In a Nutshell

Council to ask voters to OK library bond

Calling it the community’s “highest priority,” the City Council on Jan. 31 agreed to put before Walnut Creek voters later this year a bond measure for building a new downtown library.

In a special session, the Council acknowledged that there is a lot of work to do in the coming months to come up with a new conceptual design for the library that will meet the community’s high expectations and secure voter support for a general obligation bond measure on the November 2005 ballot.

If the bond measure passes, construction on the 42,000-square-foot library could begin as early as spring 2007.

“This is going to be a major effort,” said City Manager Mike Parness. “We’re going to have to do whatever it takes to get the (bond campaign) done on time.”

The new library would replace the 44-year-old facility at 1644 No. Broadway — an undersized, 9,234-square-foot building operated by the County.

For several years, Walnut Creek residents have rated a new downtown library as a top priority for the community.

The current library was built when Walnut Creek’s population was about 10,000, and is woefully inadequate in size and services to meet the needs of the current population of 66,000.

This spring the City will choose three or four architectural firms to participate in a design competition in which the public will have a role. The Council expects to approve a final conceptual design in June.

Council members agreed that public participation is paramount in choosing a

LIBRARY, see back page

Skate park groundbreaking Apr. 9

City Council members will break ground on the Walnut Creek Skate Park on Saturday, April 9 at 10 a.m. in a festive public event that will begin at the corner of Heather and Marchbanks drives in Heather Farm Park.

The 12,250-square-foot skate park is expected to be opened later this summer. It was designed by Purkiss-Rose-RSI of Fullerton with the input of area skaters.

Following the brief groundbreaking ceremony, local skaters will demonstrate their skills in a temporary skate park to be set up in the front ballfield parking lot at North San Carlos and Heather drives.

The Friends of the Skate Park, in partnership with the Walnut Creek Fountain for Youth Foundation, has launched several fundraising opportunities to pay for skate park amenities such as lighting, benches, and a water fountain.

To date the organization has raised $25,000 and a pledge for $5,000 through its fundraising efforts. Donations have been received from Sunrise Rotary Club in Walnut Creek ($10,000), the Walnut Creek Soccer Club ($5,000), and Copeland Sports has pledged $5,000 for lighting.

For details on how to contribute, go online at www.walnut-creek.org.

Planting oaks for the open space

Longtime open space volunteer Dick Daniel prepares to plant two acorns in the Shell Ridge Open Space in a symbolic ceremony on Dec. 11 to observe the City's retirement of the 1974 Open Space bond. The historic bond measure raised $6.75 million to purchase the Shell Ridge territory (previously targeted for housing), which led to the City's eventual accumulation of 2,704 acres of public open space over the last 30 years.

www.walnut-creek.org


City Event Calendar

March

18-19
Seniors Club
Second Hand Sale
(See What’s Happening)

26
Spring Egg Hunts
Heather Farm & Larkey parks
(See What’s Happening)

April

16
Trail Day
Borges Ranch, 1035 Castle Rock Rd., 8 a.m.
For details, call Ranger Art Janke at 930-7731

City Meeting Calendar

City Council
March 1, 15; April 5, 19
7 p.m.
City Hall, 1666 N. Main St.

Planning Commission
March 10, 21; April 11, 28
7:30 p.m.
City Council chamber

Arts Commission
March 7, April 4
4:30 p.m.
Lesher Center for the Arts

Transportation Commission
March 17, April 21
7:30 p.m.
City Council chamber

Design Review Commission
March 2, 16; April 6, 20
7 p.m., City Council chamber

Park, Rec & Open Space Commission
March 7, April 4
7 p.m., City Council chamber

City Council meetings are televised live on Comcast Channels 6 and 26 (unincorporated), and on Astound Channel 29. They are repeated the following Saturday at 1 p.m. on all.

Walnut Creek Currents, a City-produced 10-minute video digest on City activities and services:
Comcast Channels 6 and 26
— Daily at 6 a.m., 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., and Wed. at 7:30 p.m.
Astound Ch. 29 — Daily at noon and 7 p.m.

City’s Center REP earns eight top Shellie awards

The City’s Center Repertory Company brought home eight coveted Shellie Awards for outstanding achievement in regional performing arts at the 26th annual ceremony held Jan. 15 at the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts.

Center REP took top honors for Anna Christie (best play), Diana Torres Koss (actress, musical), Jessa Brie Berkner (actress, play), Aldo Billingslea (supporting actor, play), Lee Sankowich (director, play), Eric Sinkkonen (scenic design, play), Kurt Landisman (lighting design, play), and Toni Kilcoyne (outstanding service).

