



VISALIA CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOP

FEBRUARY 4 & 5, 2011

Council member attendance – Mayor Bob Link, Vice-Mayor Amy Shuklian, Warren Gubler, Mike Lane, Steve Nelsen

SUMMARY REPORT

The Visalia City Council met on February 4th and 5th to discuss issues of importance to the city. As in previous years, the purpose was to air the viewpoints of the council members, staff and community members in attendance about issues that were preselected by council members. The meeting agenda is appended to this report. Staff reports were given to provide background information prior to the Council's discussion of each issue. They are also appended to this report. Public comments were invited from community members at the beginning of each day's discussions as well as during specific topics covered throughout the two days.

The comments noted after each section title are a compilation of comments from the council members, the staff and community members. They are brief summary statements on each issue. A more complete presentation of the issue can be found in the written staff reports that are appended to this summary.

Priorities for 2011

The last exercise of the two-day meeting had the council members identify the eight most important issues they wanted the city staff to focus on for 2011. The following eighteen items were selected by the council members for consideration. The first item was unanimously selected as the highest priority. The next seven items noted with bold lettering were chosen through Council consensus as those to receive the greatest effort during the year.

- 1. Develop a plan for greater community input into the General Plan Update process. Include community meetings that are focused on individual elements or areas of interest of the General Plan as well as broader meetings that address the General Plan as a whole. Include strategies for involving the city's consultant in the information sharing. Also clarify funding available for the third year portion of the comprehensive work program including in-house expense estimated at \$32,000.**

2. **Present a draft balanced budget in May that is prepared in two different ways: one using General Fund reserves and one using NO General Fund reserves. Show the impacts on staffing levels, timeliness of service delivery and deferred activity for both approaches.**
3. **Better educate the General Plan Update Review Committee and the community regarding the importance of retail sales tax in paying for budgeted city services. This needs to be done prior to receiving community input on the elements of the General Plan that are impacted by this issue.**
4. **Better educate the community regarding water issues affecting the city and its surrounding area. Emphasize the interconnectivity of this critical resource among the communities and managing agencies within the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District and allied water management groups.**
5. **Bring back to the City Council for action by late March or early April the seven recommendations to increase economic activity that are contained in the report from Mike Olmos, Assistant City Manager. (See the appended report for item 8 (1), page 1,2.)**
6. **Continue the multi-agency coordinated effort to suppress gang activity being led by the Visalia Police Department.**
7. **Begin work on identifying a “signature event” for the city. Convene a meeting within two months of some of the organizations already involved with special event in Visalia including the Arts Consortium, Events Visalia, Healthy Visalia and the Visalia Convention and Visitor Bureau and explore what is needed to have a successful signature event, over time, in Visalia.**
8. **Identify infrastructure improvements needed in the Downtown and Mooney Blvd. areas. Estimate the work program and associated costs necessary to make those improvements.**

THE NEXT FIVE ITEMS WERE NOTED BY AT LEAST ONE COUNCILMEMBER AS REQUIRING PRIORITY EMPHASIS DURING 2011. WHILE NOT SELECTED AMONG THE SEVEN MOST IMPORTANT, STAFF WILL MAKE AN EFFORT TO MOVE THEM FORWARD DURING THE YEAR AS WELL.

9. **More vigorous code enforcement regarding illegal signs.**
10. **Maximize opportunities for employee retention and growth.**

11. Begin construction of the new animal shelter in 2011.
12. Remodel the council chambers to make better use of technology and provide a safer environment.
13. Keep making progress on the FEMA issues.

THE REMAINING ITEMS WERE AMONG THE 18 LISTED FOR CONSIDERATION BUT DID NOT RECEIVE ANY “PRIORITY VOTES”. STAFF WILL MAKE AN EFFORT TO MOVE THEM FORWARD DURING THE YEAR AS TIME PERMITS.

14. Consolidate public safety dispatch services with Tulare County and nearby cities.
15. Move the council chambers to a different location.
16. Resolve the issue of under what circumstances the city’s Fire Department will provide Hazardous Materials responses outside the city limits. Clarify the ground rules.
17. Revitalize the Oval area.
18. Develop a “community bulletin board” for the display of promotional signs that currently clutter the roadside of busy intersections within the city.

As in previous years, it is anticipated that an update will be given to the City Council at the end of six months to see what progress had been made on these items.

