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MEASURE T—A SUCCESSFUL MODEL OF INNOVATION: Despite last year's freeze, the quarter-cent sales tax from Measure T took in more than \$5.5 million in the 2006-07 budget year—more than \$750,000 than budget planners had expected. Since the tax started being charged on taxable sales in the city in mid-2004 through July 30, 2007, income from Measure T totaled more than \$14.9 million, compared to \$14 million projected in the original plan. Expenses during the same three-year period was just over \$6.2 million, less than expected by about \$788,000. In the first three years of Measure T, the city has hired and equipped 15 additional police officers, built two new police precinct substations, acquired property for a new fire station in northwest Visalia to be completed in March 2009, purchased a new fire truck, and hired four new firefighters. A cushion of more than \$6.2 million—just over \$1.6 million for police and nearly \$4.6 million for fire—will go toward long-range capital projects.



BIDDING BEGINS FOR SECOND PHASE OF OAKS STADIUM RENOVATION:

Construction plans are out for bid for the second of three phases in an \$11.6 million renovation of Recreation Park, and it is anticipated that City Council will award the project at the end of the month. Included in this phase is a new two-story building along the right field line next to Giddings Street that will house an enclosed VIP area that seats up to 100 for special events, additional fan seating, an improved bullpen area, souvenir shop, and team offices. Work has already been underway to prepare the building pad to get ready for construction of the new building. The priority will be to make sure the field is in playable condition by opening day, which is April 17. Last year's first phase of improvements helped boost attendance figures 34 percent, from 61,958 in the 2006 season to 83,452 in the 2007 season.

MAYOR LOBBIES FOR BULLET TRAIN STOP IN TULARE-KINGS COUNTIES:

Visalia Mayor Jesus Gamboa plans to keep the city in the minds of the High-Speed Rail Authority in Sacramento. Next month, the Authority will hear a report on Fresno-to-Bakersfield route options and potential sites for a station, including one at Highway 198 and Highway 43, east of Hanford. "There's going to be a million people in the two counties," Gamboa said in arguing for a train stop in Visalia, Hanford or Tulare. "We deserve to be connected to the rest of California." Fresno and Bakersfield are getting train stations for the bullet train. The planned high-speed rail, still unfunded, would connect the Bay Area to Los Angeles and San Diego.

DUI DETAIL NETS 2 ARRESTS: Officers from the Visalia Police Department's Patrol Division conducted a DUI Saturation within the city limits on Dec. 29, to deter motorists from drinking and driving. Two were arrested for DUI, one stole vehicle was recovered, and nine citations were issued. More details will be conducted in the future with funding provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

HOUSING PERMITS DOWN FOR YEAR; COMMERCIAL, OFFICE DEVELOPERS UP IN VALUE: Despite a drop of 38% in building permits for new single-family houses, 2007 is still the fifth-busiest year on record for home builders. Assistant City Manager Mike Olmos said other types of construction—commercial, industrial and office—are very active right now. “We expect continued strong activity in 2008,” said Olmos. “Overall, this is the third highest year in the estimated cost value of construction.” Building permits for new homes totaled 869, compared with 1,317 in 2006. In comparison, Visalia issued 84 building permits for new commercial or industrial construction in 2007, but the value soared by 13%, from \$83 million in 2006 to \$93.6 million last year—a record for the city. Olmos said new shopping centers under construction in north Visalia and activity in other parts of the city will add to commercial construction this year.

A LOOK BACK AND LOOK AHEAD: Visalia Mayor Jesus Gamboa recently marked the city’s successes of 2007 and a sneak peek at challenges and opportunities in 2008. Some highlights:

- **Public Safety:** As a result of Measure T funding, the City now has three full-service Police facilities with the addition of two new substations in North and South Visalia. The city is preparing to break ground in the first half of 2008 on a Northwest Visalia Fire Station and Training Facility. Collaborative suppression efforts with the Tulare County Sheriff’s Department created the MAGNET Unit, which now includes the District Attorney’s Office, Probation, California Highway Patrol, and Parole. Fire’s personnel grew by one paramedic engine company, nine firefighter/paramedics through hiring and training of existing personnel, and one contracted fire inspector.
- **Business Growth:** Costco celebrated the grand reopening of a new store and gas station and Lowe’s Home Improvements opened its second Visalia store. Buckman-Mitchell Insurance Inc., broke ground on the first new private office development in East Downtown; and Orchard Walk, a 20-plus acre development in North Visalia, will be anchored by Visalia’s second Home Depot, Target, and Sportsman’s Warehouse. California Dairies is investing approximately \$100 million in equipment purchases to double its capacity of dehydrating milk at its Visalia plant.
- **Preserving Neighborhoods:** The City received a \$135,000 CalTrans Planning grant for traffic calming and pedestrian enhancements around the Oval, and was awarded a \$600,000 grant from the CalHome First-Time Homebuyer Program. The citywide Graffiti Removal Program removed or covered over 420,000 square-feet of graffiti last year.
- **Looking ahead,** a Multi-Agency Auto Theft Task Force will be established, and a full-time Probation Officer will be brought into the Visalia Police Department’s Gang Suppression Unit to enhance both suppression and intervention efforts. The city is recruiting candidates for a new fire chief to provide strong leadership, sound fiscal management and budgeting expertise, and oversight for emergency preparedness, operations, and disaster planning. Community input will continue to play a pivotal role in Downtown planning, the Southeast Master Plan, and the development of areas in northwest Visalia. In response to an upward cycle in industrial activity, a 480-acre expansion in Industrial Park has received approval. This annexation means more jobs and economic growth for Visalia’s future.