WC Seniors’ Second Hand Sale

The Walnut Creek Seniors’ Club’s annual Second Hand Sale will be Friday, March 18 and Saturday, March 19, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. both days, at the Civic Park Community Center, 1375 Civic Dr. A wide variety of items will be available for purchase, including clothing, toys, books, collectibles, and jewelry. (Note: Donations of these items will be accepted at the community center weekdays through March 18, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Please, no furniture, computers, TVs, office equipment, or telephones.) All proceeds benefit the Seniors’ Club. For more information, call 943-5852.

Spring Egg Hunts planned March 26

Children can participate in Walnut Creek’s annual Spring Egg Hunts on Saturday, March 26 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 pancake-and-sausage breakfast will also be offered before the egg hunt at Heather Farm Community Center from 8 to 9:45 a.m.; cost is $5 per person.

Children invited to Spring Art Days

Spring Art Days will be held March 28-April 1 at Shadelands Arts Center, 111 N. Wiget Ln. The program, sponsored by Civic Arts Education, groups children ages 5 to 10 by age with activities appropriate to each group. Sessions will be 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The fee is $25 per child per session. To register, call 943-5846 or go on-line at http://ezreg.arts-ed.org/

Free tax prep help for low income earners

Low income families can get free tax preparation assistance through April 15 in a program sponsored by the Family Economic Security Partner-ship. For information on the nearest Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Center, call 1-800-358-8832.

What’s Happening

WC Band to present Spring Concert April 12

The Walnut Creek Concert Band will present its annual Spring Concert on Tuesday, April 12 at the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Drive.

The 8 p.m. concert will feature the Second Suite in F for Band by Gustav Holst, Irish Tune from County Derry by Percy Grainger, and William Schuman’s New England Triptych.

Tickets can be purchased for $8 from the Center Ticket Office at 1601 Civic Dr. or by calling 925-943-SHOW(7469).

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

Free home composting workshops

Free “Home Composting for Busy People” workshops will be held in Walnut Creek on March 8 and April 5, 7-8:30 p.m., at The Gardens at Heather Farm, 1540 Marchbanks Dr. Registration is required; call 906-1806.

Spring Plant Sale for Gardens at HF

The Gardens at Heather Farm will host its benefit Spring Plant Sale on Saturday, April 23, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 600 North San Carlos Drive. Call (925) 947-1678 or visit www.gardenshf.org.

Host an international student

Diablo Valley College is again seeking host families to house international students on a temporary basis while they improve their English skills. Host families receive a $650 monthly stipend per student. Contact Fia Parker at (925) 676-4600, x. 103 or e-mail: fparker@dvc.edu.

New Building Division info line

The City’s Building Division has a new information line for the public: (925) 256-3549.

Youth orchestras to perform March 22

The 96 talented youngsters of Civic Arts Education’s Young Performers String Orchestra and the Diablo Regional Youth Orchestra will perform in concert on March 22 at the Hofmann Theatre in the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, 1601 Civic Dr. The 7 p.m. concert will be conducted by professional musician Rem Djemilev. Tickets are $7 and $10 and can be purchased by calling (925) 943-SHOW(7469).
General Plan ready for consideration by Planning Commission

After nearly two years of study, discussion and analysis, the proposed General Plan update is shifting to the Planning Commission this spring for its consideration.

The 21-member General Plan Steering Committee, which has been meeting since June 2003, held its final sessions in February before passing off the ambitious project to the commission. The committee, comprising representatives from all five City commissions and the City treasurer, has met 29 times to oversee the preparation of the first new General Plan since 1989. Adoption is expected in 2006.

The public will get more opportunities to provide feedback on proposed land use change areas and General Plan policies at Planning Commission meetings scheduled March 17, 21, 24 and April 11. All will begin at 7 p.m. in the Council Chamber at City Hall, 1666 No. Main St.

For more information, visit the City website at www.walnut-creek.org.

Plan expert to get top national honor

Naphtali H. Knox, who is guiding the General Plan update, will receive the Distinguished Leadership Award for a Professional Planner on March 22 from the American Planning Association.

Knox, a 48-year planning veteran who was hired by the City in 2003 to assist in rewriting Walnut Creek’s General Plan, is being recognized for his commitment and dedication to advancing the planning profession.

Civic Arts Ed offices to move to City Hall

After making their home in Civic Park for over 40 years, the administrative offices of Civic Arts Education will finally move into City Hall this spring.

Beginning April 18, the public will be able to visit the new offices, which will be located off the main lobby and next to the City Council Chamber.

