



STAGE COACH E X P E R I E N C E S

Volume 16, Number 2

May - June 2009

SUMMER EVENTS IN THE PARK

Formerly referred to as the "Nelson Green" and the "Village Green," the City's park facility at Nelson Street and Mason Street has been officially renamed "Heritage Square Park." The newly renovated park will provide a great venue for summer concerts, outdoor movies and other events.

Concerts in the Park will take place at the Rotary Bandstand on June 21, July 4, July 5, July 12, July 26, August 9, August 23, September 6, and September 20 at 1:00 p.m. The first outdoor movie under the stars will be held July 25 at 8:00 p.m.



The City will also be presenting movies in the park under the stars at Soto Sports Complex at 1275 Ash Street on June 27 and August 22 at 8:00 p.m. For more information and movie selections, please contact the Parks, Recreation & Facilities Department at 473-5474.

FIREWORKS SAFETY

The Fourth of July is approaching and the Arroyo Grande Fire Department would like to remind everyone to take precautionary measures to ensure a safe and accident-free holiday. State Fire Marshal approved "Safe and Sane" fireworks are the only type of fireworks permissible for sale and discharge within the City limits of Arroyo Grande. Caution should be used at all times. Fireworks will be offered for sale within the City during the period of 9:00 a.m. July 1st through 9:00 p.m. July 4th. Fireworks are permissible for discharge within the City limits of Arroyo Grande on the 4th of July only. The Fire Department will have units out on patrol during the evening of July 4th. Please contact 473-5490 if you have questions.

CITY BUDGET PLAN APPROVED

The current recession has significantly impacted the City's revenues. Particularly hard hit are sales tax, property tax, and building permit related fees. A shortfall of nearly \$2 million is projected for FY 2009-10. When combined with over \$1 million in cuts last year, it represents over 20% of the City's General Fund budget. The City has worked hard to address the deficit on a proactive basis. At a special meeting on March 31st, the City Council approved strategies to balance the upcoming budget.

The plan includes a combination of staffing reductions, one-time revenues through grants and the sale of excess property, renegotiation of labor agreements, and operational efficiencies. The plan is based on a commitment to finding ways in which to address the shortfall while enabling the City to maintain critical service levels and move forward with important projects to meet the needs of the community. Given the impact of the economy on everyone, an important feature of the plan is that no revenue increases are being pursued through new or increased fees or taxes above normal annual inflationary adjustments to address the General Fund shortfall.

The proposed budget plan will result in the reduction of nine positions. By obtaining vacancies through a "Golden Handshake" program, only two will require layoffs. In order to maintain key services to the community, a comprehensive restructuring program is proposed, which will combine a number of functions, reduce the number of departments, and cross train staff to perform multiple responsibilities. In many cases, this may result in improvements to services through better coordination. However, there will be some reductions in ongoing park and street maintenance, police community education programs, permit processing times, street tree trimming and the ability to prepare in-house analysis of land use and capital project issues.

The majority of revenues from the local sales tax measure approved in 2006 will be maintained for important capital improvement projects. As a result, despite the decrease in revenues, the City will continue plans for a number of planned street, sidewalk, facility and other infrastructure improvement projects. Projections assume revenue impacts will continue for the foreseeable future. Therefore, continuing progress on investments to address capital needs is critical for long-term financial stability.

The City Manager's Office can be reached at 473-5400 with questions or requests for additional information.



FATHER-DAUGHTER DATE NIGHT

The 10th Annual Father-Daughter Date Night will be held Saturday, June 6, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the South County Regional Center, 800 West Branch Street. This event for fathers and daughters ages 4 through adult will include an evening of dinner, dancing, contests, and more. The cost is \$45 per couple, plus \$20 for each additional daughter. Couples can register at the Arroyo Grande Recreation Division Office, 1221 Ash Street, April 20 through May 29. For more information call 473-5476.

