



**CITY FORECASTS \$1.5 MILLION DEFICIT FOR FY 2010-11:** In a presentation to City Council at its Dec. 7 meeting, Administrative Services Director Eric Frost said that, even with holding the line on all cost saving actions taken to date, the projected 2010-11 General Fund budget is short \$1.5 million. That forecast assumes no more state takeaways, no allowance for additional employee compensation, the sales and property tax revenue forecast does not deteriorate further, and the City is able to maintain the cost savings it achieved with layoffs, retirements, and vacancies. Emergency reserves in excess of \$13 million can be used to temporarily help cushion losses to the City's General Fund, but Frost cautioned that reserves shouldn't be used for ongoing expenses, like salaries, during the economic downturn. About 75 percent of the City's General Fund is used to pay for Public Safety. The City absorbed \$8.5 million in lost revenue this year, \$5 million from a drop in sales tax alone. There is no way of knowing how deeply funding will be cut by the State. The most recent Legislative Analyst State Budget forecast predicts \$20 billion a year deficits for the next 5 years, despite some return in revenue growth. These deficits are due, in part, to the State's recent practice of borrowing to solve the current year deficit.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT TO APPLY TO FEMA FOR GRANT FOR ADDITIONAL ENGINE COMPANY:** On a 5-0 vote, the Visalia City Council voted to give the City's Fire Department approval to apply for a \$1.9 million federal grant to pay for a new nine-member engine company. Fire Chief Mark Nelson told Council members that the additional company would improve response times to homes and businesses on the City's west side. The grant, provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), previously had required cities to put up matching funds. In addition, if firefighters hired with the money were laid off, the grant monies would have to be returned. This year, FEMA eliminated the layoff restrictions for a three-year performance period as well as the matching funds requirement. If awarded, the grant would enable the hiring of nine firefighters. It also speeds up the city's plan to hire new firefighters in 2012 using funds from Measure T, the quarter-cent sales tax passed in 2004 by Visalia voters. Despite the anticipated reduction in sales-tax revenue, Measure T's portion should cover the nine firefighters' salaries once the grant funding runs out.

**LIGHTEN UP YOUR HOLIDAYS AND VIEW THE SAVINGS:** From now through Dec. 11, bring in a strand of incandescent holiday lights and receive a new strand of LED lights for free, while supplies last. Bring your strand of lights to the Visalia Senior Center from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 310 N. Locust St. and exchange them for a more energy-efficient LED strand of lights. Five hundred strands of lights are available through this exchange program, which is administered by Southern California Edison under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission. If you plan to use lights to decorate during the holiday season, make the switch to LEDs. They have a long life - 30,000 to 50,000 hours - and will save you both energy and money. LEDs reduce energy consumption by as much as 95 percent compared to traditional incandescent bulbs and can produce bright light for up to 20 holiday seasons. LEDs don't give off heat, reducing the risk of fire. They are more durable and perform well in cold weather, and provide a brighter, bolder light color. For information, call the City of Visalia's Natural Resource Conservation Division at 713-4532.

**BATTLE OF THE BADGE BLOOD DRIVE COLLECTS 171 UNITS:** Giving blood not only saves lives, it adds new firefighters! Decked out in full firefighter “turnout” gear, Visalia Police Chief Colleen Mestas made an appearance at the Council meeting as part of an annual wager during the annual Battle of the Badge blood drive. Police, firefighters, CHP and correction officers and ambulance personnel, together with friends and family members, donated blood during last month’s drive. Donations from Visalia Police totaled 53 units, while the Fire Department came in with 118 units. All in good fun, Chief Mestas donned the heavy jacket, pants, boots and helmet for the Council meeting.

**VINTAGE VISALIA POSTCARDS AVAILABLE:** Hundreds, if not thousands of old Visalia photographs are locked away and only a select few get to see and enjoy them. Visalia historian Terry Ommen and local photographer Bill Dillberg have found such photographs and have turned them into a set of high-quality collectible postcards. Patterned after vintage postcards, they measure 3-1/2 inches by 5-1/2 inches and feature an historical description on the back. Available in limited quantities, each sealed pack includes postcards of the Ringling Bros. Circus Parade on Main Street (circa 1903), a Southern California Edison truck in the floodwaters of 1945 at Main and Court Street, the Visalia Fire Department with a hose cart (circa 1882), and Visalia Public School (circa 1885). The cost of the postcard packs are \$4.99 each, not including shipping costs. Information: Terry Ommen at 901-3227 or email [histry@comcast.net](mailto:histry@comcast.net). Proceeds from the sale of these postcards will help finance the creation of future postcard packs.

**SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT IN VISALIA:** If you haven’t already heard the buzz, let us fill you on what’s been going on in Visalia. Beginning in October, Visalia Transit has been having a song writing contest to kick off the 2009 Holly Trolley season. After receiving numerous qualified entries, a panel of judges reviewed the songs and based on lyrics, arrangement, composition and hook have awarded the prize. Chris Seits won \$500 and the professional production of “Holly Trolley Holiday”, his custom Holly Trolley song. Chris, a native of Tulare County, performed his song live at the Visalia Candy Cane Lane Parade on November 30. His winning composition, along with other contest entries, are available for free download online at [www.HollyTrolley.com](http://www.HollyTrolley.com).

The Visalia Town Trolley operates all year long in downtown Visalia for 25 cents per ride, or with an unlimited monthly pass for \$5. During the holiday season, the Holly Trolley comes with the spirit of giving in the form of free rides. From now until Christmas Eve, Holly Trolley increases downtown route times and adds service to Mooney Boulevard that runs from downtown to Packwood Creek.

**RECYCLE YOUR HOLIDAY TREES:** From Dec. 26 through Jan. 10, you can recycle your holiday trees free of charge at any one of nine locations in the City. Drop-off locations: SaveMarts at Campus and Demaree and Akers and Goshen; College of the Sequoias Farm; Food 4 Less at 2025 N. Dinuba Blvd.; Neighborhood Church at 5505 W. Riggin Avenue; Parkside Chapel at 3200 W. Walnut Ave.; the parking lot at St. Johns and Lovers Lane; the northwest parking area behind Sequoia Mall; and Sierra Baptist Church at 1437 E. Walnut Ave. Please remove all ornaments, lights, tinsel, and stands. These events are for holiday trees only. For information, call the City of Visalia Natural Resource Conservation Division at 713-4532 or go to [www.GoGreenVisalia.com](http://www.GoGreenVisalia.com).

**BEN MADDOX WIDENING ‘ON THE MOVE’:** A groundbreaking ceremony for the Ben Maddox Widening project will be held on Friday, January 8, at 10 a.m. at the northeast corner of Ben Maddox Way and Noble Avenue. In case of rain, the ceremony will be held at the Visalia Ford Showroom at 1300 E. Mineral King Ave. The project is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and funder funds from SAFETEA-LU, the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users, and local funding including Measure R.

*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](http://www.ci.visalia.ca.us), email [nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us](mailto:nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us) or call 713-4535.*