

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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‘UNCERTAINTY’ IN ‘08 IMPACTS BUDGET: The City faces uncertain budget times with a contingency fund of \$25 million, and a “rainy day fund” of \$12 million, still not enough to be the ultimate answer to these uncertain financial times. Administrative Services Director Eric Frost told City Council members that Visalia made changes to help preserve its financial position before Wall Street went awry. Frost said \$40 million of the city’s \$870 million portfolio was moved into cash. The portfolio continues to annually earn 3 percent. The recently adopted state budget withholds less than the city had anticipated. The city budgeted for \$1.15 million in state takeaways but only lost \$610,000. However, with the State’s budget already out of balance, Visalia may still experience further State budget take-aways this year. City Department Heads met on Oct. 14, and elected to take the following actions immediately: All training and travel will be reviewed by department heads in order to reduce costs as appropriate; current vacancies will be reviewed to determine if there is a way to save money in the General Fund; some major purchases should be put on hold until the mid-year report (March) unless some special need exists; overtime will be more closely reviewed, particularly among administrative personnel with an eye toward reducing costs; and projects now in the planning stages may continue forward; however, projects may need to move slower or be put on hold depending upon what occurs with the City’s overall financial situation.

COUNCIL ASKS STAFF TO CONSIDER ADDITIONAL SITES FOR NEW ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITY:

In a 3-2 vote, the City Council on Oct. 20 asked staff to further explore possible site locations for the city’s new Animal Control Facility. Council members Don Landers and Amy Shuklian, who served on a three-person site-selection committee, voted in favor of a site near the Packwood Creek shopping center. The proposal was the result of research by a consultant and city staff that resulted in five proposed sites. Staff also held three community meetings prior to the Oct. 20 Council meeting to hear concerns of nearby residents. Over 25 people who live near the proposed site at Visalia Parkway and County Center Drive, came to the Council meeting and voiced concerns over falling property values, traffic and noise problems if the proposed 25,000 square-foot facility was built at that location. Approximately another 25 people were in support of the site, with several citizens and shelter staff describing the “terrible” conditions at the current site, and urging Council to take action to move the project forward.



CITY AWARDED FEDERAL SAFE ROUTE TO SCHOOL GRANT: For the first time, the City of Visalia was awarded a \$318,910 federal Safe Routes to School Grant to construct curbs, gutter, sidewalks and ADA ramps along the north side of Tulare Avenue from Santa Fe Drive to Pinkham Elementary School. Statewide, a total of 401 applications were competed for \$46 million in available funding. Of those 119 applications were funded. Visalia, part of District 6, was one of 20 applications, out of 44 submitted, funded for a total of nearly \$3.7 million, the district's total allocation for the program. Pinkham School Principal John Davis said the lack of sidewalks along Tulare Avenue is particularly troubling since many of the students and families with the least available resources live in that part of their attendance area. Over half of the students at Pinkham are identified as low-socioeconomic, and a large number from that demographic walk to school each day along Tulare Avenue. Partners in the grant application included Visalia Police Department, Engineering, Community Relations, and the Visalia Unified School District.

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, for \$15, 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.

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. Join in the celebration of the heritage and tradition of the Lincoln Oval Park. Band lineups include: October 17 - Pachango; and Oct. 24—Conjunto Califas. For more information, contact John Bradley at the Parks and Recreation Department at 713-4585.

POLICE MOTORCYCLE RODEO: The Visalia Police Department hosted and competed in a weekend Police Motorcycle Skills competition. The event, open to the public, drew several hundred interested spectators to the two-day event held Oct. 18-19 at the Holiday Inn. Joe Paddock of the Visalia Police Department and Brian Cordeniz of the Tulare Police Department took third and second place, respectively, in the Harley Expert category. Shawn Cardoza of the Tulare Police Department took first place and was the overall winner of the competition.



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.

OPENING CELEBRATION: The Visalia/Tulare County Children's Library and Expansion Project is completed—time for a celebration. A ribbon-cutting will be held at 5 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 28, at 200 W. Oak St., in downtown Visalia.

WEST DOWNTOWN UPDATE:

Two developers are eyeing city-owned property in west downtown to build a hotel, parking garage, medical offices and residential lofts. City staff told City Council members that it will sell the property if the plans for development help the city's goal of bringing more structures downtown. Council member Greg Collins and city staff will interview the developers in November, and make their recommendations in January. City Manager Steve Salomon cautioned that today's precarious financial climate might block a big sale, necessitating the project to be built in phases. City planners also told Council members that they might consider selling



off another downtown block where City Hall West, the City Council chambers and the main Visalia Police station are located. A site for the planned \$25 million Public Safety building in East Visalia could be built in about four years. A third project, the Miki City Park, begins construction in January. The park, named after Visalia's sister city in Japan, is at the corner of Mineral King and Stevenson, across the street from where the medical offices and hotel would go.

TV VIEWERS GEAR UP FOR CONVERSION TO ALL-DIGITAL TELE-

VISION: 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.

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 Blain Park, 3101 S. Court St. Bounce houses open at 3:30 p.m., with the movie beginning at dusk. Enjoy "Casper" on Oct. 18 at Riverway Sports Park, 3611 N. Dinuba Blvd. Bring your blankets and lawn chairs and enjoy an evening of relaxation for the whole family. Bounce houses start at 5 p.m. All-Event Bounce House Wristbands are available for \$5 per person. For additional information, contact John Bradley at 713-4585 or email recreation@ci.visalia.ca.us.

PROPOSITION 42 PAYMENTS MADE FOR FIRST TIME IN TWO

YEARS: The State Controller's office made the first Proposition 42 payments to local governments in two years on Oct. 16. Visalia received \$296,712.97 from Prop 42, also known as the Traffic Congestion Relief Program, which was under scrutiny in this year's budget negotiations as part of the potential legislative borrowing scheme from local government. It was later scrapped due largely to staunch opposition from cities.

TIME CHANGE: Just as sunflowers turn their heads to catch every sunbeam, so too have we discovered a simple way to get more from our sun – Daylight Saving Time. But, that time is coming to an end. Daylight Saving Time ends at 2 a.m. on Sunday, Nov. 2. This means that clocks will “FALL BACK” – one hour. The Visalia Fire Department encourages people to use this time as a reminder to change the batteries in all smoke detectors. Conserve Water—don’t forget to adjust the timers on your lawn sprinkling system as well.

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