Fiscal Health Task Force submits recommendations

The Community Blue Ribbon Task Force on Fiscal Health submitted its final report to the City Council on Nov. 15, recommending a series of strategies to bridge the projected long-term budget gap created by decreasing revenues, costs of services and future investments to maintain high quality City facilities and other assets.

The Task Force concluded that the City does not have adequate resources to sustain service levels and meet capital and infrastructure needs. Recommendations included tools to create more capacity for investing in capital needs, including long-term financial planning, cost control, cost recovery and economic development.

In order to keep the high level of services, programs, amenities and facilities currently provided within the City, the Task Force suggested the Council explore the possibility of asking voters to approve a half-cent sales tax measure, but not.

FISCAL HEALTH, see back page

Inside this issue!

Holiday parking guide

It can be a bit of a treasure hunt: where to park in downtown Walnut Creek during the busy holidays. We’ve mapped it out on Page 7. Quick tip: park the car, and hop on the Free Trolley to get around. And to avoid parking tickets or worse, please be sure to read the posted rules before leaving your car.

Council adds four more meter-free days

You can leave your quarters at home on Presidents’ Day. Same goes for Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Veterans Day and Columbus Day. These days are now “meter holidays,” in Walnut Creek, days when parking meters will not be enforced.

The change aligns Walnut Creek’s meter holidays with Federal holidays. The City Council agreed to add the additional days to end confusion over which holidays required feeding the meter and which did not. Other meter holidays are New Year’s Day, Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

The change applies only to public street meters, including the library parking lot and other parking lots owned by the City, not to public parking garages or private lots or garages.

And remember – regulations for red zones, handicapped zones and “permit parking” zones never take a holiday.

www.walnut-creek.org
Stay ‘current’ with new Walnut Creek TV show

Walnut Creek TV announces the debut of Creek Currents. The monthly magazine-style show offers a lively look at City programs and community treasures.

Hosts Ruby Lopez and Brendan Moran take viewers behind the scenes for an insider’s look at everything from the Farmers Market to the Open Space Division’s Ancient Ways workshops.

Tune in to find out what’s happening in your community!

“Creek Currents” airs at 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays; 8 a.m. Mondays and Fridays; and 12:30 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. It’s also available on demand at walnutcreektv.org and youtube.com/cityofwalnutcreek.

Walnut Creek TV is the City of Walnut Creek’s government access channel. Funding is provided through cable company fees.

Walnut Creek TV recently received a first place award from the National Association of Telecommunication Officers and Advisors for its Living History program featuring former Mayor and County Supervisor Bob Schroder.

Here’s what’s happening

Holidays at Shadelands

The Shadelands Ranch Museum will host “Holidays at the Shadelands” Nov. 26 – Dec. 11. The beautifully decorated historic house, located at 2660 Ygnacio Valley Road, will be open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily and feature a variety of handcrafted items for sale. Admission is free.

Three-course Victorian Tea lunches will be served each day from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.; cost is $28.50 per person. For reservations, call 925-935-7871, or go to www.WalnutCreekHistory.info.

Teddy Bear Tea

Bring your favorite teddy bear to the Gardens at Heather Farm on Dec. 3 and 4 for a photo, tea time treats and story time in an elegant setting. Seatings are 11:30 a.m. and 2 p.m. There will also be a gift boutique and special raffles. Cost is $25 for adults, $15 for children. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

For reservations, call 925-947-1678 or go to www.gardenshf.org. The Gardens at Heather Farm is at 1540 Marchbanks Dr.

Senior Club holiday luncheon

Celebrate the holidays in style on Friday, Dec. 9 with a delightful afternoon of dining, dancing and fellowship with the Walnut Creek Seniors’ Club. The fun begins at 11 a.m. at the Clubhouse at Boundary Oak. The George Campi Orchestra will perform. For ticket information call 925-943-5851.

