

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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GREAT LAKES MAKES SPRING LANDING IN VISALIA: Visalia Municipal Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez expects Great Lakes Airlines to start service here in two months. “They want to be in here as soon as possible,” he said. “It’s just a matter of getting the aircraft and getting the service started. We hope in a couple of weeks that we’ll actually be able to announce a start date. Once they get schedules loaded into the system – they like to pre-sell tickets at about 45 days – we’ll know we have a start date.” He added that it takes much more time to change airlines in an Essential Air Service market now than it used to. “Ideally, when the system was working right, within 30 to 60 days you would see a transition of aircraft,” he said. He added that two recent factors affected the current transition. Since Great Lakes was awarded the local contract, competitor Big Sky Airlines announced it was completely closing down its Essential Air Service in December, and three weeks ago, Mesa filed to pull out of all of its remaining markets. “So you have the number two and number three provider of Essential Air Service west of the Mississippi basically saying, ‘We’re done. We’re not going to do it anymore,’” he said. These actions forced Great Lakes to pick up some of the routes of these airlines, according to Cifuentez, who described the Essential Air Service program as “a shell game.” “When Great Lakes would be awarded one community, typically, it was one of the other two that was losing it, and they would be awarded another community,” he said. “So they were transferring airplanes around. Great Lakes had anticipated pulling out of some markets, but now the company is unable to do so.”



OAKS BALLPARK STADIUM GROUNDBREAKING MARCH 17: A groundbreaking ceremony for the expansion of the Recreation Park Stadium will be held at noon Monday, March 17, at 300 N. Giddings St. Refreshments will be provided by the Top of the Third, and will be served before and after the ceremony. The program will begin at 12:30 p.m., with the ground-breaking ceremony slated to begin at 12:45 p.m.



*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*

HOME DEPOT APPEALS PLANNING COMMISSION RULING: Home Depot will appeal a Visalia Planning Commission ruling prohibiting it from unloading trucks after 10 p.m. at its new store at Riggins and Dinuba Highway. The commission Feb. 26 denied the request (3 to 0) concerned over the noise impact on surrounding neighborhoods because of late night fork lifts and truck activity. While grading of the site is underway, the permit for that was issued to the developer of the project, Donahue Schriber, a city building official said. The big project, Orchard Walk, is underway on both sides of Dinuba Highway with the proposed Home Depot on the west and the other big anchor, Target, is under construction. A second anchor, Sportsman's Warehouse, has been approved to begin construction. Another major retailer is expected to land at the same center as well.



CITY RECEIVES \$1M+ FOR NEW VISITOR/SHUTTLE INFORMATION CENTER: As part of a \$394 million allocation for transit projects to protect the environment and keep the economy moving, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger awarded the City of Visalia \$1,015,390 in Proposition 1B bond funding to design and construct a visitor/shuttle information center near the city's Transit Center. The project is one of 106 approved statewide. In total, these projects will create 7,200 jobs and more than \$256 million in wages. These are the first transit projects to be funded by Prop 1B, the 2006 voter-approved \$19.9 billion transportation bond.

NORTHWEST FIRE STATION GROUNDBREAKING SET FOR APRIL 7: A groundbreaking at 3 p.m. Monday, April 7, will kick-off construction of the Northwest Visalia Fire Station and Training center at Shirk Street and Ferguson Avenue. The City Council approved a \$6.87 million financing package, with \$314,695 from fire impact fees, \$162.115 from Measure T, and a \$3 million advance from the city's General Fund, which will most likely be converted to a loan through a local bank.

SECOND SEQUOIA SHUTTLE SEASON

BEGINS MAY 21: The City of Visalia, in cooperation with the National Park Service, is ready to launch its second season of the Sequoia Shuttle, which begins Wednesday, May 21, 2008 and runs through Labor Day. This shuttle service has three routes transporting tourists and commuters to key features within Sequoia National Park, as well as offering five daily roundtrips into the park from the cities of Visalia and Three Rivers. After a successful first season, the Sequoia Shuttle is sure to attract even more use from families and backpackers feeling the impact of high gas prices, but still wanting to visit this national treasure. Features of the shuttle route from outside the park include: a no-worries drive up to the park; an onboard video introduction to the park; room for daypacks; wheel chair accessibility; online ticket reservations capabilities; convenient schedules and pickup locations for a reasonable fee. The cost for a round trip to the Park will be \$15 per person and includes the park entrance fee. Customers are encouraged to make reservations in advance by visiting www.sequoiashuttle.com or by calling 1-877-BUS-HIKE.



POLICE ESTABLISH 24-HOUR CRIME HOTLINE FOR SPANISH-

SPEAKING RESIDENTS: The Visalia Police Department has created a 24-hour crime hotline for Spanish-speaking residents. The Spanish Crime Hotline is (559) 713-4728. The 24-hour Crime Hot-

line for English-speaking residents is (559) 734-5302. The Department is encouraging Spanish-speaking residents to call the 24-hour crime hotline to report criminal activity. Messages may be left in Spanish or English, and the caller can remain anonymous. Callers should provide a description and location of the activity they wish to report; suspect names, addresses, and vehicle license plate numbers should also be provided. The messages are retrieved from the hotline and forwarded to the appropriate officers. Those wishing to be contacted can include their name and phone number with their message.

