUSING PROJECTS: The developer of three senior-citizen apartment projects in Visalia won approval from the Visalia Planning Commission for a fourth project that will bring more than 40 affordable housing units in the southeast part of the city. Plans were approved for Christian Church Homes of Northern California to build its Sierra Meadows project on Tulare Avenue between Edison Street and Ben Maddox Way. With 42 apartments for seniors and one apartment for an on-site manager, the two-story Sierra Meadows would be the smallest CCH project in Visalia. CCH President Don Stump said he expects to break ground early in 2009 and have the apartments ready for seniors to move in by early 2010. Each one-bedroom, one-bath apartment will be about 550 square feet; the complex will also include a community room, laundry facilities and a computer alcove, according to plans submitted to the city. Outside, residents will be able to enjoy a terrace, patio and garden walks. The 2.6-acre site is zoned for multi-family residential use; it is bounded on the north and east by Seven Oaks Park and the adjacent leash-free dog park, on the west by condominiums, and on the south, across Tulare Avenue, by single-family homes. The city is assisting the nonprofit Christian Church Homes to provide lower-rent apartments for seniors, having loaned CCH \$2.5 million in federal grant funds to acquire land and build the project; in exchange, the apartments are reserved for low-income seniors with affordable rents for at least 55 years. Under current federal income standards, a senior living on his or her own would qualify to live in Sierra Meadows with an annual income of about \$18,000 or less -- or about half the average median income in the Visalia area, Stump said. Rents will be kept low through subsidies from the federal Housing and Urban Development Department that caps rent at a proportion of a qualifying senior's income.

MIKI CITY PARK GROUNDBREAKING: The Mayor of Miki City, Visalia's sister city in Japan, will assist city officials in groundbreaking ceremonies for the new Miki City Park at 4 p.m. Sunday, May 11, at the park site at Mineral King Avenue and Stevenson Street. The Mayor and visiting dignitaries will be in Visalia overnight, and will tour the Three Sisters Cheese Co. factory and VF Manufacturing in Industrial Park.

VISALIA'S POPULATION GROWS 3.7%: The state Department of Finance's new population estimates released May 1 show Visalia is the fifth fastest growing city among those with populations under 300,000 based on numeric population change. Visalia's population grew 3.7% from 117,138 in January 2007 to 121,491 in January 2008, an increase of 4,360 people. Tulare County's population grew 2.0 percent from 426,798 to 435,254. Dinuba had the greatest growth among county cities with a 6% increase from 19,900 to 21,087 people.

PERMIT WATCH: COMMERCIAL CLIMBS, RESIDENCES DROP: The number of building permits for April totaled 436 for a total value of \$43,821,606. Commercial permits for the year are up 39%, with 39 permits through April 2008 compared to 28 for the same time period in 2007. New single family dwellings were down 32 percent, multi family dwellings down 69 percent, and residential additions and alterations down 23 percent.

POLICE CHIEF'S ASSISTANT MELLO HONORED BY CSET: Carina Mello, senior administrative assistant to Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden, was the recent recipient of the Excellence in Business Values Award given by C-SET. She has worked for the city for over 10 years, and nominating her for this award, Chief Carden wrote, "She is dedicated, loyal, and above all, the consummate professional. She takes pride in both her assignment and the organization and strives to further develop herself professionally, and much of the success of our office can be directly attributed to her professional drive and outstanding abilities."

VI-CYCLE PROGRAM GIVES PEDAL POWER:

Downtown will soon be seeing green. Monday, the Visalia City Council approved "Vi-Cycles", a year-long pilot program which takes recovered bikes from the Police Department, Transit, and other sources and distributes them to businesses for use by employees or customers. Bikes will be picked up by the California Department of Corrections and taken to Corcoran's Substance Abuse and Treatment Facility. At no cost to the City, inmates will deconstruct and refurbish the bicycles, add new parts, tires, brakes, paint the bikes, etc. The bikes will be painted a forest green, and a Vi-cycle stencil will be included. Bikes will be sold for \$25 and will become the sole responsibility of the selected business. The program will reduce car emissions, congestion, improve air quality and utilize recycled bicycles in the community. Information: Natural Resources at 713-4532.



STUDENTS SELECTED FOR MIKI CITY EXCHANGE PROGRAM:

Nine students have been selected to participate in the Miki City Student Exchange Program this summer. The students selected to go are: Allison Grant, 18, a freshman at California State University, Fresno; Carly Yoshida, 16, a sophomore at El Diamante High School; Devin teVelde, 18, a senior at Central Valley Christian High School; Maricela Sanchez, 16, a junior at El Diamante High School; Joshua Sheltzer, 16, a junior at Redwood High School; Alyssa Wilsey, 16, a junior at Redwood High School; Juan Godinez, 17, a senior at Redwood High School; Analis Lopez, 17, a senior at Redwood High School; and Christina Rodriguez, 15, a sophomore at El Diamante High School. The students will leave around July 20 and return to Visalia on July 29. Students will live with host families while they are in Miki City, Japan.

VISALIA FIRE DEPARTMENT WELCOMES FOUR NEW FIRE-

FIGHTER PARAMEDICS: Graduation ceremonies for four new Visalia Fire Department Firefighter Paramedics will be held Friday, May 9, at Visalia Fire Station 51 at 309 S. Johnson St. The new Firefighter Paramedics are Zach DeMoss, Michael Durham, Geoff Randall, and Darrin Woodbridge. Also at the May 9 celebration will be a pinning ceremony for Fire Captain Todd Stalker as well as a special farewell to Interim Visalia Fire Chief Greg Glass and introduction of the new Chief Mark Nelson.

HOMEOWNERS GET HELP WITH LOANS:

Would-be homeowners in two aging neighborhoods will get a helping hand from the city with low-interest loans to help them make down payments. The Visalia City Council voted this week to use \$250,000 to establish the loan program for home buyers and increase homeownership rates in the Washington Elementary School neighborhood, south of downtown, and in the Lincoln Oval area north of downtown. Families who qualify under income guidelines could receive a dollar-for-dollar match of their down payment on a home in the target areas, up to \$40,000. The loans will be treated as a second mortgage, with an interest rate of 2% per year for 30 years. Qualifying families would need to make no less than 80% of the median family income in the Visalia area according to federal guidelines. The low interest rate is only available if the family lives in the home. Funds for the \$250,000 cost of the new program will come from property taxes in the city's redevelopment area. The loan program is a component of the city's efforts to promote homeownership.

Inside City Hall is a publication of the City of Visalia.

For more information, visit the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us, email nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us or call 713-4535