

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

VOLUME 11

SEPT. 22, 2009

FEMA UPDATE: At its Sept. 22 meeting, the City Council received an update regarding FEMA's revised Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). Council approved staff's requests to work with the City's Federal lobbyist Jeanne Morin with Akerman Senterfitt toward the extension of FEMA's Preferred Risk Program. Currently, the PRP provides for a substantial discount on the flood insurance rate during the initial one-year period following the implementation of the new FIRMs. Following this initial period, the insurance rate will increase substantially. The Mayor, Council and City staff continue their efforts to have FEMA grant an extension of the PRP for at least an additional year. Members of Council and City staff have met several times with representatives from Senator Boxer's, Feinstein's and Congressman Nunes' offices. Congressman Nunes' has written to FEMA's Acting Director requesting the extension of the PRP, but to date, FEMA's Acting Director has declined to extend the PRP for Tulare County. City staff has become aware that because FEMA has received complaints from numerous cities regarding its Preferred Risk Program extension criteria, FEMA may be amending its current criteria for granting PRP extensions. These amendments may mean that the City of Visalia could potentially qualify for an extension of the PRP. The City Council also authorized the Mayor to sign a letter asking FEMA to approve the City of Visalia's participation in the Community Rating System, a voluntary incentive program that recognizes and encourages community floodplain management activities that exceed the minimum National Floodplain Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. As a result, flood insurance premium rates are discounted to reflect the reduced flood risk resulting from the community actions. A written request from the mayor is required to begin the process with FEMA of applying to the CRS program.

COUNCIL OKS PLAN FOR HAZ-MAT UNIT: City Council members approved an interim plan to keep a Visalia-based hazardous materials unit operating until June 30, 2010. The unit, which serves both Tulare and Kings counties, handles on average 100 calls a year involving hazardous materials. The Council voted to invite other communities to contribute to the program which costs the City \$180,000 a year. The plan for funding the team includes: charging fees for hazmat response; allocating \$60,000 to be "proportionately paid by participating agencies" which includes \$16,808 from the City of Visalia; and work to obtain \$60,000 in grant funding for the unit's vehicle replacement fund.

CITY'S 'GREEN TEAM' WINS IN SAN JOAQUIN CHALLENGE: The City of Visalia's Administration Department, otherwise known as the Green Team, took home top honors in the small category in the Commute Green in the San Joaquin Challenge.

VISALIA PARKS AND RECREATION TAKES MARKETING ONLINE:

The Parks and Recreation Department is looking for ways to save money in marketing programs and events. The Department has embraced new technologies with a NEW website www.liveandplayvisalia.com which will save residents time as they directly search for desired information. All printed materials direct residents to the website to view programs, events and park information and in many cases register online. Additionally, Visalia Parks and Recreation is now on Facebook! Visit

the site at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Visalia-CA/Visalia-Parks-and-Recreation/170633860648?v=wall> to be added as a friend. The Department has started sending electronic email blasts to existing program users. If you are not on the email list but would like to receive updated information please email jbradley@ci.visalia.ca.us. Coming Soon- sport stats online for youth and adult sport teams!

HOUSTON ROUNDABOUT PROJECT PROMPTS ROAD CLOSURES:

Work on this project begins this week with significant traffic disruptions. Crawford Construction is the general contractor hired by the City of Visalia to do the work on the Houston Avenue project. The resident engineer is Adam Ennis with the City of Visalia. The project managers for the City of Visalia are Greg Dais and Michael Carr.

Timeline for the next two weeks:

- **Week of Sept. 21-Sept. 25:** Santa Fe Street, with connections to NE 1st and NE 2nd will remain closed to through traffic. (Businesses will remain accessible.) In addition, NE 3rd will remain closed at Santa Fe and Houston Avenue for approximately 3 more weeks for reconstruction work on Houston Avenue and Santa Fe Street. This phase of work will extend on Houston Avenue from Santa Fe Street to the west side of Burke Street. Expect short, periodic delays. Douglas Avenue will be closed from Santa Fe east for 400 feet (between Santa Fe and the old Soroptimist Park) for the installation of storm drain pipe in Douglas Avenue.
- **Week of Sept. 28-Oct. 2:** Douglas Avenue will remain closed from Santa Fe east for 400 feet (between Santa Fe and the old Soroptimist Park) for the installation of storm drain pipe in Douglas Avenue. Storm drain installation will also take place on Santa Fe between Douglas Avenue and Houston Avenue. Road closures and detours to remain in effect.

