

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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COUNCIL WRESTLES WITH OPTIONS TO CLOSE \$5.7 MILLION

GENERAL FUND DEFICIT: Public Safety employees turned out in large numbers to address the City Council with their concerns about the possibility of furloughs to deal with the City's \$5.7 million deficit in its 2009/10 General Fund. Mayor Jesus Gamboa responded to staff present and to information which has been circulated on the City's budget deficit with the following statement.

"Much has been written, advertised and distributed on flyers recently with regard to the City's attempts to deal with its budget deficit. While recommendations have not been finalized by the City Council, it's important to clarify several points.

"Visalia is not alone in this ongoing economic crisis, the worst since the Great Depression. Almost every city is dealing with this issue, and some have had to layoff public safety staff. Firefighters in San Jose and San Luis Obispo have agreed to give up pay increases. In Santa Rosa, police and fire agreed to give up contracted raises over the next two years. Firefighters agreed to forego raises and police eliminated three positions in Tracy. The City of Fremont is considering possible fire station closures and one fire station will close in Alameda. The City of Vallejo has declared bankruptcy, and the courts may determine if bargaining agreements may be rejected, cut salaries by 20 percent and implement 4-day furloughs for all employees.

"The City of Visalia has always attempted to compensate their valuable employees. Today's difficult times call for everybody in the organization to shoulder the responsibility of foregoing salary increases.

"On May 18, the Visalia City Council was told the General Fund deficit for 2009/10 had increased to \$5.7 million and could be more for at least the next several years. At this point, it can be anticipated that the City's reserves will be needed to balance, at the very least, the 2008/09, 2009/10 and 2010/11 budgets.

"Furloughs, layoffs and other cost-saving measures are needed to deal with a \$5.7 million shortfall in the City's 2009/2010 General Fund. On April 6, 2009, the City Council approved an action plan to deal with what was then estimated to be a \$4 million deficit in the 2009/10 General Fund. One of those items was to seek the approval of the City's bargaining groups to give up a 4% raise the City is contractually obligated to give employees. The four bargaining units to whom the city is contractually obligated to give a raise rejected giving up a 4 percent pay increase which takes effect on June 29. The City's management and the bargaining group which did not have a contract (26 employees) will not receive a pay increase.

"Public Safety has always been a Priority for this City Council. Out of 395 full-time positions funded in the General Fund in 2008/09, 272 are Public Safety employees, of which 28 were paid for through Measure T. It is the Council's sincere hope that the employees of the City will respond to the challenging economic times we currently face and consider giving up the 4% salary increase so that we do not have to consider more dire alternatives."

CITY'S BUILDING PERMITS DROP TO LOWEST LEVEL IN DECADE:

Yet another sign of the slumping economy: Only 1,287 permits have been filed through May of 2009—the lowest number in over a decade, reports Assistant City Manager Michael Olmos. Single family dwellings number 180 for the year, and permits for new commercial projects totaled only 17.

CITY TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL FOR 2010 AMGEN TOUR: The City of Visalia has been invited to submit a proposal for the 2010 Amgen Tour of California. The Request for Proposals became available in mid-May. As part of the proposal, the Committee is required to demonstrate that the City will work with the Committee and Amgen officials on details that are vital to the event's success including traffic control, crowd control, garbage collection, etc. On February 19, 2009, Visalia was the host for the 5th stage of the third annual Amgen Tour of California. A crowd of 10,000 people took to the streets of Visalia for the event, including spectators from throughout the United States and several countries. It was recently announced that the Tour of California will change in 2010, moving from February to May, and it will be a day shorter, for a total of 8 stages. According to the announcement, the May 16-23 event will "enable the race to avoid the wet weather that has pelted the event in the last few years, and allow for more mountain stages in the majestic Sierras, including a likely mountaintop finish." The reference to the Sierra mountains is an encouraging sign that another Valley loop will be part of the Amgen.

STAFF UPDATES COUNCIL ON FEMA: At its June 1 meeting, the City Council received an update on issues related to the FEMA Flood plain maps, which take effect June 16. Actions by staff and Council members include:

- **Meetings with Representatives of Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein:** On May 22, Mayor Jesus Gamboa, Councilman Greg Collins and City staff members met with Ameen Khan (Senator Barbara Boxer's Field Representative) and Shelly Abajian (Senator Dianne Feinstein's Regional Director/Central California). Issues regarding FEMA's "new" Flood Insurance Rate Maps, and the map modernization process were discussed per Council's direction. The representatives of both Senators suggested that the City send follow-up letters to the Senators emphasizing two items as needing immediate attention. These two items are: Extension of the Preferred Risk Policy for an additional year; and reconsideration of FEMA's methodology for the Visalia FIRM update. Congressman Devin Nunes is now a co-sponsor of the Flood Elevation Notification Act (HR 1316).
- **Local Working Group:** Council approved a staff recommendation to establish a "local working group" of engineers, and other interested residents that have knowledge, expertise, or interest regarding floodplain related issues. The committee membership includes Vice Mayor Bob Link, several engineers, professional land surveyors, an insurance professional, a developer, a representative from the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District, and several other residents.
- **Status of Letters of Map Revision (LOMRs) and Related RFP:** Staff continues to work with FEMA, local developers, engineers and surveyors to identify areas that can be shown to be above the base floodplain elevation. To date, staff has provided technical information to FEMA to show that over 300 lots should be removed from the floodplain. FEMA's "ruling" on these lots is expected any day. Staff is developing a Request for Proposals for consultants to provide assistance with floodplain analysis and the processing of Letters of Map Revision and Letters of Map Amendment. Staff anticipates advertising the RFP this week.

WORK ON SANTA FE OVERCROSSING CONTINUES: Regular updates will be provided as work progresses and significant aspects of the project occur. Agee Construction is the General Contractor hired by the City of Visalia to do the work on the Santa Fe Overcrossing. The resident engineer is David Vallejos with Mendoza and Associates. The project manager for the City of Visalia is Fred Lampe.

Timeline for the next two weeks:

- **Week of June 1-June 5:** Demolition work will continue on the existing bridge during daylight hours. Concrete columns and abutments will be removed over the next two weeks. Highway 198 on and off ramps at Court Street will be closed daily from 9 AM to 3 PM.
- **Week of June 8-June 12:** As concrete from the existing bridge is removed excavation will begin

for the new bridge foundations. Work will also begin on drilled pile footings for the new bridge. Highway on and off ramps at Court Street will continue to be closed daily from 9 AM to 3 PM.

COUNCIL COMMENDS WORK IN LINCOLN OVAL, WASHINGTON

SCHOOL AREA: Brighter lights, renovated homes and stepped-up law enforcement efforts in the Lincoln Oval area have made a significant contribution to neighborhood improvement efforts since January. The Washington School area will receive 47 new streetlights, at a cost to the city of \$50,000, with free installation provided by Southern California Edison Co. Housing & Economic Director Ricardo Noguera told Council that lights will be installed beginning this month in an area long plagued by dark streets. Ten blighted homes in the Lincoln Oval area will be cleaned up and restored. All of this work is being paid for through city funds and grant money. Habitat for Humanity is also renovating three homes near the Lincoln Oval. Stepped-up law enforcement activities in both areas brought eight arrests for civil gang injunction violations, and criminal activity has reduced considerably. City Council members lauded the team approach of both agencies involved in the neighborhood improvements.

RFP APPROVED FOR CONSULTANTS TO ASSIST WITH GENERAL

PLAN: City Council members approved a recommendation by the General Plan Update Advisory committee authorizing the issuance of a request for proposal to qualified consultant teams to prepare the General Plan Update and Environmental Impact Report. Funding has been set aside, which currently amounts to \$962,250, and current budgetary concerns shouldn't affect the availability of funds for the proposed General Plan Update. Proposals submitted will include a project approach, budget plan, and schedule of services. The City's Planning Division will assign 1.5 staff members to work with consultants preparing the Update. Council had previously authorized the comprehensive approach and the formation of a committee to manage the Update and the EIR. Twenty-three serve on the committee, reflective of a cross-section of the City's economic, social, residential, and community organizations and committees. State law mandates that all cities and counties in California have an up-to-date General Plan and EIR. The City's current General Plan and EIR were adopted in 1991 and are becoming outdated. The General Plan is a document that sets the community's vision for the future and establishes policies for long-term growth and development. An updated General Plan enables the City to satisfy state mandates and provides businesses and landowners interested in making investments in our community with a well-structured and legally compliant development-approved process. Most importantly, the entire community benefits by having a contemporary and comprehensive General Plan that sets a path to achieve long-term community objectives.

SAVE UP TO 300 GALLONS A MONTH WHILE BRUSHING TEETH:

California is in the third year of a severe drought. Reservoirs are low, and precipitation is well-below normal. Forecasts are projecting more of the same. A typical homeowner uses more water outside than indoors. Here are some tips on cutting back on usage that will save money on your next bill:

- Save 200 to 300 gallons per month by turning off the water until you need it while brushing your teeth;
- Save 300 to 800 gallons per month by running only full loads when washing clothes and dishes;
- Save 700 gallons a month by reducing shower times by one or two minutes;
- Install low-flow showerheads and wave up to 800 gallons a month;
- Shut the water off until you need it when washing your car, doing dishes, etc., and save up to 300 gallons a month.

Follow these simple suggestions and you'll notice a change in your next bill. And you'll be doing your part to conserve water!

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