



The VOICE

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Did you know...

- There were 10 new single family home permits drawn in the City of Redding in March, bringing the total number of single family permits through March 2015 to 43. That is 6 more than for the same period last year, and 29 more than for the same period in 2013.
- At the April 21st Redding City Council meeting, **Matrix Consulting Group** was approved by Council as the consultant to assist the City and Shasta County in preparing the Blueprint for Public Safety, and \$155,000 was appropriated to execute a Consulting and Professional Services Contract with them. Matrix has indicated they will need 16 weeks to complete the project from start to finish. Of the 23 requests that went out, only two consultants submitted bids. The other bidder, Institute for Law and Policy Planning, had asked for 28 weeks and \$176,720.

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Mandatory Water Reduction of 36% Unfair

City of Redding officials are still reviewing the draft State regulations that assign water conservation targets for 2015 based on water use in 2013. They plan to push back on the draft plan that includes a **36 percent reduction** for Redding, and are not giving up trying to change what they are calling an unfair restriction.

Governor Brown had initially announced a 25 percent water reduction target for all of California. Regulators thought they were being “more fair” with the new draft proposal that they say rewards communities that conserved last summer. The new targets range from 8 percent to 36 percent depending on how much water residents use.

The “one size fits all” approach fails to recognize such things as Redding’s hot summer climate in comparison to coastal communities, our community that is rural in nature compared to more urban coastal communities with higher outdoor demands for larger lots and landscape areas, and we are at the headwaters of California’s water supply.

The restrictions are expected to be finalized by the State Water Board in early May and take effect in June. That gives Redding a short window of time to appeal to the Board for a lower mandate.

Additionally, the City is studying their current tiered water rate structure to make sure the pricing is reflective of the cost to provide water to customers. Tiered pricing is legal if it is tied to the cost of providing water, and is not arbitrary. Redding implemented the 3-tier water rates for residential customers in October, 2014 as one tool to reduce heavy water usage, primarily for such things as landscape irrigation and washing cars.

Water use in Redding was reduced by **17 percent** last year, which seemed pretty admirable. It certainly won’t be easy to reach a 36 percent reduction this year. Additional local measures are sure to be implemented to increase our conservation results in 2015 and beyond. Local water departments that fail to conserve or reduce water use face possible fines and State intervention, including raising water rates and adding new water restrictions.

Redding officials are hopeful that their efforts to receive a target percentage reduction are successful. They will know soon—the Water Board must make their plans final in early May.

Redding “Slide the City” Event Raises Eyebrows

Slide the City is an event company that brings a large water slide to a community, sets it up, pays for all expenses incurred by the City, and sells tickets to ride (\$15 to \$50). With local collaborators Rocky Slaughter and Brandon Benting, they have proposed bringing the slide to Redding on Saturday, July 18, 2015, and setting up on Placer Street between Orange Avenue and Chestnut Street. The street closure would extend a few blocks in each direction to accommodate the crowds and enhance safety. A lane would be clear for emergency vehicle access. A total of at least 16,000 gallons of water would be needed. Parking and other issues would need to be worked out.

Yes, it would be fun, yes the concept to add a campaign of awareness, water conservation education, and a challenge between businesses and residents to save more water is a good idea, as enthusiastically presented by Rocky and Brandon. But, the timing for the slide couldn’t be worse. We are in the midst of the worst drought in California’s history. Council members Sullivan, Schreder and McArthur gave the project a thumbs up anyway, and the event will now continue the process of obtaining an event permit. Stay tuned to see if it actually comes to fruition.

REU Cost of Service and Rate Design Project Update

The Redding Electric Utility (REU) Advisory Group formed to participate in a review of the electric utility cost of service and rate structure study has been meeting for the past 3 months. They have learned that REU is committed to implementing a new rate structure that recovers its costs to service each class of customers, including large commercial, small commercial, and residential. This study will call for the Utility's first rate restructuring since 1945.

So far, the Advisory Group has been presented with four different rate structure scenarios. They all include some cost shifting between energy usage and fixed charges aimed at REU "equitably" recovering their costs to deliver valuable, safe and reliable electric services for all of its customers. The current residential fixed charge is \$13 per month.

In non-government speak, this means REU would prefer to eliminate rates based on high energy users subsidizing lower energy users, eliminate the subsidies from energy usage rates being used to pay for fixed costs, and recover **actual fixed costs from every customer group**. The fixed costs to deliver electric service will more than likely be **increased** for all customers, while lowering the energy usage rates. Some customers will see an overall lower electric bill each month, and many will see a higher overall electric bill each month, no matter which of the four rate structures are eventually recommended to City Council for consideration. The Council can also consider keeping the current rate structure.

City Council is scheduled to hear the results and recommendations of this project at the June 16th, 2015 Council meeting, where they will be asked to set a public hearing for the July 21, 2015 Council meeting.