INJUNCTIONS TARGET IVANHOE GANGS:

A Tulare County judge on March 7 approved the area's first civil gang injunction. Law enforcement officials warned that while the new tool will be effective, it won't rid the county of gangs by itself. They said it will continue to take the combined efforts of the community and law enforcement to show gang members that they are unwelcome in Tulare County communities. Superior Court Judge Lloyd Hicks approved the temporary injunction against the South Side Kings of Ivanhoe, the first time that such an anti-gang lawsuit has been used by South Valley law enforcement. The Tulare County District Attorney's Office plans to ask for two more of the injunctions -- both targeting Visalia-area gangs -- in the upcoming weeks.

The injunction against the South Side Kings prevents members of the gang from associating or meeting in public within a "safety zone" designated by the injunction, which includes most of the unincorporated community of Ivanhoe, just north of Visalia. The injunction also prevents gang members from possessing illegal weapons and drugs or from acting as a lookout or painting graffiti. A person who has been served with a copy of the injunction can be arrested for contempt of court. The penalty for contempt is only six months in jail and fines, but gang enhancements can be tacked on to keep a person in prison for up to three years.



SOCIAL SECURITY BUILDING PERMIT DENIED: At its March 10 meeting, the Visalia Planning Commission voted 5-0 to deny a conditional use permit to construct a 12,585-square-foot building on Lovers Lane, the proposed new home to the Social Security Administration. Staff had recommended Commissioners deny the request by the Imperial Group of La Jolla to construct the building. "Staff's recommendation is based on the conclusion that the request is not consistent with (Visalia's) general-plan use policies," wrote Paul Bernal, associate planner for Visalia. The proposed 1.18-acre site on Lovers Lane just south of Tulare Avenue would have replaced the old downtown Social Security office at 505 N. Court St. The applicant has 10 days to appeal the Planning Commission's decision to the City Council. The Council has already voted unanimously asking Imperial Group of La Jolla and General Services Administration to find another site in Visalia and offered to help.

IN OTHER PLANNING NEWS: The Planning Commission approved (5-0) a conditional use permit allowing the Elephant Bar Restaurant to allow its construction at the northwest corner of Mooney Boulevard and Beech Street. They also approved a conditional use permit by Highland Development allowing a retail center of 118,558-square feet of commercial and office space. The center would include a pharmacy with a drive-thru and Fresh 'n Easy, a neighborhood grocery concept made popular in the United Kingdom. The center is located at the southeast corner of Caldwell Avenue and Court Street.

COUNCIL'S MARCH MEETING SCHEDULE: The Visalia City Council will hold a joint meeting with the College of the Sequoias Board at 4 p.m. Monday, March 17, at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Ave. The Council's work session follows the joint meeting at 5 p.m., with the regular session following at 7



p.m. at the Visalia Convention Center. A joint meeting with the City Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission will be held at 5 p.m. Monday, March 31, at the Visalia Convention Center.



ARBOR DAY PLANTS TREES FOR THE FUTURE: The City of Visalia's Park and Recreation Department, the Urban Tree Foundation, and the Visalia Beautification Committee will celebrate Arbor Day at 9 a.m. Saturday, April 5, at the riparian area of St. John's River, located just east of McAuliff Avenue on the setback of the St. John's River. The community is invited to bring shovels and join in this tree planting celebration. This is the City's 25th year of being named a Tree City USA Community by the National Arbor Day Foundation in honor of its commitment to community forestry. "Tree City USA designation recognizes the work of elected officials, staff and citizens who plant and care for the community forest," said John Rosenow, president of the Foundation. For more information, call 713-4384 or visit the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us.

CITY GETS GREENER FROM URBAN TREE FOUNDATION, CSET

GRANT: The streets throughout Visalia may be getting a little greener, thanks to a \$297,200 Environmental Enhancement and Mitigation grant. "We were selected, but it needs to go the California Transportation Commission for approval," said Brian Kemp with the Urban Tree Foundation, which partnered with Community Services & Employment Training (CSET) in the proposal to plant 900 street trees throughout the City. The project is designed to offset the environmental impacts of increases in traffic along Route 198 and State Route 63-Mooney Boulevard in Visalia. Work begins this Spring, with members of CSET's Tulare County Youth Corps and the Urban Tree Foundation, and the help of community volunteers, planting trees through the city. The project is expected to be completed in April 2010.

EARTH DAY: The City of Visalia's Natural Resources Conservation Division will co-sponsor Earth Day 2008 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 19, at Recreation Park, 345 N. Jacob St., in Visalia. The free event features demonstrations, information booths, and collection for E-Waste and free compost for Tulare County residents (bring your own containers, gloves and shovel). Pre-registration is required. Call 713-4531.

