

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

MAY 19, 2011

REPLACING A COUNCIL MEMBER: The news that City Council Member Mike Lane will be stepping down from the Council and moving to the Bay Area to pursue a job opportunity has quickly been followed about a series of questions about how he will be replaced. The City Council has several options, two that may make the most sense. They can appoint someone to fill the unexpired term (until November, 2013), or they can hold a special election to fill the unexpired term in conjunction with the regular Council election scheduled for Nov. 8, 2011. The Council will consider options at the June 6 regular meeting.

WAL MART EXPANSION DECISION POSTPONED: Whether the Wal Mart on E. Noble will be allowed to expand was postponed until June 6, 2011. The company is asking to add approximately 50,000 square feet, which would have a grocery component, outdoor garden center and ancillary interior service-oriented tenants, including a fast food tenant. The expansion was approved by the Planning Commission last month but the decision was appealed. Proponents argued for job creation and better shopping options; opponents argued that it will lead to more grocery store closures. A great deal of correspondence regarding the appeal was filed on the day of the Council meeting. Staff recommended at the outset of the meeting that the decision be postponed so the correspondence could be addressed. The item will be back on the agenda for Council consideration on June 6. The meeting will be at the Convention Center.

RETIREE HEALTH CARE DECISION FINALIZED: The City Council agreed that City retirees are entitled to have access to the City's health insurance plan, but due to rising costs and shrinking budgets, the City's practice of contributing to the cost of the insurance premiums will be phased out. Except for retirees who are low income and worked for the City more than 15 years or have a disability retirement, all retirees will pay the full cost of their health plan by 2019. The Council struggled with the decision, recognizing that the quality community that is enjoyed today was, in great part, created by the retired employees, but having cut more than \$10 million from the General Fund budget in the past three years, the Council was also hesitant to cut more from citizen services to fund retiree health care.

GREAT LAKES SERVICE TO LAX AND LAS VEGAS A REALITY: Great Lakes Airlines kicked off its **new flight service** on Sunday, May 15, and already, 16 passengers are slated to be using this service on tonight's incoming flight. Passengers are now able to fly from Visalia Municipal to LAX as well as to Las Vegas via Merced. The new daily Visalia to LAX routes depart at 7:10 a.m. and 4:12 p.m. for the 55-minute flight. Daily LAX to Visalia flights are scheduled to leave Los Angeles at 8:31 a.m. and 6:05 p.m. The Visalia-to-Vegas flight departs daily at 9:41 a.m. and after making a stop in Merced, arrives in Vegas at 11:58 a.m. The return flight leaves McCarran International at 1:45 p.m. and arrives in Visalia at 4:02 p.m. Fares to Las Vegas range from \$95 to \$185; tickets to LAX can be \$59 each way with 30 days advance booking. Shorter term fares range between \$89 and \$149. With both destinations offering worldwide connections, Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez is expecting business at Visalia Municipal to pick up considerably in coming months.

SUMMER GET FIT PROGRAM RETURNS: Back by popular demand; join the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation's simple 8-week program to "Get Fit" for only \$10. Participants will receive valuable information regarding nutrition, exercise and overall wellness. Each week participants will weigh in for accountability and participate in an activity. Activities will introduce participants to fitness classes like Zumba, while providing education on where to go to find out health information to continue a healthy lifestyle. At the end of the 8 weeks, awards will be given to participants who have lost the most body fat. Weigh in weekly from 6:30 to 6:45 pm, with a planned activity from 6:45 to 7:15 pm. Classes run June 21 through August 9. Register online at www.liveandplayvisalia.com. For more information call 713-4585 or email jbradley@ci.visalia.ca.us

THIRD ANNUAL DARE TO SPARE CHALLENGE SEES 50% INCREASE IN PARTICIPATION: The Dare to Spare Challenge proved to be another success, with nearly a 50% increase in participating teams. Through Dare to Spare Week, Visalia Transit Division challenges the community to get involved in sparing our air. Each team of three earned points for every task. Collectively, the teams: Walked 308 miles; biked 653 miles; rode the Tulare Intermodal Express 25 times; rode the Visalia Transit 134 times; carpooled 113 times; trip-linked 53 times; and rode the Visalia Towne Trolley four times. The winning team was Team Redd with 4880 points, with team members Matt Redd, Jason Lucero, and Shana Redd each receiving trophies and a prize package of eco-friendly items.

