Balancing WC’s future is focus of Council plan

The City Council and staff have come up with a more proactive approach to “restructuring” City operations that will make it easier to balance the City’s needs and resources in the future.

Last spring, the Council and staff successfully bridged an unexpectedly large $18 million gap to balance the 2008-2010 operating budget.

After the Council approved the spending plan, it asked staff to prepare a 10-year capital investment plan (CIP) and begin “restructuring” City operations so that future budget shortfalls could be anticipated and addressed in advance.

At a special study session Sept. 30, Assistant City Manager Lorie Tinfow shared with the Council an action plan for bridging future budget gaps that would have a role for community members, the Council, and City staff.

The shortfall will echo the previous two budget cycles, where expenses over which the City has limited or no control (such as employee health coverage costs) outpaced lower-than-typical revenues.

Balancing, see back page

Going ‘behind the scenes…’

Paige Lane of Walnut Creek (above right) takes in a fascinating historical retrospective on Walnut Creek while Katie Whitcomb, 7, (left), stands at the podium in the City Council Chamber as they and hundreds of others toured City Hall and other facilities on “Behind the Scenes Day.” See page 5 for more pictures of the September 20 event.

WWII vet to speak at Veterans Day event

Rossmoor resident Lou Satz, who as an Army sergeant served in Europe during the U.S. occupation following World War II, will share his memories of those times at the City’s Veterans Day Observance on Tuesday, Nov. 11.

The public ceremony will begin at 11 a.m. in the Civic Park Community Center Assembly Hall, located in Civic Park, corner of Civic Drive and North Broadway.

Mayor Gwen Regalia and the City Council will also honor Army 1st Sgt. William Harlan of Walnut Creek, who has been named the Army Times’ Soldier of the Year for 2008.

The Walnut Creek Concert Band will perform under the direction of Harvey Benstein.

Think Rink: Walnut Creek on Ice returns

Strap a pillow to your fanny, grab a loved one, and head on back to Civic Park for the 2008-09 holiday season of the popular Longs Drugs’ Downtown Walnut Creek on Ice, which opens its fourth season on November 13.

Walnut Creek’s very own winter wonderland, which will be open through Jan. 21, will be found in a new location in the parking lot on the north side of Civic Park, between the Park Place Library and the City’s Clay Arts studio.

Walnut Creek on Ice is co-sponsored by Longs Drugs and other Walnut Creek businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Business Association, and the City.

For times and admission prices, visit www.IceSkateWalnutCreek.com
**All aboard for WC Model Railroad Holiday Show**

The intricately detailed HO-scale model trains of the Diablo Valley Lines will be showcased at the Walnut Creek Model Railroad Society’s 2008 Holiday Show, which is scheduled:

- Friday, Nov. 21 (8-10 p.m.)
- Sat.-Sun., Nov. 22, 23 (11 a.m.-6 p.m.)
- Friday, Nov. 28 (2-10 p.m.)
- Sat.-Sun., Nov. 29, 30 (11 a.m.-6 p.m.)

Admission is $3, ages 13 and up; $2, seniors and ages 6-12; free, under 6. Call 925-937-1888.

Diablo Valley Lines is located next to Larkey Park at 2751 Buena Vista Ave.

**WC Concert Band Holiday Concert**

The Walnut Creek Concert Band, under the direction of Harvey Benstein, will perform their annual Holiday Concert on Tuesday, Dec. 2 at 7:30 p.m. at the Lesher Center for the Arts. The concert will feature traditional holiday favorites. Tickets are $12/$15 at the Center Ticket Office, 1601 Civic Drive, or call 925-943-7469.

**Seniors Holiday Boutique Nov. 14-15**

Start your holiday shopping at the Walnut Creek Seniors Club Holiday Boutique on Nov. 14-15 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. Admission is free. Lunch is $3 and will be served 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Items for sale will include handcrafted holiday decorations, baby gifts, quilts, toys, wreaths, home accents, baked goods, and more. A free turkey drawing will be held each hour. Call 925-943-5851.

**City’s Holiday Breakfast set for Dec. 6**

Enjoy an old-fashioned family good time this yuletide season at the annual Holiday Breakfast on Saturday, Dec. 6, 9 to 11 a.m., at Heather Farm Park Community Center, 301 No. San Carlos Dr. “Reindeer pancakes” will be served, and seasonal music, arts and crafts, holiday videos, and pictures with Santa will be part of the fun. Admission is $5 per person at the door (free to children under 12 months). This event is cosponsored by the City’s Recreation Division and the Walnut Festival Association.

