

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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COUNCIL APPROVES START OF ACEQUIA TWO-WAY CONVERSION:

The Visalia City Council voted 4 to 1 at its April 21 meeting to initiate the process of changing the City's General Plan to legally accommodate bicycle lanes along the soon-to-be converted-to-two-way Acequia Avenue. Council members are working to complete the conversion of Acequia Avenue from one to two-way before the completion of Kaweah Delta Medical Center's north addition, which is to be operational by mid-2009. Downtown business groups and the hospital's governing board are both against the inclusion of bike lanes downtown at the expense of 35 of the 113 on-street parking spaces. The City is proposing bike lanes to run eight blocks from Conyer Street to the west to Bridge Street to the east. Class 2 bike lanes, which are separated from traffic, would be placed on either side of Acequia, except for blocks near the proposed emergency-room entrance on Acequia and adjacent to the U.S. Post Office. These portions will have Class 3 bicycle lanes, marked but shared with vehicles. Assistant City Manager Mike Olmos, said the final approval process will take up to six months and will need to go through the Planning Commission and ultimately the City Council. A meeting is set for May 1 with members of the City's Trails and Waterways Committee and downtown business leaders to discuss the transition. *For more City Council meeting updates, go to Page 4.*



EARTH DAY CELEBRATION A GREAT GREEN SUCCESS: Over 1,000 city residents enjoyed the Earth Day celebration April 19 at Recreation Park in Visalia. Centered around the theme, "Our Earth, Our Future", the celebration kicked off with Brian Kempf of the Urban Tree Foundation leading a planting of native oaks and drought-tolerant shrubs on Mill Creek, between Redwood High School and the Visalia Police Station. The event, featured environmental, solar and recycled products demonstrations, displays of electric, hybrid and natural gas-powered vehicles, compost giveaways, and activities for children and families, including workshops from Lowe's and Home Depot. In addition to the city's Natural Resource Conservation Division, the event was co-sponsored by Consolidated Waste Management Authority, the Wal-Mart Foundation and Comcast Cable.

FREE FORECLOSURE COUNSELING SEMINARS: Self-Help Enterprises is now offering free foreclosure counseling seminars to anyone who is at risk of losing their home to foreclosure. All that is required is the property must be located in Kern, Kings or Tulare County. Seminars are held every Tuesday at Self-Help, 8445 W.Elwin Ct., in Visalia. Reservations are required and can be made by calling the foreclosure hotline at (888) 412-0828.

FIRST EVER VI-TRI A SUCCESS: The Sports Section of the Visalia Parks & Recreation department held its first ever Visalia Triathlon (Vi Tri) on April 13 at El Diamante High School. The event included a 400-yards, or 16 laps swimming event, a 9-mile bike route to and from the Visalia Airport, and a 2.2 mile run in and around neighborhoods near the school. The event attracted 150 participants, and another 150 event volunteers and spectators, and focused on participation rather than competition. Categories for both men and women, adults and children (kids participated on a modified course), ages as young as 5, and as old as 82. The overall winner in the men's division was 21-year-old Marc Schommer of Visalia with a winning time of 43 minutes and 31 seconds. The overall winner in the women's category was 50 year old Carol Camstra with a time of 1 hour 15 minutes and 36 seconds.

SERGEANT RECEIVES OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: Visalia Police Sergeant Bill Blankenship will receive an Office of Traffic Safety Achievement Award on April 29 in Anaheim. Blankenship was hired full-time in 1975 with the Visalia Police Department. He was promoted to Community Services Officer, and in 1977 was promoted to Police Officer. He was nominated for the award by OTS Regional Coordinator Scott Riesinger. He was nominated for his participation, leadership and performance of an OTS grant, his current and past history with OTS and its grants, his history of traffic safety with the police department. "All of these factors put Bill in a category by himself," said Riesinger. "I am very pleased with Sgt. Blankenship being selected to receive this award," said Visalia Police Chief Bob Carden. "He has dedicated much of his career to traffic safety efforts, and certainly he is deserving of this special recognition." Upon learning of the receipt of the award, Sgt. Blankenship said, "It's outstanding to be recognized by the Office of Traffic Safety because it is the No. 1 Agency for traffic safety in the state. It's quite an honor to be selected when there are so many outstanding candidates in traffic safety throughout the state of California." Blankenship will receive the award at the Police Traffic Services Seminar on Tuesday, April 29, in Anaheim.

