

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

DECEMBER 7, 2010

HIGH SPEED RAIL AUTHORITY CHOOSES SECTION THAT

INCLUDES HANFORD STATION: City Council members and City officials gave support at the Dec. 6 City Council meeting for the High Speed Rail Authority's decision to place one of two stations in nearby Hanford along a 65-mile section of the high-speed rail line. Federal transportation authorities have already approved \$715 million in preliminary funding in addition to \$3.1 billion approved in stimulus funds. Mayor Bob Link traveled with Assistant City Manager Michael Olmos and Visalia Municipal Airport Manager Mario Cifuentez to Sacramento for the Dec. 2 meeting of the seven-member High Speed Rail Authority. The Authority unanimously voted in favor of the plan to build the first section from north of Fresno to north of Bakersfield. Mayor Link said the decision made the most sense economically as it was the only one that included the construction of two stations. Cifuentez added, "This is just the first step to a fully operational system." The use of stimulus funding requires the approval of the Environmental Impact Report by September of 2011 and construction must begin by December 2012. Ultimately, passengers will be able to travel on bullet trains at speeds of more than 200 miles per hour between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

ANNEXATION OF DINUBA BOULEVARD PROPERTY TO PROCEED:

The process to annex approximately 137 acres on the east side of Dinuba Boulevard between Shannon Parkway and the St. John's River is proceeding with the approval of the City Council at the Dec. 6 regular meeting. Council authorized the City to submit an application with the Tulare County Local Agency Formation Commission to annex parcels and right-of-way for the acreage into the City limits.

VISALIA FIRE STATION 55 RECEIVES 'STATION STYLE'

ACCOLADES: In the November issue of "Fire Chief" magazine, the Visalia Fire Station 55 and Training Center was one of the stations honored with the Station Style Design Award. New trends and innovations in design are featured in the magazine as a resource for fire departments nationwide looking to compile a "wish list" for their next facility. The station, completed in April 2009 at a cost of \$6.5 million, includes a 2,105-square-foot training classroom building, a 7,571-square-foot training building and a 7,288-square-foot fire station. The multi-story masonry and concrete structure incorporates a 3-story training tower and retail, commercial, and residential training scenarios and props. Bedroom, and kitchen props teach firefighters to assess fire behavior and use proper fire extinguishing methods in intense heat, live fire and smoke. The site area around the training building was designed so firefighters can practice apparatus approach and window rescues.

FALL DROP-OFF RUNS THROUGH JAN. 8: The City of Visalia annual free Fall yard waste recycling event will be held through Saturday, Jan. 8, at the Tulare County Compost and BioMass and WC Wood Industries. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday and Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Tulare County Compost and BioMass, 24478 Road 140 (Lovers Lane), and from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday at WC Wood Industries, 7715 Avenue 296 (southwest corner of 99 and 198). All City of Visalia residents are urged to recycle yard trimmings, grass clippings, leaves, branches, wood and lumber scraps. This event will be the last where Visalia residents may receive 1-yard compost FREE for each load of material recycled. The event is free to all Visalia residents, and proof of residency is required. All commercial gardeners must provide a City of Visalia business license. For more information, call 713-4500.

CITY, HOMEBUILDERS TEAM FOR NEW HOME BUYERS PROGRAM:

To help struggling homebuilders and interested buyers of new homes, the City of Visalia recently announced a new homes program offering 2nd deferred mortgages to qualified buyers. First-time home buyers or those who have not owned a home in the last three years may be eligible to receive as much as \$20,000 to help purchase a brand new home with a maximum purchase price of \$200,000. A Home Buyers Education Fair will be held on Saturday, Dec. 11, from 10 a.m. to noon at the Visalia Convention Center, 303 E. Acequia Ave. The City has partnered with five homebuilders with 25 new market-rate homes to make them available for a limited time only to eligible home buyers. This is the first time a new home buyers program has been offered in Visalia. Participating homebuilders are: SMEE Builders, Hughes Development Company, McMillin Homes, Sam Sciacca/Mike Fistolera Homebuilders, and Vaccaro Homes. For more information, call City of Visalia Housing Specialist Rhonda Haynes at 713-4460. You can also visit the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us.