**Holiday Studio Art Sale Dec. 4-7**

The Clay Arts Guild and Civic Arts Education will hold their joint Civic Arts Holiday Studio Art Sale at two locations Dec. 4-7. On sale at Civic Park will be a large selection of handcrafted pottery and ceramic sculpture by students and faculty in the studios. At Shadelands Arts Center, 111 N. Wiget Lane, jewelry, paintings, and other arts will be available for purchase. Hours for both locations are: Dec. 4, 5-9 p.m.; Dec. 5, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Dec. 6, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; Dec. 7, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, call 925-943-5846.

**Denver for the holidays**

Celebrate the holidays with Back Home Again: A John Denver Holiday Concert Dec. 4-14 at the Lesher Center for the Arts. Back Home Again, by Dan Wheatman and Randal Myler, the creators of Fire on the Mountain and Ain’t Nothin’ But the Blues features modern and traditional Christmas carols, as well as some of John Denver’s most memorable hits, including “Thank God I’m a Country Boy,” “Grandma’s Feather Bed,” and, of course, “Back Home Again.” Tickets are $36; call 925-943-SHOW.

**Center REP brings back ‘Christmas Carol’**

Center REPertory Co. for the 11th season will present its heartwarming production of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol,” at the Lesher Center for the Arts Dec. 11-21. Tickets are $30-$41; call 925-943-7469 or www.centerREP.org

**Early American quilts at Bedford Gallery**

Untold Stories: Early American Quilts from the Collection of Susan Brooks is the current exhibition at the Bedford Gallery in the Lesher Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr. Featuring 35 quilts created during the 18th and 19th centuries, the exhibition is on display through Nov. 23. The gallery is open Tues.-Sun., noon to 5 p.m., and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, 6-8 p.m. General admission is $5, adults; $3, ages 13-17; free, age 12 and younger.

**WC Police to sponsor Holiday Toy Drive**

For the eighth year, the Walnut Creek Police Department will be accepting donations of toys for underprivileged children beginning Nov. 28. New and unwrapped toys for children up to 15 years of age will be accepted through Dec. 12 in the lobby of City Hall, 1666 N. Main Street.

**Correction**

The Nutshell mispelled developer Brian Hirahara’s name in the last issue.
Commission OKs parking plan for Neiman Marcus

The Planning Commission unanimously approved an attendant parking plan on Sept. 25 for the proposed Neiman Marcus store at Broadway Plaza, setting the stage for the City Council’s final decision on the project.

At pretime, the Council was scheduled to deliberate on the parking portion of the plan at its Oct. 7 meeting.

The Council on Sept. 16 unanimously approved a general plan amendment and zoning changes to increase the building height from 35 to 50 feet. The Council also certified the environmental impact report, clearing the way for final parking and design issues to be decided on the new, 107,000-square-foot store.

Neiman Marcus plans to open its newest store in 2010 on the site of the existing David M. Brian store at the southwest corner of South Main Street and Mt. Diablo Boulevard. David M. Brian is relocating to the former Gap store in the center.

Time running out to convert to digital TV

This is another reminder to consumers without cable who have a traditional analog TV that they have until Feb. 17, 2009 to convert their televisions to digital.

Digital TV provides crystal clear pictures and higher quality sound, as well as the capacity for more channels. This technology also offers other features such as enhanced closed captioning ability.

Consumers have several options:
- Purchase a DTV converter box that connects to analog TVs and over-the-air antennas to convert the digital signal to analog. Cost is about $50-$70.
- Purchase a digital TV
- Subscribe to a cable, satellite, or telephone company service provider.

For more, go to www.dtvanswers.com

Broadway Plaza Parade of Lights

The Holiday Parade of Lights and Open House at Broadway Plaza will be on Dec. 4 from 6 to 9 p.m. The Grand Menorah Lighting will be Sunday, Dec. 28 at 4 p.m. For details, call 925-933-6589.

Teddy Bear Teas at the Gardens

A magical holiday event awaits children and adults at the Teddy Bear Teas at the Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr. on Saturday, Dec. 6 at 10:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., and Sunday, Dec. 7 at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Reservations are required and children must be accompanied by an adult. The cost (which includes a souvenir photo) is $15 for children, $25 for adults, and no charge for the favorite teddy bear in tow. All proceeds benefit the Gardens at Heather Farm (www.gardenshf.org). For reservations, call 925-947-1678.