FRIDAY AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Bob Link opened the Workshop with welcoming comments. He mentioned the challenging times that continue to confront the community and his confidence that the City Council and staff would work through them to keep Visalia the exceptional community it has been over the past decades. He noted the emphasis on “business friendliness” during the past year and his confidence that will continue in the year ahead. He complimented staff on their commitment to excellent service and commented that Visalia enjoys the best staff of any local agency around.

Public comments were invited but none were received from the audience.

Six agenda items were covered on Friday, February 4th. The Workshop opened with a brief warm up exercise in which councilmembers, the city manager and department heads paired off to practice their communication skills. This was followed by work on each of the agenda items noted below.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

All council members gave their impressions of several facets of life in Visalia while being interviewed by the facilitator in preparation for the Workshop. Their collective views on these facets were reported by the facilitator as noted below.

1. Is the city council perceived by the community as being “business friendly”? All members of the City Council commented on the improvement in the city’s image with regard to business friendliness. Both the City Council and staff have conscientiously pursued policy changes and administrative improvements that expedite the permitting process and exercise as much flexibility as allowed under current rules in applying planning and building codes.

2. Are Visalia businesses in better or worse shape than last year? Opinions varied a little on this issue but no one viewed the entire business community in better shape than last year. Most felt it was the same or a little worse.

3. How effective has the city’s “Economic Stimulus Plan” been this past year? All council members acknowledged a benefit resulting from the plan that was put in place last year. None, however, was able to quantify that benefit or give a sense of the cost to achieve that improvement. They requested information on that at the Workshop.

4. Do residents feel safer or less safe than a year ago? All council members see the community as safer than last year. Particular emphasis was placed on the success of the gang suppression efforts of the police department and the fire department’s handling of the flooding which occurred during recent storms.

5. Are Visalia’s roads in better or worse shape than they were a year ago? The general view is that the roads are in the same condition overall with two exceptions. Mooney Blvd. improvements have significantly improved that major roadway during the past year. On the other hand, the recent heavy storms and resultant flooding caused serious damage to several of Visalia’s roads and significant time and expense will be required to repair them.

6. Is the organization better able or less able to provide city services than it was a year ago? General consensus is that the organization will be less able provide city services than it was a year ago. This is attributed to the reduction of staffing and the continuing budget deficit that reduces resources available for service delivery.

7. Are Visalia's recreation programs and facilities more utilized or less utilized than they were a year ago? This is a mixed bag. Some felt they are more utilized and cited examples like the baseball tournaments that are scheduled for the Sports Park. Others felt they are underutilized both in the numbers of people of who frequent them and in the percentage of the community population that take advantage of the programs and facilities.

8. How would you rate the community's overall satisfaction with the city services it receives? (1 = Low and 10 = High) The average rating is 7.5 with no rating lower than 6 or higher than 9.

9. Will the city council face easier or more difficult decisions in 2011?
Why? All council members felt the City Council will face more difficult decisions in 2011. This was attributed to several factors including the continuing economic slump, resumption of labor negotiations with all but one of the city's labor units, processing the General Plan Update, stronger competition with other communities for development and the state's attempt to dismantle the Redevelopment Agency.

NEW RULES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS IN TIMES OF ECONOMIC MELTDOWN

A recent article by Frank Benest, retired city manager, in the Western City Magazine, discussed ten rules by which elected officials can find their way through the maze of obstacles posed by the economic slump plaguing the country. Each council member presented two of the rules from the article and facilitated a discussion of the key points. The ten "rules" were as follows:

1. IDENTIFY THE "CORE". (Mayor Link) Council members agreed with the necessity of doing this, especially in times of constrained resources. The Council and organization have been doing this for several years. Public safety and parks/recreation consistently rank among the highest services provided by the city when the public is surveyed about what is most important to them. The most important thing is maintaining BALANCE among the core services.

2. FOCUS ON A FEW PRIORITIES. (Mayor Link) Last year's Workshop did exactly that and we saw good results. All five of the top priorities from last year were addressed in 2010. Among the top three priorities that are likely to surface during the course of this Workshop are increasing the city's sales tax, assuring the adequacy of water supplies, and enhancing employee support and morale.

3. SUBTRACT, SUBTRACT, SUBTRACT. (Vice Mayor Shuklian) Although we have subtracted positions in the organization back to levels seen in the 1990's, we haven't subtracted many of the services that are provided by the city. We need to implement technology to a greater extent and emphasize self-service where possible to balance out service demand with service provider resources.