Civic Arts Education, established in 1963 in Quonset huts in Civic Park, is the largest community-supported arts education program in Northern California. The current offices and studios are housed in portable buildings that were originally used on the U.C. Berkeley campus following World War II. The City acquired them in 1966 to house Civic Arts Education’s offices, three studios, a music studio, and a darkroom.

“What will be nice is we’ll be in a real building,” said Arts Education manager Kathy Nelson. “We’ve always been in temporaries.”

The City is exploring options to remove two of the existing studio buildings on the east side of the bridge later this year and perhaps move the affected classes into the Park Place building at the corner of Civic Drive and No. Broadway or into another facility.

Office hours at City Hall will be Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed 12:30-1:30 p.m.).

Civic Pride Grants to be available again

Since 1989, the City Council has been providing Civic Pride Grants to help underwrite the costs of community projects that improve the quality of life in Walnut Creek.

For 2005-06, the City is making approximately $75,000 available for Civic Pride Grants. Preference will be given to projects or programs that promote cultural diversity, provide a long-term community benefit, or are new or expanded programs and services that involve public/private partnerships.

Applications will be available March 14 and are due back to the City no later than 5 p.m. on Friday, April 15. The City Council will make final decisions later this spring on which projects to fund.

For an application, contact Sandi Kendle at 943-5899, ext. 240, via e-mail at kendle@walnut-creek.org, or go on-line at www.walnut-creek.org.

Planning for happier customers

Customers of the new Development Review Counter for the Planning, Building, Engineering, and Transportation divisions on the second floor of City Hall can now find such user-friendly features as a water station, children’s activity table, chairs, and reading materials.

Learn WC history on City Bus Tour

Visit some historic landmarks and learn more about Walnut Creek on the next City Bus Tour set for Saturday, April 30.

City Public Information Officer Brad Rovanpera will lead this 3 1/2-hour excursion, which starts at 8:30 a.m.

 Stops along the way will include historic Borges Ranch, Shadelands Ranch Historical Museum, The Gardens at Heather Farm, Lindsay Wildlife Museum, and the Diablo Valley Lines Model Railroad.

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 four tickets, call (925) 256-3505 and leave your name, address, phone, and number of tickets.
**Specialized Recreation**

**Kicking up their heels is part of fun in City program**

When Vicky Case thrusts her left foot in a classic karate kick, she’s doing more than practicing a defensive move. She’s one of hundreds of local residents with special needs who has learned how to eliminate obstacles through Walnut Creek’s popular Specialized Recreation program.

The City has been offering unique opportunities to developmentally disabled persons for more than 25 years, and its program is one of the largest in the Bay Area.

The program, which attracts around 200 participants throughout the year, is based at Civic Park Community Center and is available to everyone from age 5 to adult. Participants are individuals with special needs who suffer from such conditions as autism, Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy, and attention deficit disorder. These individuals require special interaction, which is provided in the person of Preston Jones, the City’s specialized recreation program coordinator since 1998.

“Working with the special needs population has been the most rewarding experience of my life thus far,” said Jones. “Knowing them has made me a better father, husband, friend, and teacher.”

Martial arts classes are especially popular with all ages, allowing them to try their hand (and feet) at such disciplines as karate, tae kwondo, aikido, and judo. Most special needs participants would not be able to enroll in a regular karate academy, so Jones (a 5th degree black belt) provides an adaptive martial arts program that focuses on coordination activities and works at an individual’s ability level. He’s proud of the fact that one of his specialized recreation students has gone on to higher rankings.

Walnut Creek’s specialized recreation program offers a wide variety of activities, including plays at the Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, baseball games, bowling, white water rafting, horseback riding, and visits to Monterey Bay. A summer day camp is also available to persons age 5 to 21.

For more information or to sign up for an activity, call (925) 256-3531 or go on-line at www.walnut-creek.org

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**Got a beef with your neighbor? Conflict Resolution Programs can help sort it out**

Robert Frost once mused that good fences make good neighbors. But when your fence falls down, and you and your neighbor disagree over who should rebuild it and how, that’s when you might want to contact Conflict Resolution Programs.

This countywide service, which receives annual support from the City, offers mediation services using a neutral third party to ease the way to a solution.

In 2004, 320 Walnut Creek residents took advantage of the program, which ultimately served 1,234 individuals.

The Conflict Resolution Programs process is faster than court, with mediation meetings usually held as quickly as two to three weeks. The services are provided at a low cost, with nominal fees charged based on each party’s income. Further, the sessions are guaranteed to be confidential.

The bottom line is that it works. “In the overwhelming majority of cases that come to mediation, the parties are able to agree on something that will make their lives easier going forward,” said Mady Shumofsky, case coordinator for Conflict Resolution Programs.

