

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

Volume 24

Oct. 7, 2008

CITY AWARDED \$139,500 GRANT FOR BIKE LANES: The City of Visalia was awarded a \$139,500 grant from the state Bicycle Transportation Account for the design and construction of Class II bikeways on Noble and Mineral King avenues from Akers Street to Mooney Boulevard. The City was one of 19 awarded funding after a lengthy process, in part due to the annual State budget cycle and approval of program funding. This year's prolonged budget process extended the selection process into late September. Funding for the grant will be combined with \$15,500 in local monies to complete the \$155,000 project. Senior City Engineer Michael Carr said plans will be drawn up in-house this winter, with the actual work done to stripe the bike lanes next week when the weather improves.

FIRE STATIONS OPEN DOORS TO SEND MESSAGE OF PREVENTION:



As part of the observance of National Fire Prevention Week, over 180 adults and children turned out for the first ever Visalia Fire Station Open House. Fire agencies throughout the nation continue to make National Fire Prevention Week a priority for public education and awareness in order to reduce the risk of fire and the negative effect it has on our society. This year, the Visalia Fire Department hosted a wide array of activities designed to educate citizens and promote fire safety. In addition to the Open Houses, activities included assembly presentations at Elementary Schools, and a Fire Camp for the children.

STADIUM SCOPE EXPANDS, STILL WITHIN BUDGET: At its Oct. 6 meeting, the City Council authorized the expansion of the scope of the Recreation Park Stadium right field improvements construction agreement with Seals/Biehle General Contractors to include the construction of new dugouts in the existing stadium grandstand berm. It's important to note that construction of the dugouts was included as a part of the Right Field Improvements Project previously approved by City Council and that funding for this part of the overall project is included in the \$11.6 million dollar budget.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR MAKE A DIFFERENCE DAY: It's right around the corner, and volunteers are needed to help on a variety of projects for Make a Difference Day, Saturday, Oct. 25, from 8 to 11:30 a.m. Projects needing assistance: Removal of graffiti at Santa Fe north of Houston and Modoc; planting 10 to 15 trees in pre-dug holes at Plaza Park and Stonebrook Park; planting deer grass, trees, plants, and detailing mulch at the Brookside Landscape and Lighting District on Crenshaw at Whitendale on the east side of El Diamante High School; plant trees along the Goshen bike path; repair the dirt and gravel path in Cherry Meadow Park; and work with the UC Master Gardeners on planting/maintenance along Mill Creek at Conyer and Stevenson. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Melissa Tracy at the City of Visalia Parks and Recreation Department at 713-4384.

BLOCK PARTY OFFERS HEALTHY ALTERNATIVE TO HALLOWEEN

NIGHT: Visalia Parks & Recreation offers a healthy alternative on Halloween Night. Together with Visalia First Assembly of God Church, "The Block Party/Concert" will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. Friday, Oct. 31, at the Oaks Baseball Stadium. National Christian Hip Hop favorite "Grits" will be accompanied by local favorite "Saylah" in providing wholesome entertainment. This is a "must attend" event for the whole family. Vendor booths and concessions will be available. Tickets are available now at Gorillatix.com or at the Anthony Community Center, 345 N. Jacob St., in Visalia. For more information, contact Ramsey Ochoa at 713-4508.

FREE COMMERCIAL SOLID WASTE/RECYCLING ASSESSMENT

AVAILABLE FOR CITY BUSINESSES: Free solid waste assessments are now available for the city's commercial/industrial and institutional customers. In addition, multi-family commercial customers with commercial services provided by the City also are encouraged to participate in the program. Commercial recycling may lower the cost of doing business by reducing expenses on solid waste services by up to 60 percent. Participation in the program includes a walk-through tour of the business or facility to identify recycling processes and practices. Most assessments take less than one hour to complete. For more information, contact the Natural Resources and Conservation Division at 713-4532.

OVAL PARK CONCERT SERIES: The Lincoln Oval Park will be live with music every Friday in October, except Halloween, from 6 to 9 p.m. This Free Concert is for the whole family! Booths and other activities will be available. Come join us in celebrating the heritage and tradition of the Lincoln Oval Park. Band lineups include: Oct. 10— Los Capos del Valle ; October 17 - Pachango; and Oct. 24—Conjunto Califas. For more information, contact John Bradley at 713-4585.