Holiday Concert

Ring in the season with the Walnut Creek Concert Band’s Annual Holiday Concert, featuring favorite carols and yuletide classics, at 7:30 p.m. Nov. 29 at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Tickets are $14 and $17; call 943-SHOW. The Concert Band is sponsored by the City of Walnut Creek and performs throughout the year at civic celebrations.

WCPD sponsors Toys for Tots

The Walnut Creek Police Department will be collecting new and unused toys for underprivileged children through Dec. 15. Toys may be dropped off in the City Hall lobby, 1666 N. Main Street. Call Officer David Rangel at 925-256-3523 for details.

Boychoir expands to Walnut Creek

The Grammy-winning Pacific Boychoir Academy has expanded to Walnut Creek, with an eight-week training session for beginning singers in grades 1-5 starting in January. Pacific Boychoir is a community organization that is not affiliated with any church or specific geographic area. Currently in the choir there are 170 boys and young men ages 4-18 from five Bay Area counties. For details, call 510-652-4722 or visit www.pacificboychoir.org.
SNAP: A National Juried Photography Exhibition comes to the Bedford Dec. 8 through Feb. 19. SNAP presents a diverse portrait of who we are as a nation today. The show is designed around three themes: Our World /Our Land; Our People: Narrative and Portrait; and Conceptual and Abstract.

With submissions from across the country, this exhibition gives a glimpse into the hearts and minds of photographers from the Heartland to the Maine.

In conjunction with SNAP, the Bedford presents Brett Weston, 1950-1970: Land, Figure & Abstract in the Alcove Gallery. This exhibition offers a rare glimpse at historic artworks by renowned American photographer Brett Weston (1911-1993), son of esteemed master photographer Edward Weston (1886-1958). Spanning 30 years, this retrospective of Weston’s work is generously on loan from Lafayette art collector Bruce Paltenghi.

Tours are available for school classes and adult groups. Call 925-295-1423. And remember… if you’re attending a theater performance, your theater ticket gives you free entrance to the gallery that same day. Take advantage of “Your Ticket to the Arts!”

Gloria Steinem and Alice Waters to keynote 2012 Women’s Conference

Journalist activist Gloria Steinem and chef Alice Waters top the powerhouse lineup as keynote speakers at the March 5, 2012 East Bay Women’s Conference, presented by the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau and Chevron Corporation.

The annual all-day conference blends premier keynote and featured speaker presentations; breakout sessions focused on contemporary issues; exhibitor booths; and author signings.

Joining Steinem and Waters are emcee Jan Wahl, local film critic and historian, and guest speaker Ann Tardy, who will share secrets to making a difference in the workplace. Breakout sessions feature industry experts in personal development, business leadership, surviving change, technology and social media, health and nutrition, and money and finance.

Registration is $175.00, and pre-registration is required. To register, contact the Walnut Creek Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau at www.walnut-creek.com or 925-934-2007.

Looking for that perfect holiday gift? The Walnut Creek Historical Society suggests “Walnut Creek: An Illustrated History” by Brad Rovanpera, featuring more than 260 images depicting life in Walnut Creek over the last 160 years. The book may be purchased at Barnes & Noble in downtown Walnut Creek or at the Shadelands Ranch Museum for $45 and benefits the Walnut Creek Historical Society. Call 925-935-7871.

Arts lovers and community leaders raised a record $250,000 for performing arts and youth programs at the annual On Broadway gala. More than 500 people attended the Oct. 8 fund-raiser at the Lesher Center for the Arts, which benefited the Diablo Regional Arts Association (DRAA).

The DRAA’s mission is to raise funds to support the full spectrum of arts at the Lesher Center. In addition, the DRAA provides families, children, seniors, educators and low-income individuals the opportunity to experience the arts through its Arts Access program.

Give the gift of history

Record amount raised for the arts

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New mayor to be selected at Dec. 6 council meeting

The City Council on Dec. 6 is expected to confirm Mayor Pro Tem Bob Simmons as Walnut Creek’s next mayor. Simmons won election to the City Council in 2008 and previously served on the Planning and Parks, Recreation and Open Space commissions. He succeeds Cindy Silva.

