City staff working to offset budget shortfalls

Faced with a $3 million shortfall in the 2009-10 operating budget, the City is taking unusual steps to deal with the impacts of the sagging local economy.

The City Council on Feb. 3 heard a report from Assistant City Manager Lorie Tinfow that outlined steps the City is taking to balance the budget for the next year and beyond.

Like all cities across the state, Walnut Creek is funded by a variety of revenue sources, the principal ones being sales tax, property tax, and fees and charges for services provided. All three sources have been hard hit by the economic downturn, said Tinfow.

Based on current information, staff estimates revenues of the City’s General Fund are $3.4 million (5.1%) lower for the current fiscal year and will be $5.2 million (7.5%) lower for 2009-10.

Given these changes, staff has been working diligently to reduce expenditures to offset these losses, she said. Following is a summary of the major revenue losses:

- **Sales Tax** — Revenues from the largest source have dropped by over 9%, primarily due to a decline in auto sales (which represent approximately 35% of the City’s sales tax revenues).
  
  Estimated loss: $1.5 million for 2008-09, $2.2 million for 2009-10.
  
  (See box on page 6 for charts on how much sales tax revenue the City has received since 2001 and the various sources of the City’s sales tax revenues).

- **Property Tax** — Revenues are expected to increase by only 2% (half of what was originally estimated) in 2008-09 and decrease by 4% in 2009-10.

Community weighs in on new plan for Broadway Plaza

Community members got a good look at the revised plans for a Neiman Marcus store at Broadway Plaza at workshops on Jan. 31 and Feb. 11.

Macerich, owner of the shopping mall, unveiled their proposal for a scaled-down version of the plan submitted to the City Council last September, which originally called for a three-story building on the site of the former David M Brian store.

Reaction to that proposal — stimulated by a petition drive to stop the project that was funded in the amount of nearly $95,000 by the Taubman Group, owner of Sunvalley mall in Concord — prompted changes. Macerich eliminated the third story, thus reducing the maximum height of the building from 50 to 35 feet, and reduced the overall size of the Neiman Marcus store to half the size of the Nordstrom store.
Spring City Bus Tour to visit various WC landmarks

Ever wonder what Walnut Creek was like 100 years ago? You can see for yourself on the next City Bus Tour, scheduled for Saturday, April 25.

City Public Information Officer Brad Rovanpera will again guide this fun and educational 3½-hour excursion, which runs from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

 Stops along the way will include historic Borges Ranch, Shadeland's Ranch Historical Museum (see photo), The Gardens at Heather Farm, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, the Diablo Valley Lines Model Railroad, a historical tour of downtown, and the Lesher Center for the Arts.

Tickets are $10 per person and must be reserved in advance by phone on a first-come basis. Seating is limited. To reserve up to two tickets, call 925-256-3505 and leave your name, address, phone, and number of tickets desired.

What's Happening

HodgePodgE kids’ toy & clothing sale

Are your kids’ outrgrown toys and clothes just sitting in their closets unused? Are you looking for an opportunity to sell them? If so, plan on participating in HodgePodgE - a “gently used” kids’ toy and clothing sale on Friday, March 27 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. For those interested in selling, tables will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. To rent a table, contact Hope Keung at 925-943-5866 or email keung@walnut-creek.org. All proceeds benefit the Walnut Creek Seniors’ Club.

Spring Art Days offered to children

The popular Spring Art Days program will be offered to preschoolers as well as grade schoolers April 13-17, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Shadelands Arts Center, 111 N. Wiget Ln. Sponsored by the City’s Civic Arts Education, the program groups children ages 5 to 10 by age with activities appropriate to each age group. Fee: $25/session. To register, call 925-943-5846 or go online at www.arts-ed.org.

Spring Egg Hunts planned April 11

Children can participate in Walnut Creek’s annual Spring Egg Hunts on Saturday, April 11 at Heather Farm Park or Larkey Park. The activity begins promptly at 10:15 a.m. at both parks for preschoolers through 5th graders; Heather Farm is accessible for disabled children. A breakfast of hotcakes, sausage, juice, and coffee will also be served before the egg hunt at Heather Farm Community Center from 8 to 9:45 a.m.; cost is $5 per person. Bring your camera for a picture with the Spring Bunny; $1 donation benefits the Walnut Creek Youth Council. The breakfast is co-sponsored by the City’s Recreation Division and the Walnut Festival Association.

Free home composting workshops

Residents can again sign up for free home composting workshops on March 10, 1-7:30 p.m., at Heather Farm Community Center, 301 N. San Carlos Dr.; and March 28, 1-2:30 p.m., Lindsay Wildlife Center, 1931 First Ave. Reservations are required; call 925-906-1806 to sign up.