Disposal Programs

State law prohibits disposal of household batteries, fluorescent tubes and lamps, and sharps (needles) in your trash. The City of Arroyo Grande is a member of the San Luis Obispo Integrated Waste Management Authority, which has provided residents with proper disposal options. Any store in Arroyo Grande that sells household batteries or fluorescent tubes and lamps are now required to take them back from the public at no cost. If you bought or are buying household batteries or fluorescent tubes and lamps at the store, the stores will take back that number of items. If you did not buy or are not buying household batteries or fluorescent tubes and lamps, the store will take back 15 household batteries and 8 fluorescent tubes and lamps per week. A complete list of locations is also available at www.iwma.com. Any pharmacy that sells sharps will also take back home generated sharps at no cost as long as they are in an appropriate container, which is provided at no cost by the pharmacy.

For more information on these take back programs, call the San Luis Obispo County Integrated Waste Management Authority at 782-8530.

ITS TIME TO CONSERVE WATER

As the community concludes another dry year and approaches the summer season, the City wants to remind residents the “Severely Restricted Water Supply” condition and associated mandatory conservation measures remain in effect. However, a number of new incentives are now being offered to assist residents in meeting conservation goals. In addition to the existing program of free low-flow toilet retrofits and water moisture meters, the City now provides financial rebates for energy efficient washing machines, digital controllers and automatic sensors, and the replacement of turf areas with drought tolerant plants and drip irrigation.

The City recently entered into an agreement with the Oceano Community Services District for a 5-year temporary water purchase, which will provide the City time to pursue additional supplemental water sources. Results of studies prepared on desalination, water recycling, increasing the capacity of Lake Lopez and purchase of State water options will soon be presented to the City Council for consideration. However, effective conservation is the most cost efficient way to meet the City’s future water needs. Upcoming changes to the City’s water rate structure will provide increasing opportunities to reduce customers’ water bills through conservation efforts.

Please contact the City at 473-5440 for more details.

Summer Child Care Programs Available

The City is offering a summer child care program from June 17th through August 14th for children 5 to 13 years of age. This program will operate Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at Ocean View Elementary School. The cost for Arroyo Grande residents is \$140 per week for 5 days, \$120 for 4 days, and \$96 for 3 days. For non-residents, the cost is \$150 per week for 5 days, \$128 for 4 days, and \$102 for 3 days. An annual registration fee of \$25 is charged for all participants. Children will enjoy well supervised, fun-filled activities, games, contests, crafts, sports, and field trips to local organizations. A daily drop-in playground program will also be offered 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at the Elm Street Community Center. The cost is \$16 per day or \$8 per half day with an annual \$15 registration fee. For more information call 473-5476.



UTILITY RATE ADJUSTMENTS PROPOSED

The City recently contracted for a study to update its sewer and water rates in order to address costs for future capital projects. Overall water rates are proposed to increase annually by an average of 5.2% per year and sewer rates by 10%. Final consideration of the adjustments will take place at the June 23, 2009 Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The City is very sensitive to the financial impacts of the economy on its residents. As a result, a number of actions were taken to assist the City’s water and sewer customers. A thorough review was completed to delay capital projects where possible to reduce current costs. Rates were restructured to result in little change during the upcoming year and to minimize the impact on the average and low-water users after that. Current fixed charges associated with operation of the Lopez Dam and treatment facility will be gradually phased into the consumption based fees. As a result, many low water users will actually experience a reduction in rates. It will also provide an additional incentive to customers to participate in conservation efforts.

New payment options are also being offered. The City is in the process of implementing a new online billing system. This system will allow customers to instantly view and pay their water bill with a credit card via the internet. Customers will have the option to go “green” by choosing to receive their water bill by e-mail instead of regular mail. The City will notify customers in their utility bill once this service is available. An additional feature was approved to modify payment deadlines to assist senior citizens by better coordinating with social security payment dates.

For more information, customers may contact the Financial Services Department at 473-5400.