City Attorney selected

The City Council has selected Bryan Wenter as the next City Attorney, filling a vacancy created earlier this year by the death of City Attorney Paul Valle-Riestra. Wenter joined the City in 2008 as Assistant City Attorney. The Mayor cited Wenter’s significant experience in land use and planning when announcing Wenter’s selection.

Wenter earned his law degree from the University of North Carolina School of Law. He holds a Master’s degree in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina, and graduated magna cum laude. He lives in Walnut Creek with his wife and their three children.

Economic Development Manager now on board

The City has hired its first Economic Development Manager. Ron Gerber was Redevelopment and Economic Development Director in Novato prior to coming to Walnut Creek in September. He has more than 20 years of experience in economic development and community-based planning.

City Manager Ken Nordhoff said having a dedicated Economic Development Manager allows the City to intentionally focus on attracting, growing and retaining the wide range of businesses needed for the continued economic vitality of Walnut Creek.

New smartphone app for reporting neighborhood code violations

Walnut Creek residents can now report code violations through their smartphone or online, thanks to a new program called SeeClickFix.

Residents snap a photo of the problem, then submit it along with a description and location of the problem. As soon as the complaint is submitted, the City’s Code Enforcement Division receives an alert. The division will either research the problem or forward the complaint to the proper authority. Once the problem has been resolved, the resident gets a follow-up email.

To download the app, go to www.SeeClickFix.com/apps. Complaints may also be submitted online at www.SeeClickFix.com.

The City hopes SeeClickFix will make it easier for residents to partner with Code Enforcement in ensuring the quality of life throughout Walnut Creek, said Housing Manager Laura Simpson, who manages the Code Enforcement Division.

Code Enforcement is responsible for enforcing provisions of the City’s Municipal Code that involve quality of life issues such as debris; illegal or unpermitted signs; miscellaneous zoning violations; and abandoned vehicles.

For more information, including other ways to submit complaints, visit www.walnut-creek.org/nuisance.

Rainy season reminder to check out flood insurance

Floods are one of the most common of all natural disasters. Walnut Creek and its tributaries drain over 146 square miles within central Contra Costa County. The primary flood hazard to residents comes from Walnut Creek through the downtown area, Homestead Creek along Walnut Boulevard, Tice Creek in the south, and tributaries to Grayson Creek in northwest Walnut Creek. Localized flooding, however, can occur in any location and over 30 percent of flood losses nationally occur outside of mapped flood areas.

Homeowner’s insurance typically does not cover flood damage which can be caused by as little as one inch of water. Properties located in the 100-year floodplain have a 25 percent chance of experiencing a flood during the life of a 30-year mortgage.

Flood insurance is available for purchase to all residents in Walnut Creek and unincorporated portions of the County as a result of Walnut Creek’s participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. It takes 30 days for a policy to take effect, so it’s important to buy insurance before the floodwaters rise.

To determine if your property is in a 100-year floodplain, or for other information, call the City’s Engineering Division at 925-943-5839.
City offices to be closed during winter holidays

City Hall, the Bedford Gallery, and Heather Farm, Civic Park and Shadelands center offices will be closed for the winter holidays beginning Friday, Dec. 23 and will reopen at 8 a.m. Tuesday, Jan. 3. The Lesher Center Ticket office will be closed Dec. 23 - Jan. 2 except on Dec. 24 and 31. Public safety services will remain available.

Habitat for Humanity building 10 homes in Walnut Creek

Habitat for Humanity East Bay is developing Pleasant Creek Homes, a 10-unit development in downtown Walnut Creek. There will be 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom homes.

Habitat offers an affordable first mortgage, as well as some deferred financing. Participants must complete 500 hours of sweat equity in Habitat’s program. Buyers must be very low-, low-, or moderate income, and comply with the City’s program requirements.