Here’s how it works: 1) a case developer listens to your problem and asks for details; 2) with your permission, the case developer contacts the other party and encourages participation in a panel hearing; 3) a hearing is scheduled at a time and place convenient to all; 4) the impartial panel will assist the parties in reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement; and 5) when an agreement is reached, the specifics are noted by a panelist and signed by all parties.

Your voluntary signature on the agreement signifies your commitment to uphold the resolution.

For more information, call 925-798-6132 or 925-687-8844, ext. 301.
In a Nutshell

Lindsay Museum at a glance

Lindsay Museum at a glance

KODAK MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE LINDSAY WILDLIFE MUSEUM (clockwise from top): museum volunteer Es Anderson and wildlife supervisor Sandy Fender clean oil off a duck following a 1988 oil spill in Martinez; docents allow children to get up close and personal with owls and a snake; the former Lindsay Museum was housed in an EBMUD pump house in Larkey Park from 1965 to 1993.
City Council Update

Commissioners reappointed

The City Council on Jan. 4 reappointed members of two City advisory commissions who had asked to serve a second term.

The Council reappointed Tom Bassett and Brian Kilian to the Design Review Commission and Rick Underwood and Tracy Murray to the Park, Recreation & Open Space Commission. All three were appointed to three-year terms.

Also, the Council reappointed Nancy Brownfield to another three-year term as the City’s representative to the Contra Costa County Mosquito & Vector Control District.

Other commission appointments were also pending in February.

New commissioners will be sworn in at the first council meeting in March.

Redevelopment plan approved

The City Council — acting as the City’s Redevelopment Agency — on Jan. 4 approved a five-year redevelopment implementation plan to eliminate blighted conditions and increase housing in the Mt. Diablo Boulevard/South Broadway project area.

No business licenses to be issued Apr. 1-8

No new business licenses will be processed April 1-8 while the City installs new computer software.

However, the business license office will be open that week during its regular hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. so the public may still file applications for business licenses.

The City will issue those licenses after the software installation is completed.

For information, call (925) 943-5821.

Single stream recycling to begin in WC

This spring, residents of single family homes in Walnut Creek will find it easier to recycle all the myriad items that they have been required to sort at the curb.

Beginning in March, residents will be able to commingling their recyclables in one cart, thereby eliminating the nuisance of having to sort newspapers and magazines from plastic bottles and aluminum cans. Valley Waste Management will start modifying each existing burgundy cart placed at the curb by removing the cart divider and replacing the existing lid with a new lid and label.

The new single-stream recycling program will allow most recyclables (except styrofoam and plastic bags) to be mixed together in the cart.

This more convenient and efficient recycling service is a new program of the Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority. For details, call (925) 906-1801.

Teen Job Fair set March 3

The City will hold its annual Summer Job Recruitment Fair for teens on Thursday, March 3 from 3 to 6 p.m. at the Civic Park Community Center Assembly Hall at North Broadway and Civic Drive to recruit teen workers for upwards of 100 jobs (including lifeguards, summer camp counselors, and interns). At last year’s event, Recreation Program Specialist Karen Heaston, right, chatted with a student and his mom about job opportunities at the City’s pool centers.

This year, guest speaker Nancy Beals of Walnut Creek Intermediate School will offer two half-hour sessions on “Creative Ways to Make Money” at 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. for students aged 13 to 15. The City will be accepting applications through May for the summer jobs. Check the “Jobs with the City” link on the City’s website, www.walnut-creek.org. For more information, contact Renée Zeimer at 256-3503 or Lisa Geerlof at 943-5899 ext. 424.

Time to think about tree pruning

Nearly all trees need periodic pruning, especially when they are young. This helps to improve shape and to encourage a safe, strong structure.

If you’re planning to prune a tree, remember that there is a right way and there is a wrong way. Proper pruning is important because trees can enhance property values by as much as 27 percent. Improper pruning can damage the health of a tree and mar its beauty, thus reducing property values.

Your best bet for a properly pruned tree is to hire a professional arborist certified by the Western Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture. Look in the yellow pages of your phone book for a list of certified arborists.

If you’re thinking of removing a tree, you’ll need a permit. Call the City’s Public Services office at (925) 943-5854 for details or visit www.walnut-creek.org.

Tree pruning tips . . .

Winter is the ideal time to inspect your trees and determine if they need pruning.