ENJOY ‘DINNER IN A BAG’ AND HELP POLICE ACTIVITIES

LEAGUE: Skip dinner preparations on Friday, Oct. 23, and support the Visalia Police Activities League (PAL) instead! PAL’s 2009 Fall Fundraiser will be a “Dinner-in-a-Bag” night. Tickets are only \$8 each, and includes a large Tri-Tip Sandwich, an individual bag of chips and a 12 ounce canned soft drink. A “Drive-Thru” Pick-Up area will be staffed by PAL volunteers will be setting up enabling supporters to pick-up their dinners without having to get out of their cars. Each ticket redeemed will also be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of three beautiful gift baskets. For tickets, call 732-2233 or come by the PAL Center at 701 E. Race Street. To order tickets by mail, make checks payable to Visalia PAL and mail them to P.O. Box 2663, Visalia, CA 93279. Please include a note indicating how many meal tickets you are purchasing and where to mail the tickets.

TRANSIT CENTER EXPANSION BREAKS GROUND, GARNERS PRAISE:

Over 100 City staff, elected officials and citizens gathered on Sept. 18 for the groundbreaking ceremony for the expansion of the Visalia Transit Center, one of the first projects to be fully funded by federal Stimulus monies to break ground in the State. Speaking on behalf of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer, Field Representative Ameen Khan noted that this project would be pointed to as an example of the success of using stimulus dollars to stimulate the local economy. The City was awarded \$2.6 million in stimulus funding for the project, but lower bids enabled the project to be done for only \$1.6 million. The expansion is one of several projects funded with stimulus monies. Another \$6.4 million will go to the Ben Maddox Interchange, which is expected to break ground at the end of this year. In addition, the City has received \$1.14 million for energy block grants, \$351,363 for public safety,



\$322,067 for community development block grants, and \$796,207 for transportation maintenance projects.

OPEN HOUSES COMMEMORATE FIRE PREVENTION WEEK: The week of October 5 marks the beginning of National Fire Prevention Week throughout the U.S. The Visalia Fire Department will provide presentations to all elementary schools within the City. Open Houses will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10, at Fire Station 51 at 309 S. Johnson St., Fire Station 54 at 440 W. Ferguson and the new Northwest Visalia Fire Station 55 at 6921 W. Ferguson. Bounce house will be available and a hot dog lunch will be served. For more information on Fire Prevention Week activities, call 713-4265.

VISALIA SENIOR CENTER EVENTS: On Friday, Sept. 25, from 1:30 to 6:30 pm, over 18 organizations and businesses will participate in the 6th annual Open House at the Visalia Senior Center, 310 S. Locust St. Information on health services and other opportunities for seniors will be available. Door prizes, arts & crafts display, and demonstrations will also be provided. Admission is free.

Senior Golf Scramble—On Saturday, Oct. 3, the Senior Golf Scramble will take place at the Exeter Golf Course. Senior golfers of all levels will compete in an 18-hole four player select shot tournament. Awards for closest to the pin, longest drive plus others will be offered. Total cost: \$40 per golfer includes green fees and a tri-tip BBQ. The scramble format allows the beginner and intermediate golfer to enjoy being part of a team. You may even help your team to win! For more information, contact Lloyd Trout at 713-4381 or email ltrout@ci.visalia.ca.us.

MAIN STREET PROMENADE: Located in the 400 Block of Main Street in Downtown Visalia, the Project is a joint venture of Mangano Company, Andy Mangano and Bob Dowds. Construction of the initial phases could occur as soon as the first quarter of 2010. The existing building on the site is approximately 28,500 square feet of floor area with 22 on-site parking stalls. The buildings are of various vintages and have been used for auto uses, storage, and general merchandise sales over the last 20 to 30 years. The last known occupancy of the ground floor of the hotel structure was a liquor store which was gutted by fire in the 1990s; last known occupancy of the second floor of the hotel was in the late 1960s, more than 40 years ago.

Demolition of most of the existing structure is indicated based on structural investigations conducted for the project. In order to honor the ornamental quality of the existing two-story hotel façade, important building details will be replicated. It is proposed to be constructed in up to four phases, with each phase or sub phase designed to suggest different eras of construction. The ground floor is expected to be a mix of retail and office space and the two upper floors are planned for office.