WC Concert Band’s ‘Slavic Farewell’ March 9

The Walnut Creek Concert Band, under the direction of Harvey Benstein, will present A Slavic Farewell on Monday, March 9, 7:30 p.m. in the Hofmann Theatre at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Tickets are $15/$12. To purchase tickets online, go to www.lesherartscenter.org/onestagenow.

For further details: WalnutCreekBand@gmail.com

Spring Plant Sale at Gardens at HF

A wide selection of healthy plants suited to our Mediterranean climate will be available at the Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, April 18, 9 a.m. to noon at the Gardens at Heather Farm, 600 North San Carlos Dr., Walnut Creek. All proceeds benefit The Gardens at Heather Farm. For more information and to view the list of plants available for sale, visit www.gardenshf.org or call 925-947-1678.

Host families sought for foreign students

The International Education Center at Diablo Valley College is looking for local families to host international students on a temporary basis while they improve their English skills. Short and long term placements are available. Host families will receive a monthly stipend of $750 per student, and must provide a bedroom and two meals per day for the student(s). Contact Fia Parker, at 925-876-0080 or email: fparker@dvc.edu

Student poetry celebration April 25

Student poets will be feted at “The Voice That is Great Within Us” poetry celebration and award ceremony on Saturday, April 25 at the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. The event will be from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and is sponsored by the Walnut Creek Library Foundation and the Lindsay Wildlife Museum. For details, visit www.WCLibrary.org.
Library progress: steel frame going up; project on track

Construction workers began erecting the steel beams for the new downtown library on Jan. 19, taking advantage of unseasonably warm weather in the dead of winter.

An estimated 375 tons of steel will be installed before the final beam is lifted into place in late March on the southern portion of the building. A topping-out ceremony is planned.

Assistant City Manager Lorie Tinfow reported to the City Council in January that the project is on schedule to open in mid-2010 and is on budget.

WC BART transit village

More than 70 persons participated in a public workshop on the proposed Walnut Creek BART Transit Village project on Jan. 27 at City Hall.

BART’s plan calls for 596 rental apartments, 1,000 parking spaces (an increase of 100), a new bus center, 12,785 square feet of retail space, and 30,000 square feet of office space.

BART and its development partner, Walnut Creek Transit Lifestyles Associates, said the project would provide needed affordable housing (60 percent of the apartments are planned to be single bedroom units) and enhance pedestrian, bus, and shuttle access to the station.

BART officials have said the transit village would be good for BART and Walnut Creek because it could increase ridership by nearly 1,000 riders a day.

The City will continue work on the environmental impact report and the project will be considered by various commissions later this year.

To see a wrap-up of the workshop, go online to “What’s New” at www.walnut-creek.org

City’s Center REP wins six Shellie Awards at 30th annual ceremony

The City’s Center REpertory Co. took top honors for best play at the 30th annual Shellie Awards on Jan. 17 for its production of Agatha Christie’s The Mousetrap.

The play also garnered a Best Director award for Timothy Near and Best Supporting Actress honors for Kerri Shawn.

Other Center REP award recipients were Mindy Cooper, best director/musical for The Musical of Musicals — The Musical!; Kelly Tighe, best scenic design, Mousetrap; and Kurtis Landisman, best lighting design, A Midsummer Night’s Dream.

Contra Costa Musical Theatre’s production of Rodger & Hammerstein’s Cinderella, directed by Center REP Managing Director Scott Denison, was awarded six Shellies, including best musical.

City Manager Gary Pokorny was presented a special Shellie for “outstanding contribution to the arts.”

Since 1979, the Shellies — created by Denison — have become the recognized measure of outstanding achievement in dramatic and musical theatre in Contra Costa County.

City’s teen summer job fair scheduled March 12

Local teens will again be able to shop for summer employment with the City at the annual Summer Job Recruitment Fair on Thursday, March 12 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Drive.

Upwards of 100 paid summer jobs (including lifeguards, camp counselors, and interns) will be available. Student interns will work from June 15 to Aug. 7.

The City will accept applications online only through April 3.

For more information, go online to www.realwc.org or call 925-943-5858.
New operator tapped to run Boundary Oak Golf Course

A new era in the operation of the City’s Boundary Oak Golf Course will soon begin when CourseCo, Inc. assumes operations at the 40-year-old facility.

On Jan. 6 the City Council approved a five-year management agreement with CourseCo to take over all operations, including maintenance of the 160-acre course and food and beverage services.