4. LIMIT REQUESTS FOR NEW ANALYSIS AND REPORTS. (Vice Mayor Shuklian) Council members are sensitive to this issue and are careful to take their lead from the city manager who is aware of the extent to which requests for analysis and reports for City Council can be absorbed by staff. Fewer subcommittees and requests for analysis might also be in order. Scheduling a regular City Council meeting and the Workshop back-to-back should also be avoided to reduce demands on staff.

5. HAVE THE COURAGE TO SAY “NO”. (Councilmember Gubler) This should be a normal consequence of orienting city operations towards our “core” services like public safety and developing our infrastructure and prioritizing their delivery. Council members do not believe that staff saying “no” when necessary is counter productive to a “can do” attitude in the organization.

6. AVOID A ZERO-RISK ENVIRONMENT. (Councilmember Gubler) No one enjoys public criticism and there is a natural tendency to avoid taking on issues or engaging in activities that may subject one to that exposure. We need to actively encourage innovation among our employees. City council support is important in avoiding this pit fall. Avoiding personal criticism of staff during presentations to the City Council helps with this.

7. PURSUE NONGOVERNMENTAL SOLUTIONS. (Councilmember Lane) The city must partner with non-profit and private sector interests in responding to community service needs. Collaboration is more important than ever in this era of economic stagnation. The city has done well in this area and must maintain its vigilance. Examples included Habitat for Humanity, HEART, Visalia Rescue Mission and an agreement with the private sector to process recyclables collected by the city.

8. FREE UP FUNDS FOR A FEW TARGETED INVESTMENTS. (Councilmember Lane) Although the organization is running lean, there is money available if the case is made for specific investments that will significantly benefit the community.

9. PROVIDE MEANING AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT TO STAFF. (Councilmember Nelsen) City council members continue to be very appreciative of staff and must verbalize that as opportunities arise. Budget issues make it difficult to reward employees with raises or bonuses but there are other ways to be supportive. Perhaps employees could be given time off with pay to assist other community organizations providing community services. Non profits that are active in areas of interest to an employee could probably put to good use the talents we have in our organization.

10. HELP DEVELOP TALENT AND REBUILD ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY. (Councilmember Nelsen) This may be the most difficult of these ten

suggestions. Some money may be available for employee training in areas that assist with skill development. Rebuilding the organization's capacity is dependent on getting beyond the current budget deficit.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Budget constraints and staffing reductions made 2010 a challenging year in which to provide city services and pursue the top priorities established at the City Council's Strategic Planning Workshop of 2010. Council members were interviewed regarding the accomplishments they considered noteworthy and the city manager summarized them as follows.

- Fiscal stability of the city
- Adoption of Local Economic Stimulus Plan
- Designation of High-Speed Rail station near Visalia
- Opening of the 2nd phase of the Sports Park and the Lions Park
- General Plan Update underway
- Conclusion of negotiations with all labor groups
- Response to 2010 flooding
- City provided assistance to homeowners related to FEMA maps
- Emphasis on business-friendly council and city staff
- Initiated "town hall" meetings in four quadrants of the city
- Hwy. 198 corridor open space/land use plan initiated
- VWR project
- Hobby Lobby opening
- Mangano project downtown
- Rehabilitation of Togni Branch building
- Mooney Blvd. roadway improvements
- Plaza Business Park standards clarified
- Improved relationship with the Chamber of Commerce
- More attention to unsightly signs and banners
- Gang suppression: Operation Street sweeper

Council members thanked the city manager and staff for their efforts in accomplishing these tasks. Councilmember Shuklian commented that more work needs to be done on illegal and unsightly signs and banners before that issue is considered an accomplishment.

WATER

Water is among the community's most critical natural resources. The dramatic drawdown in recent years of the aquifers supplying Visalia's water is evidence of a critical need to better manage this resource. The Workshop discussion of this topic began with a presentation from Mark Larsen, General Manager of the Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District ("District"). The District covers an

area of 340,000 acres with over 200 miles of water channels. Water use throughout the District is almost evenly divided between groundwater (53%) and surface water (47%). Agricultural use accounts for the majority of that water (94%) with urban uses consuming the remaining 6%. The annual overdraft (more water out than in) of groundwater is one of the greatest challenges facing the District. It is estimated that the overdraft is between 22,000 and 36,000 acre feet of water each year.

The solution to this problem includes a combination of strategies: recharge the groundwater table; water importation; conservation by agricultural and urban users, water transfers and exchanges; new storage; coordination and partnerships. Regional collaboration is required among cities, the county and water districts.