Jewish Community Center

The City Council is scheduled to consider on Nov. 18 the Jewish Community Center’s modified application for an 80-unit residential condominium project with underground parking and the rebuilding of its existing community center on Tice Valley Boulevard.

The Council rejected the original plans for a 120-unit project in July 2007 for being out of character with the neighborhood.

Co-op site

It’s back to square one on the development of the long-abandoned Co-op store site on Geary Road as Silverwing Development has terminated its contract agreement with Pleasant Creek Industries to build affordable housing on the site. The Co-op store closed in 1984.

Sister Cities group planning Noceto visit in spring 2009

Walnut Creek Sister Cities International has confirmed plans for a visit to Noceto, Italy next May.

Planners say the trip would be from May 13 to 21 and include a two-day visit to Walnut Creek’s first sister city on May 15-16. Other planned stops include Milan, Parma, and Bologna.

A delegation from Noceto, led by Mayor Fabio Fecchi, visited Walnut Creek on April 13, 2007.

For more information, contact president Bill Hansen at 925-939-4951.
Survey results

Older adults ‘flourishing’ in Walnut Creek

Walnut Creek scores high marks with its older residents, who indicated in a recent survey that it’s a great community for retirement because of its health and wellness opportunities.

The study found, overall, that Walnut Creek was rated positively by its older residents and that most seniors are “flourishing” in Walnut Creek. Many rated the city as a great place to live.

The survey, conducted for the City by National Research Center in Boulder, Colo., in August 2007, provides a fascinating glimpse at what the nearly 19,000 older adults (age 65 or older) living in Walnut Creek think about their community.

“With more than one-half of the Baby Boom generation at age 50 and older, the flow of older adults is beginning to gush into the demographic pipeline,” according to the final report.

To better prepare for this aging population, or “silver tsunami,” as it has been called, the City contracted for the study to assess the strengths and needs of its older residents.

The study showed that the greatest needs of older residents were civic engagement, information, housing, and physical health.

For instance, one in four older residents in Walnut Creek said they had problems in the areas of social engagement, social support, and financial needs.

The mail-in survey was returned by 539 older adult households, representing an overall response rate of 46 percent. Following are some of the more interesting results:

- 79% rated local services as excellent or good
- 88% rated the quality of shopping opportunities as excellent or good
- 93% voted in the last election
- 78% rated the ease of walking as the most favorable form of travel
- 92% said fitness opportunities are excellent or good

The bottom line, according to the study’s findings, is that, by and large, older residents are mobile, healthy, and engaged in a variety of productive activities.

“Older residents experience a good quality of life in Walnut Creek and most plan to stay in the community,” the report concluded.

National magazine rates WC among 10 top healthy places to retire in America

Walnut Creek was selected as one of America’s 10 best healthy places to retire in the Sept. 29 issue of U.S. News and World Report.

The City’s Sugarloaf Open Space was featured on the cover of the magazine, which also selected Bella Vista, Ark.; Boulder, Colo.; Eden Prairie, Minn.; Green Valley, Az.; Issaquah, Wa.; Longmeadow, Mass.; Portland, Maine; Punta Gorda, Fl.; and Reston, Va.

These 10 cities were selected by the magazine’s editors as the healthiest spots in the nation to retire. Walnut Creek was lauded for its abundant open space, recreational opportunities, the Lesher Center for the Arts, and its “walkable downtown.”

Among those quoted in the article were Mayor Gwen Regalia and Parks, Recreation & Open Space Commission chair Ed Montgomery, a Rossmoor resident.

Mini-bus service available to seniors

If you’re a senior citizen needing a ride someplace, just call the City and leave the driving to us.

For nearly 35 years the Walnut Creek Seniors Club has offered mini-bus service to any senior living within the Walnut Creek city limit. Drivers are friendly and reliable volunteers who take seniors to shopping destinations, medical appointments, Civic Park Community Center, and other locations within the city.

Rides are only $1. To reserve a ride, call 933-1434 between 9 and 11 a.m. the day before your ride. For details, call 943-5852 weekdays between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.
Hundreds attend City open house and ‘Get Involved’

An estimated 300 persons explored the hallways and byways of City Hall, the Police Station, and the Lesher Center for the Arts during the Behind the Scenes Day open house on Sept. 20 and learned how they can “get involved” in the community as a volunteer.

It was a unique and fun opportunity to see and do things you normally couldn’t, like walking into a jail cell, sitting in a police car, meeting the mayor, learning about the history of Walnut Creek, and watching street traffic on a big screen TV monitor.

