

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

VOLUME 13

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COUNCIL CONTINUES VERIZON APPEAL: At the request of Verizon Wireless, Council approved a continuance until Nov. 1 of an appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of a conditional use permit. The permit, filed by Verizon, is for a proposal to install a new 80-foot telecommunications tower on property located on the north side of East Caldwell between South Stover Street and South Pinkham Street. The continuance was approved until the Nov. 1 regular City Council meeting, which will be held at 7 p.m. at the Visalia Convention Center.

CITY COMPENSATION UPDATE: In an attempt to insure the long-term viability of the City organization, the City Council has taken the position that this year's budget solution must include a permanent reduction in employee compensation. Sales tax, the fundamental resource for providing services, has diminished. The City needs to permanently reduce its expenses to meet the current level of revenues. The alternatives—cutting more positions from the City—means less service for a growing community. To that end, to balance this year's budget, \$1.5 million is being used from Emergency Reserves and \$1 million is to come from wage concessions.

Agreements have been reached with four of the city's five bargaining units. The City Council continued negotiations with the firefighters until Nov. 1. While close to an agreement with the 61 firefighters, a potential agreement has not been finalized nor approved by the Fire Bargaining Unit. The Council did authorize continued discussion because the basic outline of the agreement, if finalized, includes:

- A new retirement tier for new employees;
- A 4.1% compensation concession which will include the loss of the Disability Avoidance Program;
- A two year agreement with no compensation increase in the second year, and;

A trial work schedule of 48/96.

OTHER COUNCIL NEWS: City Council adopted July 1 as the beginning date and June 30 as the ending date for all Council appointed Committee and Commission terms, and extended all current terms to coincide with these dates in the appropriate year for all seated Commission/Committee members; approved an annual agreement between the City of Visalia and Tulare County to provide Visalia Transit (VT) service to the unincorporated areas of the greater Visalia Urbanized Area contiguous to the City, including Goshen; approved appointments of Rick Jones, George Curtis, Carlos Estrada, Trilby Barton and Linda Denny as voting members of the Disability Advocacy Committee, a seven-member committee to the City Council who represents issues and concerns of the disabled community.

THIRD TOWN HALL MEETING SET: Council Member Warren Gubler will moderate the third in a series of four Town Hall Meetings, scheduled for 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 27, at Annie Mitchell Elementary School, 2121 E. Laura St. This meeting is specifically for citizens in southeast Visalia, but is open to the general public. Council Member Gubler will provide a City overview, and staff will be available to answer questions on issues related to Public Safety, Transportation, and Planning. The meeting is designed to allow sufficient time to hear and respond to citizen's concerns. Council members are available to hear constituents' concerns. Mayor Bob Link can be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 2313 or by email at blink@ci.visalia.ca.us. Vice Mayor Amy Shuklian can be reached through 713-4400, then enter 8313, or by email at ashuklian@ci.visalia.ca.us. Council Member Warren Gubler can be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 3313 or by email at wgubler@ci.visalia.ca.us. Council Member Michael

Lane can be reached at 559-713-4400, Ext. 4313 or by email at mlane@ci.visalia.ca.us. Council Member Steve Nelsen can also be reached by calling 559-713-4400, Ext. 7313, by email at snelsen@ci.visalia.ca.us.



SOMETHING TO SING ABOUT IN VISALIA: With help from the community, the Visalia Transit Division is looking to make the holiday season one of the loudest! Now through Oct. 29, all Tulare County residents have the opportunity to submit a unique song about the Holly Trolley, either in person or through the website at www.hollytrolley.com. All music genres are welcome, and the winning artist or band will receive \$500, a consultation with an award-winning producer, professional production and distribution of the song, and live appearance opportunities. Entries must be received by Oct. 29 and can be submitted either by mail, on the website, or in person at the Visalia Transit Center, at 425 E. Oak Ave. All entrants must be residents of Tulare County and all songs must be about the Holly Trolley.

The Visalia Town Trolley operates all year long in Downtown Visalia for 25 cents per ride or with an unlimited monthly pass for \$5. During the holiday season, free trolley rides are offered from November 26 through December 24. Services are increased to include Mooney Boulevard, so all major shopping outlets can be accessed by riding the Holly Trolley.