City staff followed the District's overview with the impacts of this water situation on Visalia. The City of Visalia's water supply is obtained entirely from groundwater and is primarily purveyed by the California Water Service Company (Cal Water). The majority of the water is used for landscape irrigation. Cal Water currently pumps about 35,000 acre feet annually but can only pump about 23,500 acre feet without contributing to the overdraft. This situation will worsen as pumping increases to keep pace with population growth. Visalia and the region are on an unsustainable course unless regional solutions are implemented to reverse the overdraft of water.

One element of the solution is to recharge the groundwater table. The city operates a storm drain system with over 1,000 curb inlets, 200 miles of pipes, 500 manholes and more than 40 ponding basins. The ponding basins are primarily intended to prevent storm water runoff flooding. Water that collects in the basins can be pumped into local canals or creeks when they can handle the water. The city partners with KDWCD to develop "layoff basins" to avoid overflowing these waterways, especially Mill Creek. While ponding basins are not ideal for recharge, continuing improvements at the Oakes Basin located near the intersection of Mineral King and Road 152 make it ideally located to recharge the aquifer upstream of the city.

The city's continuing efforts to address the impact of changes to the FEMA maps were also reported on at the Workshop. The city's "Long Term Plan" includes exploring self-insurance, identifying potential flood mitigation projects, certifying portions of the levees, obtaining up to \$7 million toward a potential "Section 205" United States Army Corps of Engineers floodplain mitigation project, obtaining insurance discounts through the FEMA *Community Rating System (CRS)*, and supporting a revised HR 5114 legislation to limit increases on flood insurance and to require proportionally discounted flood insurance rates for areas with flood protection systems that protect for less than the 100-year flood.

Council members commented on the critical need to educate the public regarding these challenging water issues. It was suggested that the city manager work with his colleagues in the other Tulare, Kings and Kern County cities affected by this issue to convene educational meetings. At the minimum, there needs to be a significant public outreach program in Visalia to inform all users about the severity of the problem and the critical need for conservation.

The city might also want to further revise its landscape standards to require less water usage. More work should also be done examining new systems for the use of gray water in residential and commercial buildings.

FINANCIAL

The Finance Director presented an overview of the city's current and anticipated financial health. The picture has not improved over the past year. The forecast shows a General Fund deficit of \$2.4 million this year and \$1.3 million in FY 2011/12. The deficit remains about \$1 million into the future. The forecast assumes no general increases in employee wages and no additional positions in a growing city. Neither assumption is likely to hold true. Every increase of 1% in the number of employees or in employee compensation increases the General Fund's costs by \$800,000 by the end of the planning period of FY 2013/14.

Health Benefit costs and Pension costs are two expenses over which the city has some control. The council members requested a report on alternatives for reducing costs in these two areas. The report should include a discussion of defined benefit programs that might be applicable to Visalia as well as changes to the PERS program that would produce cost savings. They would like the report to be a part of the March 22nd mid-year financial report. Their goal is to implement by January 1, 2012, a plan to reduce or eliminate the city's contribution to the retiree health care plan cost. Cost-saving alternatives also need to be reviewed relative to the employee health plan.

The next budget proposal presented to City Council should incorporate two different assumptions. The first is a budget **with** the use of General Fund reserves as deemed prudent. The second is a budget **without** the use of General Fund reserves in any manner. Each scenario should demonstrate the impacts on city services and infrastructure if employed.

Staff's report emphasized the importance of sales tax to Visalia's budget health. Council members noted that this is not well understood by Visalia's residents. Staff was requested to prepare a breakdown of sales tax generated by type of business and a list of potential businesses which might be enticed to Visalia to help stimulate tax revenues. Council members discussed ways to increase revenues to the City by aggressively seeking new businesses; attracting tourists with a signature event; attracting people to events and cultural attractions in the downtown.

It was also recognized that attracting industry to Visalia is important to increasing jobs that will contribute to the community's economic health.

Concerns were also raised regarding the potential loss of Redevelopment funds if the state terminates that program as well as impacts to the city's Community Development Block Grant funding if federal cutbacks occur this year.

Charts and graphs were presented comparing Visalia to nearby communities with regard to the breadth of the tax base, General Fund spending per capita, sales tax capture per capita and debt levels. The historical trend of General Fund contribution to public safety was also highlighted.

An overview of Risk Management Activities and Strategies was also presented. Attention to detail and proactive measures in this area are producing good results. While there is always room for improvement, the city is definitely moving in the right direction.