More than 60 employees participated in the event, providing tours, hands-on demonstrations, and general information.

At the same time, the City held its Get Involved 2008 volunteer fair in front of the Lesher Center for the Arts, with 34 non-profit organizations providing information to the public on how to become a volunteer.

Volunteers are the backbone of Walnut Creek activities. When an important social service needs to be done, or an activity funded, or an event planned, volunteers are the engine that makes the machine go.

Often, however, people who would like to volunteer their time or services simply don’t know where to turn.

Following is a listing of all the non-profit volunteer organizations that participated in Get Involved 2008. To find out more about these and other volunteer agencies, contact The Volunteer Center of the East Bay at 925-472-5760, or go online to www.helpnow.org.

American Cancer Society Discovery Shop  
Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF)  
www.arf.net  925-256-1273
Assistance League of Diablo Valley  
www.diaiblovalley.assistanceleague.org  
925-934-0901
Bay Area Crisis Nursery  
www.bacn.info  925-685-6633
Bedford Gallery Docent Council  
www.bedfordgallery.org  
925-295-1418
Bedford Gallery Guild  
www.bedfordgallery.org  925-295-1418
Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)  
www.walnut-creek.org  925-256-3556
Cornucopia/Wellness Community  
cornucopiawc@gmail.com  925-256-4486
Lesher Arts Center Usher Program  
www.lesherartscenter.org  925-295-1400
Caring Hands Volunteer Caregivers Program  
www.johnmuirhealth.com  925-952-2999
CASA of Contra Costa County  
www.cccocasa.org  925-256-7284
Contra Costa Crisis Center  
Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano  
www.foodbankccs.org  925-676-7543
Friends of the Creeks  
contact@FriendsoftheCreeks.org  
925-937-6791
Friends of the Walnut Creek Library  
www.contra-costalibrary.ca.us/friends/wcl.html  
925-933-7354
The Gardens at Heather Farm  
www.gardenshf.org  925-947-6712
John Muir Medical Center Auxiliary  
www.johnmuirhealth.com  925-947-5358
Kaiser Permanente Volunteer Services  
www.kaiserpermanente.org  925-295-4486
LifeGarden  
www.lifegarden.org  925-937-3044
Lindsay Wildlife Museum  
Monument Crisis Center  
www.monumentcrisiscenter.org  
925-825-7751 x105
Mount Diablo Interpretive Association  
www.mdia.org  925-927-7222
Movies Under the Stars  
www.walnutcreekrec.org/muts.htm  
925-943-5899 x420
Walnut Creek Open Space Division  
dollard@walnut-creek.org  
925-943-5899 x135

VOLUNTEER, see page 6
Two council members to step down

Two veteran members of the City Council — Gwen Regalia and Charlie Abrams — will end their public service Dec. 2.

After 21 years, Regalia will be completing her unprecedented fifth term on the Council, as well as her historic fifth term as mayor.

Abrams, a local traffic engineer, is ending 12 years as a Council member (during which he served twice as mayor). He was formerly a member of the City’s Planning and Transportation commissions.

City moves forward on variety of energy efficiency measures

The City is continuing its efforts to “go green” with a variety of energy efficiency projects that will save money.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company has begun installing energy saving thermostats in the City’s municipal buildings under its SmartAC program.

Walnut Creek is the first city in northern and central California to participate in this important program that helps PG&E and the State of California avoid power interruptions without sacrificing customers’ comfort or control.

The City’s Public Services Department is also working with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) Energy Watch Partnership on a host of energy-efficient lighting upgrades at several City facilities. Over 65 percent of the $68,041 project costs will be paid for by the California Public Utilities Commission and PG&E. The lighting upgrades will save the City an estimated $36,000 a year in energy costs.

By the end of 2008, ABAG Energy Watch will have helped Walnut Creek secure more than $139,000 in incentives for projects that will save the City 862,000 kWh and eliminate close to 512,000 pounds of CO₂ emissions each year.

Meanwhile, the City’s recent green efforts have grabbed the attention of area photo-voltaic solar providers, who want to partner with the City on solar installations at select municipal buildings.