SEVEN SEEK PLANNING COMMISSION POST: An adhoc subcommittee of the Visalia City Council will soon begin interviewing for the Planning Commission opening currently held by Sam Logan, whose term expires in June. Seven individuals submitted applications by the April 18 extended deadline. They are: Troy Pennington, an architect with PMSM Architects; Steven King, a contractor with Tricon Building Solutions, Inc.; Paul Fry, general manager of the Visalia Fox Theater; Roland Soltesz, a deputy public defender for Tulare County; Phillip J. Cline, a deputy county counsel for Tulare County; Lindsay Bailey, an administrative analyst for new homes and development with Self-Help Enterprises; and Andrew A. Miller, chairman of the Visalia Memorial District Board of Directors. The subcommittee will recommend the finalists for the full Council's consideration.

DUI WARRANT DETAIL: The Visalia Police Department's DUI Unit conducted a warrant detail on Sunday within the city limits, contacting those that had outstanding warrants for DUI and other driving convictions. A total of 95 warrants were attempted. 11 warrants were served, and one vehicle was towed. Funding for this detail was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

17TH ANNUAL DIA DEL NINO/KIDS DAY FESTIVAL: Families are invited to attend the 17th Annual Dia Del Niño / Kids Day Festival. This will be a day for celebrating children of all cultures. This Kids Day Festival will take place Sunday, April 27 from noon to 4 p.m. at the Manuel F. Hernandez Community Center, 247 W. Ferguson. Families will enjoy a variety of local entertainment, games and food in a festive atmosphere. This festival will start with the local youth Mariachi music group "Nuevo Generación". This day is considered one of the most important annual holidays in Latin America. Dia Del Niño celebrates children and recognizes their importance to families and the world. Many Latin American families honor their children on this day with gift-giving or by holding a "fiesta" at a loved one's home or a local city park. The event is a Latin holiday to honor the essence of childhood innocence, playfulness and a carefree outlook on life. This free festival is sponsored by the City of Visalia Parks & Recreation Department, the Dia Del Niño Committee, local organizations, agencies, businesses and volunteers. For more information contact Juan Mendoza at 713-4461 or jmendoza@ci.visalia.ca.us.

PUBLIC RECORDS ACT REQUEST FOR CITY SALARIES: The City of Visalia received a letter on April 3, from Jim Houck, Interim On-Line Editor for the Visalia Times-Delta requesting salary information on City employees. Pursuant to the California Public Records Act, the following information was provided in electronic and hard-copy format on Friday, April 18:

- Current salaries, as of April 1, 2008, for all employees. The Personnel Census Report released provides a listing of current employees by name, classification, job status, hiring date and salary.
- Total compensation for 2007 for all employees. The Total Compensation Report is generated to balance the City's 2007 W-2's and outlines gross wages only. A request made for a report that outlines each category of compensation and the employee's job title along with total compensation was not provided because there is no report.
- For both of these items, the names of four employees were redacted as these individuals are engaged in undercover police work, and therefore the City has a public safety reason for not disclosing their names. The City has determined that the public interest in learning the specific names of these officers (as opposed to their salary information which is being disclosed) is outweighed by the public interest served by not disclosing the names, specifically, the public's interest in ensuring the safety of police officers who are engaged in sensitive undercover operations.

Human Resources Manager Janice Avila notified all city staff with regard to the release of this information. Job classifications and salary ranges are available on the City's website at www.ci.visalia.ca.us.

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS APPROVE BUSINESS PARK PLAN -- A business park at the western end of the city won unanimous approval April 14 from the Visalia Planning Commission for the complex of offices and highway-oriented businesses. The Plaza Business Park, proposed by the Mangano Company and Westland Development, will cover about 37 acres straddling Plaza Drive north of Highway 198, between Crowley and Hurley avenues. Plans for the business park were originally up for approval last fall, but put on hold after Visalia City Council members expressed concern over some of the proposed commercial uses in the plan. The project will now go to the City Council for final consideration. The land is zoned for a "business research park" or BRP -- a designation created in the city's 1991 General Plan to provide space for large businesses to locate in sprawling, campus-style settings. What city planners and developers have struggled to figure out is whether hotels, a gas station, fast-food outlets and small office buildings fulfill the original intentions behind the BRP zoning. In response to concerns floated last fall and in meetings since with city officials and business organizations, Mangano officials retailored their plans. Mangano vice president Stephen Peck, in the company's permit application, said the meetings "resulted in a change that we think is a win-win for the project and community." The changes include having one hotel with at least 100 rooms on the east half of the campus, enlarging the smallest office building to address concerns of scale within the complex and potential

competition to owners of buildings in the downtown district, and office building will be clustered around open landscaped spaces to promote a campus-like atmosphere.