BUILDING PERMITS BREAK EVEN: Down by only one permit from 2009, the total number of permits through November was 2,818, buoyed by a slight increase in the number of residential additions and alterations (943) and commercial additions, alterations and signs (347). The number of new single family dwelling permits was down 25% and multi-family permits by 75%. New commercial was off by 39%. Total valuation of all permits is down 15% for the year, from \$126,503,417 in 2009 to \$107,904,187 year-to-date in 2010.

CITY KICKS INTO HOLIDAY MODE: It's looking a lot like the holidays in Visalia. Downtown merchants are open until 8 p.m. on Thursdays for the Downtown Holiday Open House. Santa Claus will make a stop at the former Togni-Branch building from 5-8 p.m. on Thursdays and noon to 3 p.m. on Saturdays. Free gift wrapping is offered and free carriage rides are available on Thursday nights in the weeks leading up to Christmas. The Holly Trolley offers free rides through Christmas Eve with increased downtown route times and additional services to Mooney Boulevard from downtown to Packwood Creek. All major shopping can be accessed by riding the Holly Trolley—for FREE! Less traffic congestion, less gas, and less worry about where to park.

AGGRESSIVE SOLICITATION: The Visalia Police Department often receives inquiries regarding solicitation for funds. While it is not illegal to solicit funds, commonly referred to as panhandling, there are limits which are outlined in City Ordinance 9.34 Aggressive Solicitation. The ordinance was enacted due to complaints regarding person(s) asking for money in a way that may be intimidating to some citizens. It is not legal to follow or attempt to intimidate a person when soliciting funds in a public place. It is also a violation of the city ordinance to approach a motor vehicle and solicit funds. This does not preclude a driver of that vehicle from giving money in response to a person on the side of the road holding a sign as long as they are not impeding traffic. The City Ordinance also prevents solicitation near banks. For information on this or any other city ordinance, go to <http://www.amlegal.com/library/ca/visalia.shtml>.

FOURTH TOWN HALL MEETING SET: Council Member Michael Lane will moderate the fourth in a series of Town Hall Meetings, scheduled for 6 p.m. Monday, January 31 at Crestwood Elementary School, 3001 W. Whitendale Ave. This meeting is specifically for citizens in southwest Visalia, but is open to the general public. Council Member Lane can also be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 4313 or by email at mlane@ci.visalia.ca.us. Mayor Bob Link can be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 2313 or by email at blink@ci.visalia.ca.us. Vice Mayor Amy Shuklian can be reached through 713-4400, then enter 8313, or by email at ashuklian@ci.visalia.ca.us. Council Member Warren Gubler can be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 3313 or by email at wgubler@ci.visalia.ca.us. Council Member Steve Nelsen can be reached by calling 559-713-4400, Ext. 7313, by email at snelsen@ci.visalia.ca.us.

HOLIDAY LIGHT EXCHANGE WRAPS UP DEC. 10: Through Dec. 10, you can exchange those traditional strands of incandescent holiday lights for new, energy-efficient LED lights – for **free!** Bring in a strand of incandescent holiday lights (one strand of lights per person, please) and receive a new strand of LED lights for free, while supplies last. Bring your strand of lights to either the Visalia Senior Center from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 310 N. Locust St. or at the Recreation Ballpark Ticket Office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. at 300 N. Giddings while supplies last. A total of 250 strands of new LED lights are available through this exchange program, which is administered by the Valley Innovative Energy Watch (VIEW) and 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. For information, call the City of Visalia's Natural Resource Conservation Division at 713-4532.

GET FIT IN 12 WEEKS FOR ONLY \$10: The City of Visalia's Park & Recreation Department offers a 12-week program to "Get Healthy" on Tuesdays, Jan. 4 through March 22. Registered participants will receive information on nutrition, exercise, and overall wellness. Each week, participants will weigh in and participate in activities, ranging from Zumba, meal planning, walks, and more. Awards will be given to participants with the most total body fat loss. Information: John Bradley at 713-4585 or email jbradley@ci.visalia.ca.us.

You can now self-subscribe to receive issues of "Inside City Hall". Go to the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us, click on About Visalia and go to Inside City Hall Newsletter. For more information, contact Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva at nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us or call 713-4535..