



Volume 24

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BUSINESS PARK PLAN APPROVED: In a 3-2 decision, the Visalia City Council voted Monday night to approve the conditional use permit for the Plaza Business Park. The business park, proposed by the Mangano Co., and Westland Development, covers about 29 acres that goes along both sides of Plaza Drive between Crowley and Hurley avenues. A master development plan will guide the development of businesses which will surround the new Fresno Pacific University. The 53,000-square-foot, two-story campus will be at Crowley Avenue and Neeley Street. City Planning Commissioners adopted the master development plan for the business park in April. The project is zoned for a business research park. The zoning was created in 1991 when city officials adopted the Visalia 2020 General Plan to provide space for businesses in campus-style settings. A series of meetings between the developer and city officials modified the project, including having one hotel instead of two. Office buildings also have been rearranged to cluster around open landscaped spaces to promote a “campus” atmosphere.

MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING OFFERED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT: In an effort to diffusing confrontations and directing patients to proper resources, the Visalia Police Department is teaming up with other Tulare County law enforcement and mental health officials to give officers more advanced training in dealing with the mentally ill. The first training session was held Monday, and includes officers from the Visalia Police Department and deputies from the Tulare County Sheriff’s Department. Topics include types of mental illness, techniques for dealing with patients who wish to harm themselves or others, and how to diffuse tense situations before they reach a confrontation. Visalia Police plan to train 20 officers and form a crisis-response team to deal with emergency situations involving the mentally ill. The goal is to have a trained officer respond in the field when a mentally ill person is in a crisis situation, and ultimately reduce the number of repeat contacts police have with individuals suffering from mental illness.

VISALIA POLICE JOINS EFFORT TO TACKLE MOTOR VEHICLE

THEFT: The Visalia Police Department joins officers from Porterville and Tulare, investigators from the California Highway Patrol and the Tulare County District Attorney’s Office in the formation of the Tulare county Reduce Auto Theft Team. The team’s goal is to reduce the number of vehicles stole by 10 percent. The county’s annual average from 2002 to 2005 is 3,935 thefts. Members of the team will work to identify and arrest known car thieves and break up auto theft rings, and will use “bait cars” to catch others in the act. Bait cars are set up with officers watching them. If someone attempts to steal the car, officers can turn it off and lock the suspects inside and avoid long and dangerous car chases. Since the team began work in April, officers have recovered 21 stolen vehicles, made 11 arrests in those thefts, and investigated four “chop shops” where stolen cars are stripped for parts.

PROJECT TO WIDEN MOONEY BOULEVARD TO BEGIN IN JUNE: The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) announced Tuesday the beginning of construction on State Route 63/Mooney Boulevard. In cooperation with the City of Visalia and Teichert Construction, Caltrans will begin construction of the State Route 63/Mooney Boulevard 6-Lane Widening Project in June 2008. A Pre-Construction Public Information Meeting/Open House for residents, business owners, and commuters will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, May 27th, in Room 1 of the Sequoia Building at



the College of the Sequoias, 915 S. Mooney Blvd. The \$12 million dollar project will widen Mooney Boulevard from the existing 4-lane highway to a 6-lane conventional highway from Packwood Creek to State Route 198. As part of this project, dual left-turn lanes and exclusive right-turn lanes will be added at four major intersections, Caldwell, Tulare, Orchard and Beech Avenues. In addition, the City of Visalia will also make identical upgrades to Whitendale and Walnut Avenues. Twenty bus bay turn-outs will be constructed at major intersections and at mid-block loca-

tions. Median landscaping will also be included within the project scope. This project will increase the capacity on this segment of State Route 63 through the city. Construction of this project will reduce traffic congestion on local streets, by improving traffic flow, reducing travel times and increasing safety for motorists. The project is scheduled to be completed in the Winter of 2009.

SEQUOIA SHUTTLE'S SECOND SEASON

LAUNCHED: The Sequoia Shuttle returns after its successful first season, and the first day of operation for its second season will be Wednesday, May 21. Over 500 reservations have been accepted to date. The Shuttle, operated by the City of Visalia in association with the National Park Service, enjoyed a successful first season. With rocketing gas prices this summer, the \$15 roundtrip, which includes the park entry fee, will be a major draw for people who want to enjoy a national treasure. To book a reservation, go to our website at www.sequoiashuttle.com or call 1-877-BUS-HIKE (1-877-287-4453).



LAWYER/LICENSED REAL ESTATE BROKER TO JOIN PLANNING

COMMISSION: Roland Soltesz was appointed by City Council members to fill an upcoming vacancy on the Visalia Planning Commission when six-year veteran Sam Logan steps down at the end of June. Soltesz, who begins his four-year term July 1, is an attorney in the Tulare County Public Defender's Office and is a licensed real-estate broker. Lindsay Bailey was named an alternate if another vacancy unexpectedly arises on the Planning Commission in the coming year. Soltesz said he is excited about an upcoming overhaul of the Visalia General Plan, policies which govern the city's land-use zoning, circulation, and other development policies and criteria.

CITY'S GENERAL PLAN SLATED FOR COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE:

A community-wide comprehensive update to the city's General Plan was approved by Council members at the May 19 meeting. A General Plan Update Scoping Committee will draft a scope of work for council consideration and assist in evaluating proposals submitted by interested professional planning teams. The committee will return to the Council to approve its recommendations for a scope of work, consultants, and timeline. A comprehensive update will involve rewriting all seven required General Plan elements: Land use element; circulation; housing; conservation and open space; noise; safety; historic preservation; and scenic highways. The process would include substantial public outreach, and would also include preparing a new Program Environmental Impact Report which address new state and federal legislation on air quality, greenhouse gases, flood management, agricultural land preservation water quality, and endangered species.

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For more information, visit the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us, email nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us or call 713-4535