COUNCIL APPOINTS REPRESENTATIVES TO BOARDS, COMMITTEES: Mayor Jesus Gamboa’s selections for Council representatives for boards and committees were approved by City Council at the Jan. 7 meeting. Some appointments of interest: Vice Mayor Bob Link will serve on the Tulare County Association of Governments; Mayor Gamboa on the Tulare County Economic Development Corporation; Council; Council Member Don Landers on the newly-combined Civic Center Masterplan/East Downtown Project and the Visalia Economic Development Council; Council Member Greg Collins on the Property Based Improvement District; and Council Member Amy Shuklian on the newly-combined COS/Cities Coordination/Higher Education Subcommittee.

METRO RURAL LOOP ON THE HORIZON FOR 2110? City of Fresno Assistant

Planning Director Keith Bergthold's report on the Rural Metro Loop was presented to Council members at the Jan. 7 meeting. Continued study of the multi-county transportation system is supported by the Tulare County Association of Government. Its implementation in 2110 could include portions of Tulare County. The project is being studied by the City of Fresno and the results will be one of the scenarios that is considered as part of the San Joaquin Valley Blueprint process. Originally conceived as a system between Madera and Fresno counties, an expansion is being considered that could include as many as five or six counties, including portions of Tulare County using Highway 198 as a corridor for the system.

DUMP ON US: The City of Visalia will hold a "Dump-On-Us" event from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 26, at the Visalia Corporation Yard, 335 N. Cain St. These events are limited to City residents (proof of residency is required). Take advantage of free disposal of these hard-to-dispose-of items: air conditioning/heating units, bamboo, cactus, cell phones, computers, monitors and televisions, dryers, fencing material, furniture, mattresses, palm fronds, printer toner cartridges, scrap metal, small appliances, tires (limit of 4, with rims removed), washers and yucca trees. Dump-On-Us events are for City of Visalia residents only, and proof of residency is required. Commercial waste is not accepted, and only one visit and one small truck and/or small trailer per household per event. Information: 713-4500.

DIGITAL TV TRANSITION APPROACHING: TV stations across the country will switch from analog to digital television (DTV) on Feb. 17, 2009. About 1.99 million California households use a traditional antenna and will not continue to receive free television after the conversion date without taking one of these three steps:

1. DTV Converter Boxes will need to be purchased by consumers without cable who have a traditional analog TV. This electronic device, which costs between \$50 and \$70, connects to analog televisions and over-the-air antennas to convert the digital signal to analog. Coupons will be issued for DTV converter boxes. For more information, go to www.ntia.doc.gov/dtvcoupon.
2. Digital TV sets will be able to receive digital signals broadcast by stations, and consumers will still get their programming without paying a monthly fee;
3. Consumers who subscribe to a cable, satellite or telephone company service provider will continue to be able to use their existing TV to receive local broadcast stations carried by their service.

For more information, consumers can visit the National Association of Broadcasters' website at www.dtvanswers.com.

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT UPDATES: The City of Visalia has teamed up with the Visalia Times-Delta to provide weekly updates on city public works projects involving major city roadways on its website (www.visaliatimesdelta.com). For the week of Jan. 14, the following Public Works/Development projects are being conducted and may interrupt major routes of transportation within the City of Visalia:



1. Installation of curb, gutter and drive approaches on N.E. 3rd Street and Court Street; days and hours of work being done - Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; date of expected completion: Feb. 1, 2008; work is being done for the new commercial location at the above intersection; and responsible Contractor/Contact is Phil Cox at 734-0492.
2. Installation of new natural gas regulation station on Walnut Avenue, east of Central Street; days and hours of work being done - Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; work is expected to be completed date of expected completion: Feb. .22, 2008; work is being done in preparation of the state's Mooney Boulevard widening project; and responsible Contractor/Contact is WM Lyles at 799-7860.
3. Road widening on Cameron Avenue from Vintage to Oakview Streets; days and hours of work being done—Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; date of expected completion: Jan. 18, 2008; work is being done for the new subdivision on the south side of Cameron Avenue; and responsible Contractor/Contact is Gill/Reeves Construction, Bob Gill at 804-1577.
4. Sidewalk and electrical reconstruction at the northwest corner of Locust and Acequia; days and

hours of work being done - 7 a.m. – 4 p.m., Monday through Friday; date of expected completion extended to Friday, Jan. 18, 2008, due to weather-related issues; work is being done for a building remodel and upgrade; and responsible Contractor/Contact is Joe Leal, Longview Development Co., 804-7421.

5. Road widening and median island installation on Walnut Avenue from Simon Street to Casablanca Street; days and hours of work being done—Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; date of expected completion—Jan. 18, 2008; work is being done for the new subdivision on the south side of Walnut Avenue; and responsible Contractor/Contact is Crawford Construction, Russ Anderson at 908-9949.
6. Building remodel construction at Garden, Center, and Bridge Streets; days and hours of work being done: Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.; date of expected completion extended to Feb. 1, 2008, due to weather-related issues; work is being done to replace curb and gutter, sidewalks, and drive approaches, and responsible Contractor/Contact is Mangano Homes, Inc., Evert Dixon at 804-5333.
7. Multi-family housing at the southeast corner of Sunnyside and Lovers Lane; days and hours of work being done - Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 4 p.m.; date of expected completion extended to Feb. 1, 2008, due to weather delays; work is being done to install curb and gutter, sidewalks, and street widening; and responsible Contractor/Contact is L & S Grading and Paving, Larry Catrall at 686-8032.
8. Building remodel construction at Kaweah Delta Co-Generation plant on West Street between Mineral King Avenue and Willow Street; days and hours of work being done - four hours a day, one day a week; date of expected completion extended to Feb. 1, 2008, due to weather delays; work is being done to install new co-generation facilities; and responsible Contractor/Contact is Kovaleff Mechanical Services, Inc., Mike Montgomery at (562) 244-1743