WALMART EXPANSION ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

AVAILABLE: A draft environmental impact report for the Walmart Expansion Project on Noble Avenue is available for review on the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us (Go to Departments, click on Community Development, then Planning, and Long Term Planning and Special Projects). It is also available for review Monday through Friday, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the City of Visalia Community Development Department at 315 E. Acequia Ave., and at the Visalia branch of the Tulare County Library at 200 W. Oak Ave. The public review period ends on November 29. Written comments may be submitted to Senior Planner Andy Chamberlain by email at achamberlain@ci.visalia.ca.us, by FAX at 559-713-4814, or by mail in care of: City of Visalia, 315 E. Acequia Ave., Visalia, CA 93291. The proposed project consists of the expansion of the existing 133,206 square-foot Walmart store by about 54,076 square feet.

BEN MADDOX OVERCROSSING PROJECT ACCELERATES: The good news—the \$8 million-plus Ben Maddox Overcrossing Project is running ahead of schedule and may be completed as early as March, 2011. The not-so-good news: The most intensive part of the project causing significant traffic delays begins today (Oct. 19) through Friday, Nov. 12.

Timeline:

- **8 p.m. Tuesday, Oct 19 to Friday, Nov 12:** Southbound traffic along Ben Maddox over SR198 will be reduced to a single lane. In addition, north and south-bound lanes of Ben Maddox will be reduced to one lane on each side for about 500 feet south of Noble Avenue. Work to include: Demolition of the bridge railing and sidewalk located on the west side of the bridge; and demolition and reconstruction at the intersections of Mineral King and Ben Maddox, Noble and Ben Maddox and Noble and SR198 on/off ramp.
- **Full Freeway Closures:** Westbound SR 198 will be closed from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. Tuesday, Oct. 19. Westbound traffic will be detoured from Ben Maddox Way on to Mineral King Avenue and back on to SR 198 at West Street. Eastbound SR 198 will be closed Wednesday, Oct. 20, from 8

p.m. to 6 a.m. Eastbound traffic detour will be at the Central Visalia exit and traffic will be detoured onto Noble Avenue back on to SR198 at the Noble Avenue and Mary's Vineyard intersection.

- **Tuesday, Oct. 26**, a major paving operation will be done on Noble between Ben Maddox and Pinkham. Traffic delays are expected, signal lights will be on red flash with officer-directed traffic. Two-way traffic will be maintained.

GAS LINE SAFETY TIPS: In the wake of recent events regarding pipeline safety, Southern California Gas Company has issued information on how to recognize a pipeline leak and what to do before digging in an area where pipelines may be located. Excavation, demolition and other forms of digging are a major cause of pipeline damage. A gas leak can be recognized by smell, sight, or sound. It's important to know that any of the following signs may indicate the presence of a gas leak:

- The distinctive odor of natural gas. But do not rely exclusively on the odor to determine whether or not there may be a gas leak.
- A hissing, whistling, or roaring sound near a pipeline. Special markers show the location of most major pipelines.
- Dead or dying vegetation in an otherwise moist area over or near pipeline areas.
- A fire or explosion near a pipeline.
- Exposed pipeline after an earthquake, fire, flood or other disaster.

Leaking gas from any damaged pipeline or gas meter could cause a fire, explosion, property damage, and serious bodily injury. Follow these guidelines if you encounter a leaking gas pipe or meter: Remain calm; don't light a match, candle, or cigarette; immediately evacuate the area, and from a safe location, call SoCalGas at 1-800-427-2200 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and call 911 promptly after evacuating the area if the damage results in a natural gas leak that may endanger life or cause bodily harm or property damage. For more information, visit www.socalgas.com/safety.

DUMP-ON-US FOR FREE ON OCT. 23: Take advantage of this event on Saturday, Oct. 23, from 7 a.m. to noon at the Visalia Corporation Yard, 335 N. Cain. Dump-On-Us is limited to City residents, and proof of residency is required. Doors must be removed from all large appliances, and participants are limited to one visit. Commercial waste is not accepted. For more information, go to www.dumponus.org.

You can now self-subscribe to receive issues of "Inside City Hall". Go to the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us, click on About Visalia and go to Inside City Hall Newsletter. For more information, contact Community Relations Manager Nancy Loliva at nloliva@ci.visalia.ca.us or call 713-4535..