

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

JANUARY 19, 2011

COUNCIL APPROVES USE OF \$968,000 IN EMERGENCY RESERVES

FOR STORM RESPONSE: Hoping to offset the use of the City's emergency reserves in its General Fund with State and Federal reimbursements, the Council approved the use of \$968,000 for emergency response efforts as a result of the storms in December, the wettest one ever recorded for Visalia. A total of 6.27 inches of rain fell in the City in December. Over the course of the storms, rainfall amounts were in the 10- to 25-year storm totals. The State issued a disaster proclamation for Tulare County and 11 other counties. The City is working with the Tulare County Office of Emergency Services requesting reimbursement of emergency response costs and potentially the public infrastructure damage that occurred as a result of the storms. The majority of the damage that occurred was caused by pavement subsidence in streets, the largest along the east side of Shirk Street at Ferguson Avenue, near Fire Station No. 55. Total repair costs for the subsided areas are estimated to be about \$650,000 to \$750,000. Repairs to the storm water basin at McDermott Park, where a temporary drainage trench was constructed to drain the basin into Persian Ditch, is estimated at about \$100,000. Erosion of ditch and creek banks will cost an estimated \$75,000 to repair, and repairing potholes in street paving from storm runoff and soil saturation is estimated to cost around \$4,000 to \$5,000.

SPCA PET LICENSE FEE ADJUSTMENTS APPROVED: The Visalia City Council voted to raise some pet-licensing fees and approved an "amnesty program" allowing pet owners, which have not previously licensed their pets, to obtain a one-year license free of charge. Also, as part of the Amnesty Program, any owner that has an expired license can renew their pet's license without the \$25 late penalty. The Amnesty Program deadlines July 1. Under the new fee schedule which takes effect Feb. 1, it will now cost \$75 to license a dog that has not been spayed or neutered, and \$18 for a dog that has been spayed or neutered. It will cost \$22 to license an unaltered cat, \$8 for one that has been altered. Owners can now purchase two- and three-year licenses that cost less per year than buying licenses annually and actually cost less on an annual basis than previous license fees. Offering extended pet licenses also cuts down on administrative costs for Valley Oak SPCA, under contract to run Visalia's animal control program.

VISALIA RAWHIDE: 2010 RECORD YEAR FOR ATTENDANCE: The 2010 Visalia Rawhide season was a record year for attendance, according to Tom Seidler, president and general manager for the minor league baseball team. During his presentation to the Visalia City Council, Seidler said 108,651 people had attended games at Recreation Park, averaging 1,552 people per game. The City will collect \$84,500 in revenues the team and stadium earned in 2010. Under an agreement with the team, the City collects 5 percent of the team's gross receipts over \$1 million, and collects fees from ticket taxes and other events held at the stadium. Seidler estimates that this year's Rawhide game attendance could go up to 115,000, which would also increase the City's portion of revenues and ticket sales taxes. An additional \$12,000 could also be collected by the City with the leasing of 1,433 square feet of commercial space at the ball park's office building. He also said he would like discussions to start on ball-park improvements, including constructing a family-seating deck before the start of the season in April. A committee will be formed to consider the projects and how they might be funded.

OTHER COUNCIL NEWS: Council received information and heard public comment on the possible development of a "Neighborhood Traffic Management Program" to address resident's concerns regarding excessive vehicle speed and traffic volumes on neighborhood streets within the Marseille Subdivision in northwest Visalia.

FOURTH TOWN HALL MEETING SET: Visalia City Council Member Michael Lane will moderate the fourth in a series of four City of Visalia Town Hall Meetings at 6 p.m. Monday, January 31, at Crestwood Elementary School, 3001 W. Whitendale Avenue in Visalia. This meeting is specifically for citizens in southwest Visalia, but is open to the general public. Council Member Lane and City staff will provide an update of efforts in the southwest quadrant of the City in the areas of Public Safety, Traffic Circulation Improvements, and Economic Development. The meeting is designed to allow sufficient time to hear and respond to citizen's concerns. Areas to be covered by Public Safety staff include gang suppression and prevention efforts and an update on the new fire station in Southwest Visalia. Traffic Circulation Improvements will include updates on the Ben Maddox and Lovers Lane Interchanges, Walnut and Mooney Boulevard intersection, and County Center/Dans Lane. Economic Development updates on Mooney Boulevard and Industrial Park will also be discussed. The meeting will also include a citizen question-and-answer period.

DUMP ON US: The next free event available to all Visalia residents will be held from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday, January 22nd at the City of Visalia Corporation Yard at 335 North Cain in Visalia. The Dump On Us event is free and available for all Visalia residents. It is an opportunity to rid property of any garbage, electronic waste, green waste and household hazardous waste items. A commercial shredding service will also be on site. For more information, call 713-4500 or go to www.DumpOnUs.org for details.

COUNCIL WORKSHOP SET FOR FEB. 4-5: The Visalia City Council will set priorities for the coming year at a workshop set for Feb. 4-5 at the Visalia Convention Center. Friday's session will start at 12:30 p.m., and Saturday's will begin at 8 a.m. The public is invited to attend.

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