

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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COUNCIL HEARS FEMA UPDATE: At its work session, the City Council learned that 541 parcels have been removed from the Special Flood Hazard Areas. Staff and Council members continue to pursue the extension of the Preferred Risk Program, which provides substantial discount on the flood insurance rate during the initial one-year period following the implementation of the new maps. A Local Working Group recommended hiring a flood study consultant, Northwest Hydraulic Consultants, which gathered, modeled and produced the technical information used in the flood mapping process. The consultant would meet with the Group to discuss possible sources of funding and potential flood mitigation measures and projects. Staff will bring a proposal back to Council at its Feb. 1 meeting.

CITY CONSIDERS DOWNTOWN PARKING: Reaction from City Council members to proposed downtown parking fees was mixed at the January 19 Council Meeting. Staff presented an update on progress made by the Downtown Parking Committee to improve the downtown parking “experience” and to identify funding sources to maintain parking facilities. The committee, made up of downtown property and business owners, a Planning Commissioner and two Council Members, made recommendations for consolidation of expanded on-street-parking, directional signage to parking garages, potential changes in parking enforcement hours, tiered parking citations, and a “pay for parking” system at the Acequia parking structures. The Acequia Avenue parking structures cost a combined \$20 million to \$25 million, said City Manager Steve Salomon. The council voted 5-0 to add appropriate directional signage to the Acequia Avenue parking structures and to continue to look for opportunities to add downtown parking, possibly through angled parking stalls and the elimination of unused loading zones. The City Council voted 4-1, with Mayor Bob Link dissenting, to study further the pay-for-parking, enforcement-hours and fine-escalation proposals.

COUNCIL WORKSHOP SET FOR FEB. 5-6: The public is invited to the session, set for noon to 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 5, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Ave.

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT UPDATES: Work continues on the Houston Widening and Roundabout and Santa Fe Overcrossing projects. An update for the next two weeks on work for the Houston Widening and Roundabout project:

- **Week of Jan 18 – Jan 22:** The connections to the roundabout from NE 3rd and Santa Fe Street will remain closed. Construction detours will be signed to direct traffic around closures. Traffic controls and posted Construction Zone speeds to remain in effect on Houston Avenue. The subcontractors will continue to work on sidewalks, traffic signals, and street lights, weather permitting.
- **Week of Jan 25 – Jan 29:** The connections to the roundabout from NE 3rd and Santa Fe Street will remain closed. Traffic could be affected around the roundabout as work is done on the ADA crosswalks through the median islands. Sidewalks on Houston will be closed until concrete work is done. Electrical work for new street lights and traffic signals will continue. Work on the Ben Maddox median island near Sweet Avenue may occur with traffic shifted to the outside

lanes away from the median.

An update on work for the next two weeks on the Santa Fe Overcrossing project:

- **Week of Jan 18-Jan 22:** Work will continue on concrete planter walls at the bridge entrances. Landscaping is planned for Highway 198 slopes and in the median. Highway 198 ramp closures are scheduled Wednesday through Friday this week from 9 am to 3 pm for the eastbound Court Street onramp and the westbound Court Street offramp. Nighttime single lane closures on Highway 198 near the bridge structure and Court Street on- and off-ramp closures are planned from 8 pm to 6 am for Thursday night, Jan. 21 through Friday morning, Jan. 22. There will be no detour of highway traffic to city streets.
- **Week of Jan 25-Jan 29:** Forms will be constructed for concrete traffic barriers on the bridge deck. All work will be done in the daylight hours. Highway 198 ramp closures for the east bound Court Street on-ramp and westbound Court Street off-ramp are scheduled from 9 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday, Jan. 25-29. All work will be done during daylight hours.