

Inside City Hall

Beyond the headlines

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COUNCIL APPROVES AGREEMENT TO SELL, DEVELOP CITY-

OWNED PROPERTY: At its October 5 meeting, the Visalia City Council approved an agreement to sell and develop city-owned property in west downtown Visalia. The agreement between the development team of Mill Creek Professional Center, LLC, and the City is for a portion of the property bounded by Acequia, Mineral King and Stevenson Avenues and Conyer Street. The land, currently used for surface parking, is to be developed in two to three phases. The first phase consists of multi-storied medical offices, totaling 45,000 square feet. Later phases may include a multi-story parking structure, a park on both sides of Mill Creek and possibly a mixed-use development which could include ground floor retail and residential space on upper floors. The development team includes: Harvey May of Paloma Development; Tom Gaebe, a certified public accountant and investor/developer; Doug Lawrence, a long-time realtor, and Jody Graves, a local businessman and investor. The partnership owns and has developed multiple office buildings in downtown Visalia, is a strong supporter of Downtown Visalians, and two team members are on the board of PBID. "This is an exciting project," said May. "We will have a Class A building within walking distance of the newly expanded hospital wing. In conjunction with the hospital's expansion and doctor recruitment program, we can offer doctors an ownership opportunity for suites ranging from 1,800 square-feet and up". Ultimately, the development is designed to support the Kaweah Delta Medical Center extension along Acequia Avenue. Medical professionals are seeking space in close proximity to the hospital and the proposed medical offices will compliment the recent expansion of the hospital and offer office suites to physicians within walking distance of the hospital. This site is also easily accessible off Highway 198, allows use of Visalia Transit, and offers a host of downtown amenities for physicians and patients.

ANIMAL CONTROL FACILITY RETURNS TO COUNCIL ON OCT. 19:

A proposal to hire a design consultant for the city's animal control facility returns to the Council at its Oct. 19 meeting. While there is no opposition to replacing the city's existing out-dated facility, a staff recommendation that \$150,000 in previously allocated Capital Improvement Program funds be redirected to the design and construction of the facility brought opposition from Mayor Jesus Gamboa and City Council Member Greg Collins. Mayor Gamboa wanted \$50,000 for promotional signage for the City along the Highway 198 corridor to remain intact. The vote to hire the design consultant was split 2-2, and a second motion by Vice Mayor Bob Link to bring the item back at its Oct. 19 meeting was approved. According to Valley Oak SPCA Board President Tami Crawford, the number of animals at the shelter have swelled to 18,000 to 20,000 this year, compared to a static 12,000 in previous years. In the first six months of 2009, 90% of the cats, primarily kittens, and 50% of the dogs brought to the shelter have been euthanized.

OTHER COUNCIL NEWS: The Council voted 4-0 to hire a consultant to explore the possibility of a stand-alone 911 Consolidated Dispatch Center which would serve surrounding communities. Potential sites include land adjacent to a future Civic Center and public safety building at Oak Avenue and Burke Street. The Council also voted 3-1, with Council Member Amy Shuklian voting no, to uphold the City Planner's decision to deny a Medical Marijuana Business Permit Application for Central

Cali Caregivers without prejudice and the applicant can reapply earlier than the one-year required period and no fees will be assessed. The City Council will also need to review and approve the final application.

OPEN HOUSES COMMEMORATE FIRE PREVENTION WEEK: The Visalia Fire Department will host open houses at three fire stations from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 10, in celebration of Fire Prevention Week 2009. The open houses will be held at Fire Station 51, 209 S. Johnson, Fire Station 54 at 440 W. Ferguson, and Fire Station 55 at 6921 W. Ferguson. The Open Houses will allow citizens the opportunity to tour each station and talk with on-duty fire personnel. A bound house and a hot dog lunch will be provided. Representatives from Parks & Recreation, Crime Prevention, and Natural Resource Conservation Division also will be available to answer questions about related city services. For information, call 713-4265.

SANTA FE OVERCROSSING TIME CAPSULE ITEMS TO BE DISPLAYED: Life in Visalia in 2009 will come back to life when time capsules to be placed in the Santa Fe Overcrossing will be opened in 2059 and 2109. A committee working with the City of Visalia have been collecting items to include in both capsules, and beginning Friday, Oct. 9, the items will be on display at the Visalia Convention Center. Similar items will be placed in both capsules, but there will be a few special items for each one. The items will be on display until Oct. 23, and then placed in the bridge around the middle of November. Work on the bridge is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

8TH ANNUAL BATTLE OF THE BADGES BLOOD DRIVE SLATED TO BEGIN: Get ready to roll up your sleeves beginning Monday, November 2, for the eighth annual Battle of the Badges Blood Drive. The Visalia Fire and Police Departments, Cal-Fire, the Tulare County Sheriff's Department, and AMR Ambulance will host a free tri-tip luncheon at the Central California Blood Center from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, Nov. 2, at 1515 S. Mooney Blvd. Donors are encouraged to come and donate blood on behalf of their favorite department. The competition runs from 8 a.m. Monday, Nov. 2, until 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 10. For information regarding blood donations, go to www.cencalblood.org.

UPDATES ON CITY'S ROAD PROJECTS: Work is proceeding on the Houston Roundabout and Widening Project and the Santa Fe Overcrossing. The timeline for the next two weeks for Houston Roundabout is as follows: **Week of Oct 5-Oct 9** - Santa Fe Street with connections to NE 1st and NE 2nd to remain closed to through traffic. NE 3rd will remain closed at Santa Fe and Houston Avenue for approximately 2 more weeks for reconstruction work on Houston Avenue and Santa Fe Street; **week of Oct 12-Oct 16**- Douglas Avenue will be reopened to through traffic. Storm drain installation will continue on Santa Fe between Douglas Avenue and Houston Avenue. Underground work on Houston Avenue will also continue between Santa Fe and Burke St. Work in the intersection around the roundabout will continue. Sidewalks may be closed on the south side of Houston between Santa Fe and Burke St. Traffic controls and posted Construction Zone speeds to remain in effect on Houston Avenue. **Santa Fe Overcrossing timeline for this week:** Westbound Central Visalia off-ramp (Court Street) and eastbound Central Visalia on-ramp (Court Street) are scheduled to be closed through Friday from 9 AM to 3 PM. Nighttime lane closures are planned for Highway 198 Wednesday night, 10/7/09, and Thursday night, 10/8/09, from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.. Single lanes and Court Street on and off-ramps will be closed as crews construct work platforms on both sides of the bridge. A minimum of one freeway lane will be open in both directions at all times during the nighttime closures.