EXPLORER COMPETITION RESULTS: Ten Visalia Police Department Explorers participated in the Ninth Annual 2008 Central Coast Law Enforcement Explorer Competition in Paso Robles. The events test the strengths and limitations of the Explorer's intelligence, personality, demeanor and physical abilities. They were given the opportunity to test their skills in real life scenario situations such as Felony Stops, Driving Under the Influence Investigations, Vehicles Searches, Domestic Violence, Crime Scene Investigation, Suspicious Person Call, Crisis Negotiations, Explorer Ride-along, Nighttime Traffic Stops, Medical Call, Building Search and Shooting Skills. The Visalia Police Department Explorer Post #32 won five trophies as follows: 1st Place in Domestic Violence; 2nd Place in Written Test; 3rd Place in Nighttime Traffic Stop; 5th Place in Team Obstacles and 5th Place in Relay Race.

SUMMIT PRESENTED BY, FOR YOUTH: Whether it's choosing the best guest speakers, designing a T-shirt logo, or creating a MySpace page, Tulare County's youth have a big say in the look and sound of the November Step Up Youth Summit. The summit will host 1,000 students in grades 9-12 from County public and private high schools as a way to connect, educate, equip and inspire young people to live violence- and drug-free lifestyles, pursue educational achievement and connect to their community in a positive manner. The summit, on Thursday, Nov. 20, at the Visalia Convention Center, will offer a variety of guest speakers, breakout sessions, and a resource fair. A committee co-chaired by Visalia Police Lt. Perry Phipps, and representatives from Tulare County government, schools, community and faith based organizations, and law enforcement have been planning the event for months, with valuable input from teens. A Step Up Youth Summit MySpace page - www.myspace.com/stepuptc - is designed as a tool for Tulare County's youth to visit before the event. The web-site will feature video blogs of each of the guest presenters and other resources for teens. Opening speaker will be Jeff Yalden, an internationally-renowned motivational speaker, who leads students on a journey of self-discovery that will lift the "fog" of youth - and alter the course of their lives. For more information on Jeff Yalden, visit www.jeffyalden.com. Visit www.stepuptc.com for more information on the Step Up Youth Summit.

BUILDING PERMITS DOWN 17 PERCENT: The number of City building permits was down 17% from a total of 3,118 from January-September 2008, compared to 3,776 for the same period last year. New commercial permits were up 19%, from 57 in 2007 to 68 in 2008. Single family dwellings and multi family permits were down 37% and 77%, respectively.

POLICIES, PROCEDURES FOR CITY'S COMMITTEES, COMMISSIONS TO CHANGE:

With the ultimate goal of streamlining the committee/commission process, the City Council on Oct. 6 approved revisions to the terms, designations, composition and existence of some committees. A subcommittee of the City's Citizens Advisory Committee reviewed current policies and practices. Recommendations approved include establishing a maximum of three two-year terms for all committee members, beginning Jan. 1, 2009. Commissioners will be eligible for a maximum of four two-year terms. The Commission term changes will begin at the conclusion of the current terms. The new procedures also more clearly outline the role of alternates, and allow alternates to automatically move into voting membership when a vacancy occurs. For more information on the policies and procedures approved, you can view the staff report on the city's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us. In other City Council news: A public hearing is planned for Nov. 3, to hear public testimony and consider a proposed recommended transportation impact fee program.

SAVE THE DATE FOR BATTLE OF THE BADGES BLOOD DRIVE: Mark your calendars for the 7th annual South Valley Battle of the Badges Blood Drive Monday, Nov. 3, through Tuesday, Nov. 11, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at the Central California Blood Center, 1515 S. Mooney Blvd., in Visalia. Visalia Fire Chief Mark Nelson and Police Chief Bob Carden will kick off the blood drive at a "Chief's Donation Luncheon" at 11 a.m. at a tri-tip luncheon at the Blood Center. Donors will receive a commemorative T-shirt and donor reward coupons.

TV VIEWERS GEAR UP FOR CONVERSION TO ALL-DIGITAL TELEVISION:

After Feb. 17, 2009, full-power television stations will broadcast in digital only. Digital broadcasting allows stations to offer improved picture and sound quality and is more efficient than analog. A digital television (a TV with an internal digital tuner) will allow you to continue to watch free over-the-air programming after February, 17, 2009. If you have an analog television, you will need a digital to analog converter box to continue to watch broadcast television on that set. A converter box will also enable you to see any additional multicast programming that your local stations are offering. To help consumers with the DTV transition, the Government established the Digital-to-Analog Converter Box Coupon Program. Every U.S. household is eligible to receive up to two coupons, worth \$40 each, toward the purchase of eligible digital-to-analog converter boxes. The coupons may only be used for eligible converter boxes sold at participating consumer electronic retailers, and the coupons must be used at the time of purchase. A one-time cost of \$40 to \$70 each is estimated for the digital-to-analog converter boxes. For information on the coupon program, visit www.dtv2009.gov.