Information sessions for interested applicants are tentatively scheduled for December. Contact Jen Golike, Homeowner Relations Program Manager, at JGolike@HabitatEB.org or 510-251-6304 ext. 376.

Home rehabilitation loans

Deferred, low-interest homeowner loans for home renovations and energy efficiency upgrades are being offered through the City of Walnut Creek. Homeowner loans are available for improvements such as new roofing, windows, water heater or furnace.

In addition, the City has funds through the federal Energy Efficiency Block Grant Program for low- and moderate-income homeowners who would like to reduce energy costs by making energy efficiency improvements. Call 925-335-7233.

Below-market-rate homes at Walden Park

In partnership with the City’s Housing Division, the KB Homes is offering six 3-bedroom, 3-bath homes for sale at Walden Park on Oak Road to eligible buyers at the below-market sales price of $340,000. Call 925-979-9824, or visit the sales office.

Share ideas on Broadway Plaza future

It’s not too late to share ideas on the future of Broadway Plaza. Stop by the Concourse Office Open House on Dec. 6 or 13 to see the results of a series of public meetings held this fall to gather community input by Macerich, owner of the 60-year-old outdoor shopping center.

Macerich is proposing one of two options as part of a long-term Broadway Plaza master plan: add 300,000 square feet of retail and parking, or add 200,000 square feet of retail and up to 200 residential units along with parking.

BART Transit Village environmental docs to be released February

The environmental impact report for the Walnut Creek BART Transit Village project is expected to be released to the public in late February, according to Principal Planner Scott Harriman.

The plan includes 596 apartments, approximately 22,000 square feet of commercial floor area, replacement parking of 850 BART spaces, and 845 new below-grade residential parking stalls.

Conceptual architectural and landscape plans are available on the City’s website.

The BART Transit Village project is just one of a number of housing developments proposed for downtown Walnut Creek.

The City is currently processing a General Plan Amendment and conducting an Environmental Impact Report for the master plan. Details of a specific project will not be available until after the public and City have been given sufficient opportunity to provide input.

A joint workshop with the City Council and the Planning, Transportation and Design Review Commissions to share information culled from the community meetings was held on Nov. 1; a similar workshop will be held at 7 p.m. Nov. 29.

STAY IN THE KNOW

All development projects, whether being reviewed, approved or under construction, can be found on the Project Pipeline List. Go to: www.walnut-creek.org/current_projects.

Other projects include the 300-unit Paragon Apartments at 141 North Civic Drive (currently under review); the 126-unit North Main Apartments at 1960 North Main, site of the former Walnut Creek Motor Lodge (approved); 48 apartments being developed as affordable housing at 2618 Baldwin Lane (approved); and the Village Mixed Use Project at 1500 Newell Avenue, with apartments and ground floor retail on the site currently occupied by a vacant eight-story office building.
Libraries offer wealth of programs for all ages

Our two libraries in Walnut Creek average more than 2,100 visitors a day and the combined circulation at the libraries is highest in the county. Patrons include children checking out books with parents and caregivers, adults using a computer or reading a magazine, tutors working with local students, and teens collaborating in a study room. And hundreds of people are attending the myriad of programs and events that include storytelling for toddlers, book clubs for teens, and author talks and educational programs for adults. Have you visited our libraries lately? If not, check them out! Upcoming exhibitions, programs and events include:

Live! From the Library

BamWow! - games, movies and activities
Students in grades 4-8 are invited to the Ygnacio Valley Library, 2661 Oak Grove Road, every Wednesday at 2 p.m. for BamWow! Activities include a book club, Wii, Playstation, books and games.

Photography exhibition showcases ghost town
The Community Art Gallery in the downtown library currently features 24 photographs of the ghost town of Bodie, California, by photographer Tom Donahoe. The exhibit will be on display until Jan. 30. The gallery is administered by the Arts Commission.