Volunteer

From page 5
RSVP of Contra Costa
www.helpnow.org 925-472-5771
Save Mount Diablo
www.savemountdiablo.org 925-947-0642
Senior Outreach Services
www.mowosos.org
SHELTER, Inc. of Contra Costa County
www.shelterinofccc.org 925-335-0698

STAND! Against Domestic Violence
www.standagainstdv.org 925-676-2845
Walnut Creek Education Foundation K-12
www.wcifik12.org 925-933-9233
Walnut Creek Historical Society
woshadelands@sbcglobal.net 925-935-7871
Walnut Creek Little League
www.wcbaseball.org 925-806-8242

Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation
www.wcosf.org 925-939-6610
Walnut Creek Sister Cities International
sanhan@astound.net 925-939-4951
Walnut Creek Soccer Club
www.wcsc.org 925-930-0210
Youth Homes & Youth Homes Auxiliary
www.youthhomes.org 925-933-2627
LibraryFest kicks off fundraising campaign for new WC library

Having raised over $5 million to date in private grants and major donations for the new Walnut Creek Library, the Walnut Creek Library Foundation is now seeking contributions from families, businesses, and individuals towards its goal of $7.4 million.

The community campaign kickoff was the hugely successful LibraryFest on Sept. 14, which attracted more than 2,000 people to a wide variety of activities, from book readings to live musical performances, in Civic Park.

Meanwhile, excavation of the underground parking lot for the library was completed on September 26.

Gifts of $100, $500, $1,000, $2,500, and $5,000 will garner recognition for donors at the new library. For details, call 925-935-5395 or go to www.newWCLibrary.org.

Free emergency response training to be offered

Do you want to get involved in your community and learn to help yourself and your community in the event of disaster by taking Community Emergency Response Team training?

The free, six-week CERT course includes lessons on earthquake preparedness, suppressing small fires, shutting off utilities, light search and rescue, disaster First Aid, and many other response techniques.

Nearly 800 people have taken CERT in Walnut Creek since its inception in 2004.

Creek Talk

Heed ‘Don’t Dump in Drains’ alert

On your walk around town, you’ll probably notice the little blue “No Dumping – Drains to Creek” metal decals placed on top of storm drain inlets.

This marking is part of the City’s effort to make the public aware of stormwater issues. One important point to drive home is that water that rushes through the storm drains — often carrying dirt, trash and pollutants — is not treated before it ends up in local streams.

Using fertilizer, littering, and not cleaning up after pets often have damaging effects on local streams, as pet waste, pollutants, and trash can be washed into a drain during a rainstorm.

The City has over 4,000 storm drain inlets and most, if not all, should have a “No Dumping” marking installed.

Student interns and volunteers installed most of them throughout the years.

Want to get involved in your community to protect our creeks and Bay? Volunteer to stencil your local storm drains by calling 925-256-3511.
City Directory

Arts Education classes 943-5846
Bicycle registration 943-5844
Building Division, permits 256-3549
Business licenses 943-5821
City Clerk’s Office 943-5818
City Hall main number 943-5800
City Manager’s office 943-5812
Civic Arts Education 943-5846
Civic Park rentals 943-5853
Crime prevention 943-5885
Employment hotline 943-5817
Fingerprinting 943-5844
Flood zone info 943-5839
Foothill Gym 256-3539
Graffiti reporting 943-5854
Heather Farm rentals 943-5859
Heather Farm Pool 943-5856
LCA Ticket Office 943-7469
Leisure Service classes 943-5858
Mayor’s Office 256-3504
Open Space information 943-5855
Planning/Zoning hotline 256-3558
Police Administration 943-5869
Police (non-emergency) 943-5844
Public Information 943-5895
Recreation classes 943-5858
Senior citizen activities 943-5851
Street light outages 256-3529
Tice Valley Gym 256-3572

City’s Holiday Tree Lighting set Nov. 28 at Civic Park gazebo

Join Mayor Gwen Regalia in kicking off the yuletide season this year at the City’s traditional Holiday Tree Lighting on Friday, Nov. 28 in Civic Park.

This free event, sponsored by the Walnut Creek Downtown Business Association and the City of Walnut Creek, will begin at 6 p.m.

Featured will be holiday music performed by the Walnut Creek Concert Band under the direction of Harvey Benstein.

After Mayor Regalia lights the Holiday Tree, Santa Claus will make a special appearance to pass out candy canes in the gazebo.

Balancing

From front page

(primarily sales and property taxes).

Staff recommended that the City look six years ahead over three budget cycles — through 2014-16 — and move from “restructuring” to achieving “balance” between needs and resources.

In this new approach, there will be more time — 21 months instead of only three or four months — to find solutions to the structural problem of the budget so it can be rebalanced in a sustainable way.

Staff will look for more savings in existing operations, review fiscal policies and practices, come up with new ideas for revenues, consider additional revenues, and consider reducing or eliminating programs and activities.