

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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COUNCIL DECLARES FISCAL EMERGENCY, APPROVES USE OF RESERVES, DIRECTS STAFF TO TRIM \$3 MILLION FROM CITY'S GENERAL FUND:

At its June 15 work session, the City Council approved the use of up to \$5.5 million of the City's emergency reserves in FY 2009/10 to offset a \$5.7 million deficit in its General Fund. Sales tax revenues, which along with property tax revenues make up two-thirds of the General Fund, have dropped from \$21,865,053 in 2005-06 to a projected \$19,414,000 in 2009-10. Estimates on state takeaways have climbed to over \$5 million, including: Borrowing \$2 million from the City's General Fund; taking \$1.9 million in the city's gas tax, the main source of revenue for street maintenance; taking \$350,000 a year for three years from Redevelopment; discontinue paying \$200,000 for booking fees; reducing state transit assistance by \$500,000 in FY 2009/10; and state mandated costs of \$100,000. In addition, Council declared a fiscal emergency under Measure T due to the General Fund's multi-year deficit for both Fiscal year 2009/10 and 2010/11. Council also directed staff to implement a cost reduction program to decrease ongoing costs by \$3 million based on City departments' dependency to the General Fund. City management is working on determining the amount each department will need to trim from its budgets on an ongoing basis.

COUNCIL APPROVES FEE HIKES: In a 3-2 decision, the Council also approved rate increases for utilities, transit fares, and the adoption of a new fee policy for Parks & Recreation programs. Effective July 1, fees for wastewater services will increase by 7% for three years and 12 percent for the fourth year, and Solid waste rates will increase 1.5 % each year for three years. The combined increases bring the new monthly residential rates up to \$39.65 beginning July 1, 2009, to \$43.35 beginning July 1, 2010, to \$47.50 beginning July 1, 2011, and to \$50.30 beginning July 1, 2012. Visalia utility rates are among the lowest in the State. Wastewater has the largest increase due to a required treatment plant facility upgrades to meet Federal Clean Water Act requirements. Solid Waste's capital problem is smaller but rate adjustments are needed to adequately fund need capital expenditures. On Aug. 8, transit fares will go up by 25 cents for general fares, by 50 cents for day passes and it will cost 25 cents to ride the Trolley.

MAKE A SPLASH THIS SUMMER WITH LESSONS, PUBLIC SWIMS:

Swimming pools will be in full use at Redwood, Mt. Whitney, El Diamante and Golden West high schools offering swim lessons, swim team competition and public swim. Public swim runs through August 10 for only \$1.25 per person Monday through Sunday from 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Registration for swim lessons is ongoing until classes are full. Group lessons are \$54 and last two weeks; private lessons last one week and cost \$70 per person. Additional specialized aquatic classes include water polo, diving, lap swim and water wellness. The Family Swim and Movie Night is back by popular demand. This great activity is available for only a \$2 pool admission and a free movie afterward. The event is held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Fridays at Mt. Whitney High School Pool, at 900 S. Conyer. For a list of all summer movies, visit the City of Visalia's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us. For information, call (559)-713-4365 or email hfelix@ci.visalia.ca.us.

NEW SOROPTIMIST PARK OPENS: Visalia's newest neighborhood park opened to the public on June 13, at Linwood Street and Prospect Avenue in northwest Visalia. The 4.5 acre new Soroptimist Park is just south of Oak Grove Elementary School. The City's Parks and Recreation Commission named the park after the local women's service organization. The former site of Soroptimist Park will be the new home of the Imagine U Museum. The new park features a solar system themed playground, a small shade shelter, a half court basketball court, open space for active play, a perimeter sidewalk that loops around the park for walking enthusiasts, several picnic tables and benches, lots of trees and drought tolerant landscaping. The park was designed by Royston, Hanamoto, Alley & Abey from Mill Valley and the general contractor was Sierra Range Construction of Visalia. The park was built on time, and on budget, at a final cost of \$645,140, financed solely from new housing development park impact fees.



VISALIA TRANSIT LAUNCHES NEW CALL CENTER:

Visalia Transit, in partnership with Tulare County (TCAT) and the cities of Dinuba (DART), Exeter, Porterville (COLT) and Tulare (TIME) have started a new bus route information phone call center, "The Green Line" to help individuals navigate the transit systems throughout Tulare County. The growth in public transportation demand has resulted in significant increases in the number of bus routes operating throughout Tulare County. It is now possible for a citizen of Tulare County to travel from one end of the County to another solely using public transportation via connections and transfers. The goal is to combine resources and information into a "one-stop-shop" call center that can assist and encourage more individuals to access public transit systems as a means of transportation within Tulare County without having to dial more than one phone number. The Green Line regional call center will also help address one of the major barriers to the use of public transportation; a lack of knowledge of how to use the transit system(s). In addition, the Green Line call center it will help increase public transit awareness and convenience. The Green Line call center is currently open Monday through Friday, from 8 am to 5 pm.



1-877-40 GO GREEN
Your Bus Info Help Line. 1-877-404-6473

OUT OF THE FLOOD ZONE? ACT NOW TO SAVE!: If you are one of the homeowners who will be coming out of the flood zone on June 16th, you should know that before you can cancel the flood coverage that you have in place, you will need a letter from your mortgage company stating that you are no longer required to carry flood insurance. In order to do that, you will need to call the insurance department of your lender's customer service and provide them with documentation showing that your property has been moved out of a flood hazard zone. You can print the information from FEMA maps or use the following link <http://204.155.47.66:8080/femaal/Default.aspx> to verify new non-flood status. If you wait for them to locate the documentation, it could be a few months before they get the new data input. Once you are able to obtain the documentation from your lender, you will need to contact your insurance agent to sign a cancellation for the flood coverage and have them submit to FEMA. Any homeowners who have an impound will want to be sure that their lender is aware that flood expense will no longer be required. The impound should be adjusted accordingly, providing a welcome break in monthly payment. For more information, call (559) 713-4640.