THREE COMPLETE CITY'S CONVERSION TO ALTERNATIVE FUEL IN TROLLEY FLEET:

The City of Visalia recently received three new Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) trolleys this month, converting the entire six-vehicle fleet to alternative fuel and demonstrating the City's commitment to convert its bus fleet to alternative fuel. In May, the conversion of the Dial-A-Ride fleet will be completed with the receipt of six new buses for that service. All 11 Dial-A-Ride buses will then be powered by natural Gas. The fixed route or big buses are not far behind. Currently 28% of the fixed route fleet is CNG and that will jump to 63% in October when the City takes delivery of 10 more vehicles. By 2016, the remaining fixed route diesel buses are scheduled to be replaced and our City bus fleet will be 100% alternative fuel. Natural Gas buses run about five times cleaner than the diesel buses they replace and natural gas costs about \$1.00 per gallon less than gasoline or diesel. The City of Visalia has been converting all city vehicles to alternative fuel during the last five years. With the construction of the City natural gas fueling facility, and the one constructed by the Visalia Unified School District a few years ago, any private or other public fleets can take advantage of this savings also. Both fueling facilities are open to the public. For more information about these fueling facilities or the City's plans for converting our fleets, contact Monty Cox, Transit Manager, at 713-4100.

HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE: Housing and Economic Development Director Ricardo Noguera summarized for the City Council past, present and future housing activities of the City and the Redevelopment Agency. Funding sources utilized include Community Development Block Grants, HOME, Program Income and Redevelopment low/moderate funds. A strategic approach to foster affordable housing throughout the city has been implemented by partnering with non-profit agencies to deliver infill single-family homeownership, multi-family rental, senior rental, first-time homebuyer and rehabilitation programs. Staff will bring a proposal to the May 4 Council meeting to utilize funds to provide incentives for homeownership in both the Oval Park and Washington School neighborhoods. The loans will serve as second mortgages enabling prospective buyers to maximize down payments on the purchases of homes. New projects to be considered include the Paradise and Court multi-family development, the Encina Triplex development, and multi-family development along County Center Drive by the South Police Sub-station and the Caltrans site in East Downtown.

PUBLIC WORKS PROJECT REPORT FOR WEEK OF APRIL 21: The following new Public Works/Development Projects are being conducted during the week of April 21. For more information on Public Works projects, call the Public Works Customer Service Line at 713-4428.

1. **Install new sanitary sewer lateral at 1644 W. Caldwell Avenue, east of Fairway.**
 - Days and hours of work being done: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
 - Date of expected completion: April 24, 2008.
 - Why work is being done: New sanitary sewer lateral for a new dentist office.
 - Responsible Contractor/Contact: Gorsky Construction at 732-5624.
2. **Install new telephone fiber lines on Caldwell Avenue at Dan's Lane and between Mooney and Shady Streets.**
 - Days and hours of work being done: Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 - Date of expected completion: April 23, 2008.
 - Why work is being done: AT&T constructing new fiber line.
 - **Responsible Contractor/Contact: AT&T at 583-8112.**
3. **Install new water service on Hillsdale Avenue just west of Aspen Street.**
 - Days and hours of work being done: Monday thru Friday 9am – 3 pm.
 - Date of expected completion: April 22, 2008.



- Why work is being done: Cal Water service replacement.
 - Responsible Contractor/Contact: Shawn at West Valley at 217-3837.
- 4. Install new water service on Ben Maddox Way just south of St John's Parkway.**
- Days and hours of work being done: Monday thru Friday 7am – 4 pm.
 - Date of expected completion: April 23, 2008.
 - Why work is being done: Cal Water service replacement.
 - Responsible Contractor/Contact: Shawn at West Valley at 217-3837.
- 5. Install new electrical poles and wires on Acequia between Bridge and Edison Streets.**
- Days and hours of work being done: Monday thru Friday 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
 - Date of expected completion: April 26, 2008.
 - Why work is being done: Southern California Edison Co., upgrading service in the downtown area.
 - Responsible Contractor/Contact: D. Akins, 331-5845.
- 6. Remove natural gas regulation station at Walnut Ave and Mooney Boulevard.**
- Days and hours of work being done: Monday through Friday 9am to 3 pm
 - Date of expected completion: April 25, 2008.
 - Why work is being done: Cal Trans project to upgrade intersection.

Inside City Hall is a publication of the City of Visalia.

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