Public Art tours
Bedford Gallery docents offer guided tours at the downtown library at 11 a.m. the second Saturday of each month. The library houses 39 works of art, including 11 paintings donated by Jan and Mary Ann Beehuis, whose collection of Dutch Impressionism was highlighted at the Bedford Gallery in 2010.

It’s a gala, it’s a benefit, it’s a celebration!
Dine with local literary stars at the Walnut Creek Library Foundation’s annual fund raiser, Authors Under the Stars, Saturday, March 24. If you’d like an invitation, visit the foundation’s website, wcilibrary.org or call 925-935-5395.
To learn more about what’s happening at your local library, visit wcilibrary.org.
Safe shopping tips from WCPD

By Alicia Williams
Crime Prevention Coordinator

Shopping during the holiday season can present unique danger. People become busy and sometimes careless, which can lead to being a victim of theft and other crimes. Here are a few tips to help keep you safely in the holiday spirit:

♦ Shop during daytime if possible. If you must shop when it’s dark, park close to the building and near a light. Take advantage of shuttles or escorts.
♦ Don’t carry a purse. Carrying items like a checkbook, ID and credit cards on your person will make it more difficult for someone to take them. If you must carry a purse, carry a cross-body style bag and keep the bag part in front.
♦ Be aware of the people around you, especially strangers who appear to be approaching for no reason.
♦ Avoid carrying a lot of cash; pay for purchases with a check or credit card.
♦ Keep cash and credit cards in your front pocket.
♦ Avoid overloading yourself with bags and boxes. And NEVER leave them in your car while you continue to shop. Consider shopping in pairs or groups. The more the merrier, as the saying goes!

For crime prevention questions, please contact Crime Prevention Coordinator Alicia White at white@walnutcreekpd.com or 925-943-5885. Happy Holidays!

Think rink! Ice skating returns to Civic Park

Glide into winter at Civic Park with “Walnut Creek on Ice,” sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Business Association. The ice rink will remain through Jan. 16.

Take advantage of special programs such as children and adult skate clinics, birthday party packages, private ice rink rental and frequent skater passes.

General admission is $15 per person and includes skate rentals. Family Fun Night returns this season on Tuesday evenings between 4 and 8 p.m. (except Dec. 20 and 27). Up to six family members can skate for $25 total. Learn more at www.iceskatewalnutcreek.com.

HOLIDAY PARKING GUIDE

FREE TROLLEY

♦ ➡ FREE TROLLEY (ROUTE 4)
♦ FREE TROLLEY STOPS

PARKING

P CITY PARKING GARAGE ($.50/HR)
P CITY PARKING LOT
P METERED PARKING LOT
P PRIVATE PARKING GARAGE
P PARKING METER ZONE ($1/HR)
Be informed, have fun! 2012 Citizens Institute

The Walnut Creek Citizens Institute is accepting applications for the 2012 session. From a backstage tour of the Lesher Center to an in-depth look at how the City makes land-use decisions, the Citizens Institute highlights the people, programs and services of the City of Walnut Creek.

The 2012 Citizens Institute kicks off the morning of Saturday, Feb. 26 with a bus tour of the city, followed by six Wednesday evening sessions Feb. 29 - April 4, and a graduation celebration Saturday, April 14.

Space is limited. The program fee is $25. To learn more, go to www.walnut-creek.org/institute. To register, call Gayle Vassar, Communications and Outreach Manager, at 925-943-5895 or email vassar@walnut-creek.org.

Fiscal Health

From page one

before taking steps to implement other cost effective recommendations.

Task Force members were appointed by the City Council in February to address ongoing financial issues facing the City. The final report was the result of nine months and hundreds of hours of research by the 14 Task Force members. The City Council is expected to deliberate on the numerous recommendations in early 2012, with the intention of directing staff to develop an implementation plan based upon the results.

Community Blue Ribbon Task Force reports are available online at www.walnut-creek.org/fiscal_health.