K-9 TRIAL RESULTS: The Visalia Police Department K-9 unit competed in the Kingsburg K-9 competition held on Friday October 3rd and Saturday October 4th. The Kingsburg K-9 competition is held annually and designed to test the working ability of police K-9's. Police K-9's compete in a series of events including narcotic detection, obedience, agility, area search, and protection. Agent Mark Lyon and his K-9 partner Alex took 2nd Place in narcotics detection, 3rd place in obedience and 5th place in the open division. Officer Clay Moffett and his K-9 partner Bosco took 5th place in agility. Officer Jason Feierbach and his K-9 partner Timber took 5th place in the area search and won agitators choice. Officer Gerritt DeJong and his K-9 partner Samson took 2nd place in the area search.

ENJOY FALL NIGHTS WITH FAMILY NIGHT AT THE PARK: The Parks and Recreation Department will partner with Centex Homes Jumpin Jollies Bounce Houses, Amazing Bounce, and Domino's Pizza to provide "Family Night at the Park". Each night will begin with bounce house fun for a minimal wristband price. Afterward, a FREE movie will be shown at dusk. Concessions will be available. The fun starts Saturday, Oct. 11, with "Shrek 3" showing at Blaine Park, and "Casper" on Oct. 18 at Riverway Sports Park. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy an evening of relaxation for the whole family. For additional information, contact John Bradley at 713-4585.

CITY GIVES BUDGET UPDATE TO SCHOOL BOARD: At the Oct. 7 joint meeting of the Visalia Unified School District Board of Trustees/Visalia City Council, Administrative Services Director Eric Frost gave an update on the impact of the approved state budget on City revenues. This year's budget was adopted assuming that a certain level of revenues would be taken from the City by the State. General Fund revenue losses are about \$1 million less than was anticipated, but the City may need to extend a loan to the Redevelopment Agency to fund their \$450,000 in State losses. The big issue now is estimating what the major revenue sources from the City yield. The State has taken away Redevelopment monies this year. Council will need to consider if loaning the Redevelopment monies to carry out their programs is appropriate or if programs should be cut. At the same time, preliminary information about the two major General Fund revenues is mixed. Property taxes are up about \$100,000 but sales tax is down about \$600,000 or 2.75% from budget. The Finance Department has projected sales tax assuming that all quarters which are unknown will be the same as last year. With this assumption, the preliminary forecast shows that revenues are at about the same level as last year but short \$600,000 from budget. The result is, the revenue picture has improved, but other factors offset some of the gains. In other words, the smaller than expected state take-aways may just offset the RDA takeaways and Sales Tax losses, as shown by the addition or subtraction of changes in sales and property taxes. The net budget losses are about at the level projected at budget time. At this time, staff does not recommend any changes in budget direction. The City needs to continue to look for ways to restrain spending and be ready to meet the uncertainties of the current economy.

BARRIER AWARENESS DAY ON OCT. 16: The City's Park and Recreation Department will put on its annual Barrier Awareness Day from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 16, at the Anthony Community Center, 345 N. Jacob St. The event shows how challenging the world of a disabled person can be. Sign-ins are at 8:30 p.m., followed by a short presentation and the formation of teams (a disabled individual, a volunteer, and a safety helper) to maneuver around downtown Visalia. Lunch will be served, and all participants will be encouraged to share their experiences. For more information, contact Jeannie Greenwood at 713-4042 or by email at jgreenwood@ci.visalia.ca.us.

POLICE CAPTAIN COMPLETES COMMAND COLLEGE: Congratulations to Visalia Police Captain Rick Haskill, a recent graduate of the POST Command College program. The 18-month program is designed to prepare law enforcement leaders for the challenges of the future by focusing on the most effective methods, skills and strategies needed to confront tomorrow's issues. Haskill completed a research project on emerging future issues that will affect law enforcement in California. His project was submitted for publication in a professional journal. In addition, sessions in the program included social issues and futures research, enhanced leadership and politics, economics and strategic planning, technological and environmental issues, futures planning tools, and politics of change.



*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*