Petaluma-based CourseCo, formed in 1989, was selected from a field of 19 firms. It operates 15 public access golf courses, 12 of which are publicly owned (among them are Metropolitan in Oakland, Callippe Preserve in Pleasanton, and Napa Golf Course), and a website, www.GolfAroundTheBay.com, that cross-promotes its Bay Area courses.

“We are very excited about the future of the Boundary Oak Golf Course,” said Barry Gordon, director of the City’s Arts, Recreation & Community Services Department, adding it is “one of the best municipal golf courses in the Bay Area, perhaps in northern California.”

PGA Pro Bob Boldt has operated Boundary Oak for the City since 1977, and Sunrise Bistro took over the food and beverage services on an interim basis on Jan. 1, 2008.

To book an event at the Clubhouse at Boundary Oak, call 925-935-3600.

For tournament reservations at Boundary Oak Golf Course, call 925-934-4775, ext. 13.
We all know it’s coming. It’s as inevitable as the sun rising in the east and warm winters in the West. It’s the Big One — a 7.0-magnitude earthquake on either the Hayward Fault or the San Andreas Fault — and when it finally does come, those who prepare for it will be glad they got ready.

Over the last several years, a growing army of Walnut Creek citizens have prepared themselves for the Big One — and any other major emergency — by taking the City’s popular Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training. The next round of training begins in April (see box below). Residents are encouraged to sign up for these free classes.

Already more than 700 Walnut Creek residents have gone through CERT training, according to coordinator Gayle Vassar. Walnut Creek was the first city in central Contra Costa County to offer the training in 2004.

“It’s so that people can take care of themselves, their families, and their neighbors in the first several days immediately following an emergency,” said Vassar, community relations manager with the City. “I think it takes away the fear that people have that they won’t be able to take care of themselves.”

CERT training is funded with federal Homeland Security funds and involves a 20-hour course that covers disaster preparedness, fire safety, first aid, light search and rescue, and terrorism. CERT-trained citizens may pursue a variety of volunteer opportunities in the community.

For details, visit the Contra Costa CERT website: www.contracostacert.org

Tips on how to prepare for the next earthquake

Following are some useful tips and common sense steps to take to prepare for the next big earthquake or other major disaster:

- Remain calm.
- Stay informed.
- Have an emergency survival kit ready (see box at right).
- Choose an out-of-state friend or relative whom you and your family members can call after an emergency to report your whereabouts and conditions.
- Expect delays of several days for local government services.
- Expect traffic delays and restrictions.
- Be prepared to evacuate if ordered.

Survival Kit Checklist

- Water — 2 quarts to 1 gallon per person per day
- First aid kit — freshly stocked
- First aid book
- Food (packaged, canned, no-cook, baby food, and for special diets)
- Can opener (non-electric)
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Portable radio, flashlight, spare batteries
- Essential medication and extra set of reading glasses
- Fire extinguisher — A-B-C type
- Food and water for pets
- Cash (ATMs might not be working)
- Toiletries (toilet paper, toothbrush/paste)
City Council Update

Council accepts $750,000 donation towards new downtown library

The City Council on Jan. 20 received a $750,000 check from the Walnut Creek Library Foundation in its second installment payment towards meeting its goal of raising $5 million for construction of the new downtown library (see project update on page 3).

The Foundation last year presented a check of $1.25 million to the City as its first contribution to the project.

Budget

From page one

Estimated loss: $888,000 for 2008-09, $2.2 million for 2009-10

On the expenditure side, the City has frozen 18 staff positions through 2009-10.

In addition, the City expects to save an additional $931,000 in salary costs for 2008-09, or about 2% of the City’s total salaries for regular full time and part time employees.

“The budget helps us set our priorities,” said City Manager Gary Pokorny. “It is clear we have fewer people working for the community and it will continue for several years. We and the community will need to reach an agreement on what services we can live without until the economy recovers.”

City officials are planning a major round of Community Conversations later this year to address these decisions.

Open Space Vision report: ‘Keep it as it is’

Walnut Creek citizens treasure the vast expanse of public open space that surrounds their community, and keeping it as it is ranks as their top priority.

That’s the conclusion of a new study conducted by the broad-reaching Open Space Vision Project, which last year collected input from citizens to help the City frame the future of Walnut Creek’s 2,704 acres of open space.

The City Council accepted the study findings on Jan. 20 and lauded the seven-member task force for its ambitious efforts to solicit public feedback. The group held three public workshops that attracted 74 people and conducted a citizen survey that reached 130 more.

Besides preservation, the most mentioned single issue was the presence of cattle in the open space, according to the study. While many called for the removal of cattle because of the damage cows cause to the creeks, ponds, and plants, others said cattle grazing should continue as a historical reminder of the early ranching days of Walnut Creek.