Council members concluded this topic with a discussion of ways to lower health benefits costs by implementing an employee health newsletter similar to that of KDHC and VUSD.

EONCOMIC STIMULUS PLAN

The Economic Stimulus Plan incorporates a combination of strategies. They include decreased impact fees, deferred collection of impact fees, 5-year impact fee financing for industrial projects secured by a lien against real property, 5-year financing of transportation impact fees for commercial projects, expedited processing of commercial projects and large residential subdivisions, real estate sign revisions and a local preference plan for awarding bids.

These have been well received in the community and are expected to increase in their positive impact on local business activity as the economy improves.

SATURDAY AGENDA ITEMS

Mayor Link opened the second day of the Workshop with welcoming comments and a summary of the previous day's discussions. He praised the presentation on the Water issue, emphasized the importance of sales tax to the city's budget and offered some introductory thoughts on the General Plan Update. He opened the meeting to public comments and received the following presentations.

Bill Haxton, representing Main St Theatre, discussed performing arts in Visalia and how it stimulates the economy. He encouraged everyone to attend the "Music at the Main" presentations of Chamber Music at the Main Street Theatre.

Gladwin Burris, representing Visalia Heritage, discussed interest in purchasing city-owned property at Oak and Bridge (site of Fort Visalia) for purposes of building a museum and/or art building.

LAND USE PLANNING

1. Encouraging infill development. A review of planning regulations and procedures along with administrative flexibility in applying them to projects.

Public comments:

Darlene Mata, discussed the need to remove more CUP requirements.

Bill Huott, Willis St., discussed how staff's recommendations are a step in the right direction and should help attract businesses to vacant buildings on Willis and Murray Streets.

Michael Kreps, Demaree, discussed needed changes in parking requirements in the downtown.

Jim Robinson, discussed parking on Mooney Blvd., consideration for developing a campus village area at COS and providing walking/bicycle opportunities.

Harvey May, N. Garden, discussed recommendations regarding fire sprinklers for remodels in the downtown area. He indicated that the additional cost of adding them is not as great a deterrent as is the difficulty of getting adequate water and infrastructure to the area. Those costs and logistical problems are the greatest deterrents to development.

Staff presentations and council member discussions followed.

The Assistant City Manager presented seven proposed strategies intended to further streamline the city's permitting processes and provide additional stimulus to the building industry and economy as a whole. These were enthusiastically considered by the council members and well received by the developers in attendance. Details of the presentation are included in the report for item 8 (1) that is attached to this document. He was requested to bring these recommendations back to the City Council in a form that can be acted upon by late March or early April.

Council members also discussed changing the role of the Planning Commission to more of a policy body and using a Zoning Administrator for approval of day-to-day projects. While the use of a Zoning Administrator appealed to them, there were mixed views about changing the role of the Planning Commission. This

may be discussed further when the City Council and Planning Commission have their future joint meeting.

2. Significance of the GP Update and discussion of community policy issues including potential retail development along Hwy. 99 and open space setback corridor and development opportunities along West Highway 198.

Public comments:

Don Wright commented that the public needs to be educated on the benefits of regional retail and an updated and aggressive marketing philosophy is needed to make the City “business aggressive”.

Steven Peck, commented that 200-250 acres of regional retail is needed to move the city towards a super regional area.

Rick Tellegan, discussed the City of Selma’s recent Notice of Preparation to have a 3 million square foot retail shopping area located along Highway 99.

Glen Morris, Chamber of Commerce, stated that careful planning and balance is needed. The City needs to be ready when the large regional stores want to locate in Visalia.

Larry Segrue commented that the Comprehensive General Plan Update is the driver for all of these recommendations and will integrate all aspects.

Harvey May suggested designating space and making sure it is available when the regional retail stores want to locate here. Make sure the planning procedures are in place and the infrastructure is ready.

Darlene Mata added that the Council needs to make “value” decisions.

Staff presentations and council member discussions followed.

The Assistant City Manager presented an overview of the General Plan’s framework for dealing with the Retail Commercial sector. (See report item 8 (2) attached to this document.) It was pointed out that the philosophy shaping the city’s retail philosophy was established over 20 years ago and there have been significant changes in the local and regional retail arena during that time. A plan reflecting the reality of these changes is necessary if Visalia has any hope of retaining its retail sales dominance in the region. Careful thought must be given to how the Regional Retail Commercial designation might be applied along State Route 99.