Following are tips on how to prune your trees safely and correctly:

- Remove broken or dead limbs
- Thin trees; don’t stub cut branches
- When cutting a limb, be sure to leave the branch collar for quick healing
- Don’t use patching paste or paint to seal cuts — it can inhibit healing
- Prune fruit-bearing trees annually
- Prune ornamental or shade trees only every eight years

Free informational brochures on tree care are available at City Hall.
Police track criminal offenses for 2004

The death of an 82-year-old woman in her Creekside Drive apartment in a fire on Dec. 30 was the only homicide in Walnut Creek in 2004, according to police.

A statistical summary of criminal offenses in 2004 compiled by the Police Department (see box at right) shows the biggest increase over 2003 levels for thefts, which includes shoplifting and thefts from vehicles (up 20 percent) and burglaries (up nearly 20 percent).

In 2004 police handled 33,350 events, of which 9,925 were cases requiring follow-up. Crimes against property accounted for 3,303 incidents.

Also in 2004, the department investigated 990 non-injury motor vehicle accidents, 231 injury accidents, and one fatality.

Do’s and don’ts of draining pools, spas

Summertime is almost here … but before you decide to drain that “yucky” swimming pool or hot spa water, did you know that discharging chlorinated water into the street is prohibited by the City’s Municipal Code?

There are 3,287 swimming pools in Walnut Creek. Imagine what the impact will be cumulatively to our environment if chlorine-saturated pool water was drained into our gutters.

Chlorine is commonly used to disinfect and remove pathogens, such as bacteria and viruses, in the water. While it’s relatively safe for human, it is harmful to fish and other aquatic life, even at low concentration. Chlorinated water should not be discharged into street where it can enter storm drain and thus, flow untreated to our local creeks.

You can do your part by following these ‘Best Management Practices’:

1. The best option is to discharge chlorinated water from pools and hot tubs to the sanitary sewer (sewage treatment plant).
2. When discharge to a sanitary sewer is not possible, either because it is unavailable or not allowed, then chlorinated water from pools and hot tubs may be disposed on the ground or irrigated on your property under the following circumstances:
   • Prior to disposing or irrigating the water, shut off the chlorination system if you have one, or stop adding chlorine.
   • Hold the water in the pool or hot tub for at least one week to reduce the chlorine level.
   • Discharge or irrigate the water in an area where the water will not flow into a stream or storm sewer.
   • Discharge or irrigate the water on your property and ensure that it does not flow off your property.

Note: Water from backflushing pool filters should not be discharged to a stream, ditch or storm sewer. Backflush from pool filters must be discharged to the sanitary sewer, on-site septic tank and drainfield system (if properly designed and adequately sized), or a seepage pit.

CRIMINAL OFFENSES

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Statistics compiled by the Police Department

New traffic laws for 2005

The new year brings us some new State traffic laws. The following information comes courtesy of the California Highway Patrol with some additional comments from your friendly neighborhood Traffic Officer.

Child Restraints

Beginning Jan. 1, all children under the age of 6 or weighing less than 60 pounds are required to be properly restrained in the back seat of passenger vehicles.

Exceptions include vehicles with no rear seat, rear seats that are rear or side-facing, and if all rear seats are occupied by children under the age of twelve. The law also prohibits children from riding in the front seat of a vehicle with an active passenger airbag if the child is under the age of one or weighs less than 20 pounds or is riding in a rear-facing restraint system.

The Walnut Creek Police Department highly recommends all users of child seats have their seats inspected by a trained safety seat technician. The Walnut Creek Police Department, in cooperation with Nurses and Cops Caring for Kids, offers child seat inspections. Please call (925) 941-7989 to schedule and appointment.

Motorized Scooters

This new law now requires users of motorized scooters to have a valid Class C driver’s license or instruction permit. The law also prohibits operating a scooter on a highway or off highway unless it has a properly maintained muffler in constant operation. Motorized scooters such as Go-Peds are a frequent source of noise complaints and reckless driving in Walnut Creek neighborhoods.

Traffic Signal Devices

This prohibits unauthorized purchase, possession, manufacture, installation, sale or distribution of a MIRT or other devices capable of sending a signal that interrupts or changes the sequence patterns of an official traffic control signal. Authorized emergency vehicles and public transit vehicles are excepted.
Walnut Creek ranks in nation's top 10 of tech-savvy cities

Walnut Creek was honored in 2004 as one of the most technologically-advanced cities in America by the Center for Digital Government based on its 2004 Digital Cities Survey.

The annual study examines how city governments are utilizing digital technologies, including websites, to better serve their citizens and streamline operations.

Walnut Creek placed in the top 10 of cities with a population of 30,000-74,999, ranking eighth. Redmond, Washington was rated in first place, and Palo Alto ranked 10th.

The undersized and aging library would be razed to make room for the new library.

**City Directory**

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*For appointment: Call 943-5812.*