To read the complete Open Space Vision Project report, go online to www.walnut-creek.org and click on “Quick Links” to find “Open Space.”

City endorses ‘Healthy Eating Guidelines’

The City Council wants citizens to watch what they eat.

Mayor Gary Skrel has issued a proclamation declaring the City’s support and commitment to the “Wellness City Challenge” and its adoption of “Healthy Eating Guidelines” to encourage citizens to follow good nutritional rules.

The guidelines recommend people check food labels for the following:
1. No sugar in the first three ingredients of a food or beverage
2. 3 grams of fiber per 100 calories
3. No transfat/hydrogenated oils

The City is a co-sponsor of the Wellness City Challenge, a campaign initiated by local restaurateur Cindy Gershen to promote healthier lifestyle habits for Walnut Creek residents.

Sales taxes — How much the City gets; from what sources

Note: The City gets 1 cent from every $1 of taxable sales in Walnut Creek

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Furniture/appliance stores</th>
<th>Leasing</th>
<th>New auto sales</th>
<th>Business-to-business sales</th>
<th>Department stores</th>
<th>Online sales</th>
<th>Misc. retail</th>
<th>Apparel stores</th>
<th>Restaurants</th>
<th>Food markets</th>
<th>Service stations</th>
<th>Department stores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$19.1 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$1.1 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$21.1 million</td>
<td>$20.4 million</td>
<td>$19.2 million</td>
<td>$12.1 million</td>
<td>$19.0 million</td>
<td>$20.0 million</td>
<td>$17.9 million</td>
<td>$18.4 million</td>
<td>$18.9 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Police Dept. tracks 1 homicide, stable crime year in 2008

Walnut Creek police investigated one homicide in 2008, a year in which most crime activity was not too different than the previous year.

A summary of criminal offenses in 2008 compiled by the Police Department shows there were 31,409 calls to the police for service (9,407 of which required follow-up).

In 2008, the department also investigated 794 non-injury auto accidents and 244 injury auto accidents, which included two fatalities (20 were driving-under-the-influence cases).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRIMINAL OFFENSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRIME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homicide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assaults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auto Theft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vandalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.U.I.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Offenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Time to apply for Civic Pride grants

Applications will be available in March for 2009-10 Civic Pride Grant awards, which will be given later this spring by the City Council.

The deadline for submittal will be late-April. The Council will make its decisions in June.

Since 1989, the City has awarded over $1 million in Civic Pride grants to a wide variety of local non-profit organizations to help underline the costs of projects that improve the quality of life in Walnut Creek.

Take care with fund-raising car washes

Car washes have long been a favorite fundraiser for scout troops, schools and other non-profit groups. They provide a needed service, can be done with little capital investment, and are very visible. Only in the last few years have we all become more aware of the environmental impact our car washes can have.

Dirty water containing soaps, detergents, residue from exhaust fumes, gasoline and motor oils are washed off of these cars and flow directly to the nearest storm drain.

All by itself, your car wash may not seem to be contributing much. But collectively, each of these car washes, done on a regular basis as they are in our communities, can degrade water quality and creek habitats.

To stop pollution from entering our storm drains, best management practices are needed to ensure that your car washing event does not pollute the environment.

Contact the City’s Clean Water Program, 925-943-5839 to obtain a brochure or to reserve a car washing kit free of charge to discharge your wash water to the appropriate sanitary drain or vegetated area. Kits are available on a first-come-first-served basis and reservations can be made up to a month in advance.

Good luck on your car wash fundraiser – and thanks for helping keep our environment clean and safe!
INAURUGATION CELEBRATION — More than 1,000 persons turned out at the Lesher Center for the Arts on Jan. 20 to participate in the historic live television coverage of the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States. The event was co-hosted by the City, the Mt. Diablo Peace & Justice Center, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Downtown Business Association.

Broadway Plaza

From page one

Macerich also revised its proposal for parking in the five-level parking garage on South Main Street. The revised plan calls for using mechanical lifts and attendant parking solely for employees of Broadway Plaza, not shoppers. Macerich said this approach would produce 175 extra parking spaces as required under the City’s Municipal Code without building a separate structure.

Macerich also will fund extended hours for the Free Ride trolley and a signalized intersection on South Broadway behind the Macy’s store.

More than 30 citizens participated in the Jan. 31 workshop and a similar number on Feb. 11. During breakout discussions residents commented that the reduced store plan is “friendlier,” that the Neiman Marcus building should be a unique architectural statement, that the proposal should conform with the City’s general plan, and that even more parking should be provided for shoppers.

“We want to thank you for investing in Walnut Creek,” resident Sherri Goldsmith told Macerich officials. “We would be fools to turn down more (sales tax) money to support our police and other services.”