Whatever is decided for Hwy. 99, it must be balanced with the needs of the Downtown and Mooney Blvd. The investment of decades in these areas cannot be sacrificed to a regional effort on the periphery of the community. There is surely a way to blend these. At the end of the process, we need a place that appeals to unique retail stores like IKEA and Bass Pro. Staff should contact them to see what their site criteria are.

A strong marketing strategy will be required once it is decided what Visalia's Retail Commercial will look like in the future.

Regional Retail center developers will be attracted to a community that is ready for their project. This means having the following elements in place:

- Waste water capacity
- Adequate potable water at a competitive price
- Adequate electricity at a competitive price
- Appropriate land use designations
- Infrastructure in place or plans and funding available to get it done by the opening of the center
- Entitlements processed with the necessary environmental clearances completed
- The political will to expedite and approve the project

Council members discussed the possibility of the area at Caldwell and Highway 99 as a future spot for the regional retail and that open discussions are needed with the community. It was also suggested that the city consider a cooperative agreement with Tulare County for retail development on Visalia's borders.

Staff was requested to develop a list of potential sites for Regional Retail in addition to the Hwy. 99 corridor.

Visalia is considered a sub-region to Fresno and Bakersfield and regional retail stores are typically looking to locate in areas of 500,000 populations. In the case of a Regional Retail center Visalia may be viewed as being at the center of a market area of over 1,000,000 people. Unique stores like Bass Pro draw from a large geographical area and are more flexible with their site location criteria.

It was suggested that we begin discussing the Regional Retail site as a "Metroplex" site in consideration of the metropolitan benefits of being centrally located in a large population base.

Council members discussed deficiencies in infrastructure in the downtown area specific to lighting/electrical/water and asked staff to develop recommendations for improving the situation.

It is also important to further explore the idea of a “campus village” in the area of COS so that the disposable income from thousands of students can be captured in Visalia. Retail outlets that are of interest to students and within easy walking distance need to be included in that area.

Concern was expressed regarding sales that are lost to the Internet. One suggestion for tapping into that phenomenon is to attract major distributors of products that are purchased via the Internet. The jobs and business-to-business sales associated with that industry could be significant.

It was suggested that there be more interaction between the City Council and the General Plan Update Review Committee before the General Plan Update consultant returns to Visalia to facilitate the community input meetings. The members of the Committee would like to better understand the thinking of council members regarding the retail issues.

WEST VISALIA / 198 SCENIC CORRIDOR UPDATE

Staff presented an overview (Item 8 (2) of progress for this topic. It included:

- Overview of the West Visalia / Hwy. 198 corridor area
- Inclusion of the this area into the General Plan Update
- Update on the Parks and Recreation Commission study
- Informational meeting with property owners
- Land use requests from property owners
- Pending annexations
- General Plan Update relative to this area

Council members commented that this Plan has been under discussion for the past seven years and might be hanging around for another seven.

A member of the audience commented that Costco wanted to site its new store near the intersection of Hwy. 198 and Plaza Rd. several years ago but was not permitted to do so.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Many communities around the country host a signature event that draws tourists and bolsters the local economy. Visalia enjoys a wide range of athletic, arts and entertainment events. Staff presented a summary of these events and discussed with council members the possibility of growing one of these into a signature event as well as creating a new one. Consensus was that staff should work with Events Visalia, the Visalia Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Arts Consortium, Healthy Visalia, and possibly others, to determine what they were currently doing and what some of the barriers are to growing their current events. Starting a new event that may become a signature event should also be considered along with

determining if there is something the city can do, within our limited financial resources, to help.

Care should be taken not to cannibalize existing events. Play to our strengths and determine our niche. A presentation should be made at a future Council Work Session by several local event groups such as Healthy Visalia, Events Visalia and Arts Visalia.

The following elements were noted as characteristic of a signature event:

- Attracts tourists to the community
- Is an annual event
- Takes place for longer than a weekend
- Is a net economic benefit to the community
- The brand recognition in the market is greater than the brand recognition of its sponsoring organization

Council members commented on concerns about an adequate number of volunteers to plan, organize and conduct a large event. Cautions were also raised about the financial requirements of a signature event. Perhaps it is best to invest the City's money in the Economic Development Corporation or the Convention and Visitors Bureau. These and other ideas will be discussed at a future City Council Work Session.

Council members concluded the Workshop by listing potential priorities for 2011 and selecting from the list the eight that are most important to them.

The Workshop adjourned at 1:20 p.m.