PARKS AND RECREATION'S 2011 LIVE & PLAY SUMMER RECREATION GUIDE AVAILABLE: Registration is being accepted for all summer programs and classes including swim lessons, specialty camps, youth & adult sports, enrichment classes and more. To view the recreation guide and register online visit our website at: www.liveandplayvisalia.com. For additional information please call 713-4365 or email recreation@ci.visalia.ca.us.

DUMP ON US EVENT: You read about them in Inside City hall. Dump On Us events are held quarterly at the Corporation Yard, where citizens can bring loads of material to dispose of for free. Here is a breakout of collection and disposal costs for the April 2011 Dump on Us event held at the Corporation Yard.

- About 80 tons of material was collected at the April event. The material is mostly junk and items that might eventually find their way to the landfill or illegally dumped in an alley or roadside.
 - 582 vehicles and trailers were unloaded at the event.
 - 210 tires were collected.
 - 7.5 tons of metal was collected, the City received \$1,463.00 for the scrap metal.
 - Almost 50% of the collected material was recycled or otherwise diverted from the landfill.
 - It cost Solid Waste operation a net \$28,000 to hold the event and dispose of the material collected.
- The next DOU event will be held on July 9 at the Corporation Yard at 335 North Cain Street.

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE MOVES INTO SECOND PHASE: The General Plan is a long-range planning and policy document which guides city growth and public services. The 25-member General Plan Update Review Committee is leading this effort. Topics to be addressed include: Land use, transportation, street patterns, parks and open space, public services, city design, noise, safety, conservation, and air quality. The Plan is now at the stage where several different “growth concepts” – maps showing the potential locations of future housing, job centers, parks, schools, greenbelts, transit and other amenities – are being prepared. They show a range of concepts to guide future growth and development in Visalia.

Remaining community meetings from 6 to 7:30 p.m. will be held at the following locations:

- **Thursday, May 19** – Oak Grove Elementary School Cafeteria, 4445 W. Ferguson Ave. Interpreters for non-English speaking residents will be available at these outreach meetings:
- **Tuesday, May 24**, Fairview School Cafeteria, 1051 Robin Drive, from 3:30-4:30 p.m.; and the Founder's Room at CSET, 312 N.W. 3rd Ave., from 5:30 to 7 p.m.
- **Wednesday, May 25**, Manuel Hernandez Center, 247 W. Ferguson Ave., from 6:30 to 8 p.m.

A citywide public workshop in June at the Convention Center will provide opportunities to learn about the growth concepts, participate in small group discussions, and record your ideas for the Update Committee to consider as they move forward. For dates and times of upcoming events, go to www.visaliageneralplanupdate.com.

SEQUOIA SHUTTLE TICKETS SELLING STRONG: The season doesn't officially start for several more weeks, but so far, Sequoia Shuttle is seeing a 225% sales increase over this very same time last year which was a record setting year over all. Typically this means the forecast looks good as it seems like the increase gas prices tend to draw new shuttle riders to the service. For information on the Sequoia Shuttle, visit www.reservations.sequoiashuttle.com.

PARKS AND RECREATION EVENTS PREVIEW: Experience a showcase of art programs sponsored by the Visalia Parks & Recreation Department from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Friday, May 20 at the Visalia Senior Center. Enjoy a tasty barbecue while you admire the art. Admission to the showcase is free, and the cost for the barbecue is \$3.50 per person, and will be served from 12:30 to 2 p.m.

DUI CHECKPOINT: The Visalia Police Department will conduct a DUI/Drivers License checkpoint Friday, May 20. By publicizing these enforcement and education efforts, the Visalia Police Department believes motorists can be deterred from drinking and driving. Traffic volume and weather permitting, all vehicles may be checked and drivers who are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs will be arrested. The objective is to send a clear message to those who are considering driving a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol and/or drugs – Drunk Driving, Over the Limit, Under Arrest. The public is encouraged to help keep roadways safe by calling 911 if they see a suspected impaired driver. Funding is provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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