New Direction Needed as 2004 City Park Bond Debt Is Retired; Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan Needs Revisions

The City of Redding has two funds which collect park-related fees connected to new residential development. The Park-in-lieu Fund receives fees in-lieu of land when residential subdivision maps are approved to offset the costs associated with the acquisition of new parkland to meet the demands of new residents. The Park Development Fund collects impact fees on residential building permits to offset the costs of developing new, and improving existing, parkland.

The most significant financial obligation for the City of Redding's Park Funds budget was the 2004 City Park Bond. The final payment was due and paid in March, 2015 in the amount of **\$939,750.00**.

The now retired bond obligation began as **\$7.7 million** in bonds sold in 2004 to begin implementing the 2004 Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan. More than **\$5.5 million** of the funds were spent on the Redding Soccer Park. Another **\$750,000** of the funds were used to pay off the City's legal fees to Dale Construction for the 2002-2003 construction of the Big League Dreams softball facilities, representing money that had been withheld from the contractor and was ordered to be paid.

The most significant remaining financial obligation for the City's Park Funds budget is the debt service on Enterprise Park in the amount of **\$485,155**. This will be paid in the amount of about \$51,000 per year throughout fiscal year 2022-2023. This obligation began in 1995, with a \$750,000 Construction Bond. An additional debt service for Enterprise Park of \$758,000 from an internal City loan in 1998 was retired in 2011.

Almost all Park Fund resources in recent years have been dedicated toward debt service costs. While the most significant debt obligation was retired in March 2015, the Park Development Fund will need to repay to the Park-in-lieu

Fund approximately **\$2.2 million** in inter-fund transfers made to cover debt service costs. Thus it will be a number of years before the Park Development Fund will have resources available to undertake major projects. The Park-in-lieu Fund, however, will have some resources available to undertake projects restricted to specific quadrants of the City.

During the process of updating the development impact fee program in 2012-2013, it became clear that the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan was out of date, and needed to be updated. The Community Services Department is now finally in the process of updating that plan, chapter by chapter at meetings each month in 2015.

One of the stated goals of the impact fee program update was to **reduce** the amount of the fees, in no small part to reflect the grossly overstated growth projections from the early 2000's. That growth simply did not occur, and the fees were based on building facilities that would have been needed to support it, and are now not needed, resulting in lower fees.

By revisiting and updating the Parks, Trails and Open Space Master Plan, there is an opportunity to consider adjustments to the current standards, which could bring down the single family dwelling impact fee for parks. Additionally, other sources of revenue for building and maintaining these facilities need to be identified if the community's wish list of facilities is to be realized.

Another important development to consider during this update is the continuing severe drought, which is impacting the entire State of California. The City's existing Parks Plan calls for dedication of many acres of primarily turf (green grass) covered neighborhood parks. Given the mandated restrictions on outdoor water use in California, it is time to adjust such requirements for any future facilities.

Little Known Building Permit and Plan Review Options

Redding City Councilman Brent Weaver is in the process of reaching out to and seeking feedback from businesses and builders in the community whose members interact with Redding's development services. Those meetings are proving to be useful to all participants, who are now learning just why so many building customers complain about issues such as long delays and unreasonable fees.

There appears to be somewhat of a disconnect between the Building Department and its customers in providing communication and education when it comes to the process of permit and plan check processing, as well as the application of impact fees associated with construction projects.

As a participant in the process, we've learned that many seasoned contractors are *unaware* of certain City building division policies that exist to expedite construction, which is one of the most common complaints about trying to build something in Redding. For some unknown reason, these and other existing building division "policies" aren't mentioned up front to customer applicants. Perhaps a new policy should be added to those already existing that requires building division staff members to provide such information up front in some form. But that discussion has yet to take place.

In the meantime, to assist in the education and communication process, here are three of those policies that are now and have been in existence for quite some time, and could be helpful to many:

- Number PR-1 (10-20-98): **Optional Use of Outside Plan Review Consultants**—The Building and Code Enforcement Division has established permit processing goals. These goals are stated in terms of "working days to review" for various project categories. It is their desire to meet these goals 85 percent of the time on new commercial projects and 90 percent of the time for all others. Processing times often exceed the target processing time during busy months. A limited amount of funding is available for the use of outside consultants. This funding is used to assist the Division in meeting the stated goals during the time periods where they are unable to meet their goal processing times. Due to the finite amount of funding available in any given year, it is often not feasible to send plans to an outside consultant for review even when they are not able to meet their processing goals. In some cases, developers are in a hurry to begin construction and become frustrated when they submit plans for review and have to wait. They are often willing to pay extra to get a faster review. In some cases, permit applicants have been allowed to send plans to an approved consultant for an expedited review. ***Policy:*** Plans will be sent to an outside consultant for review by the City and paid for by the City when plan review goals cannot be met and when the budget allows. ***If a permit applicant wishes to have plan reviews expedited, they may request to use the services of a pre-approved outside consultant.*** The Division will establish a list of consultants who may review plans for the City. The applicant will be responsible for paying all costs associated with the use of the consultant as well as normal City fees. It is desirable to avoid a situation where an applicant contracts with and pays the consultant directly so there is not a perceived conflict of interest. Therefore, applicants using this service will be responsible for paying the City all costs associated with a third party plan review. The City will then contract with and pay the third party plan review consultant.
- Number PR-2 (12-8-98): **Express Plan Check Processing**—The Building Division is currently processing plans through a standard plan check process. The time frame goal to process small projects is five working days. Typically, a garage, patio cover, or small fire repair permit might only take one hour or two of actual processing and plan check time, but the permit gets put in the loop and could possibly take up to several weeks to process. To enhance customer service and reduce plan check turnaround time on small-permit applications without engineering, energy compliance, or new or revised planning permits, the Building Division has implemented an express plan check process. This process is only available for projects that normally take an hour or less in total processing time. Primary plan check review will be performed by the front counter staff with assistance provided by the plan check staff. ***The goal of express plan check is that plans submitted on any working day will be reviewed by 4 p.m. the following working day.*** The permits that would qualify for this process are: patio covers that meet conventional bracing, have I.C.B.O. approval, or comply with our standard handout; residential garages and sheds that meet conventional bracing provisions; minor office and retail tenant improvements and remodels; minor fire repair/build projects.
- **Impact Fee Adjustment Request**—Some building projects are eligible for impact fee adjustments depending on the nature of the business to be operated in the building and the size of the building. There is an "Impact Fee Adjustment Request Form" available at the City of Redding permit center. It states: "Please provide the information requested below and other relevant information, including but not limited to traffic studies, water consumption histories, or sewer pre-treatment or reclamation date. Submit this form and the relevant information to: City of Redding Development Services Department, Attn: Bill Nagel, Director, 777 Cypress Avenue, Redding, CA, 96001." This request form is also available online as a permit center handout on the City's website.

Updated News and Notes

Shasta VOICES is continuing to monitor and follow many issues of interest to our supporters and the community. As part of our efforts to keep you updated and informed, here is a brief update of some of these issues.

Victor Avenue Pedestrian Improvement Project—Long awaited improvements to Victor Avenue from Enterprise Park to the bridge at Churn Creek are on the drawing board, and the public is invited to review and comment on the proposed improvements. These improvements will address pedestrian safety and will include a pathway along the western side of the entire corridor, complete corridor roadway lighting, raised islands/refuge areas for shorter pedestrian crossings at intersections, a barrier on the west side of the existing bridge, additional parking in front of the Park, and re-purpose of the travel lanes in front of the Park to calm traffic and provide better facilities for all roadway users. An informational open house is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 12, 2015 from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm**. The meeting will be held in the **Enterprise Park Community Room**, adjacent to the Park Pavilion area, located at **4300 Victor Avenue**.

Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) Awards Cash Incentive—The Shasta Regional Transportation Agency (SRTA) recently received grant funds in the amount of \$122,085 to develop and administer a pilot program of **development incentives** that seek to spur higher density and mixed-use infill and redevelopment projects within city and rural community centers known as “Strategic Growth Areas.”

Proposals were accepted from potential developer projects through March 27, 2015, and one project was selected for funding. K-2 Development was awarded \$100,000 to assist in the conceptual design, infrastructure needs assessment, permitting and non-construction related costs associated with the **redevelopment of the former Dicker’s Department Store building in the Market Street Promenade, 1551 Market Street, in downtown Redding** for a mixed-use five-story building with ground-floor office and retail space and fifty residential units on floors two through five. The parking garage located under the building site will need to be modified, and portions of the parcel and existing building are needed to open Butte, Yuba, and Market Street to vehicle traffic and street parking.

These incentives, when combined with targeted transportation investments and reinforced by local policies, could result in transportation efficiencies, spur economic development, and help to revitalize community centers. If the pilot program is successful, it could become an ongoing program with additional future grant funding, and could result in a list of shovel-ready projects that would compete well for capital construction grants.

These initial grant funds must be expended by November 2015.

Trash Disposal Coupon Program for Neighborhood Watch Clean-Ups—The City of Redding adopted a coupon program on April 21st to be used to help cover the costs associated with the disposal of trash collected by volunteers cleaning up illegal encampments. The coupons are valid for use at the City of Redding Transfer Station and will be distributed by the Redding Police Department and Code Enforcement to Neighborhood Watch Captains. The value of each coupon is equal to one large pickup load of trash (currently \$25.25). City Council authorized using \$2,530 from the General Fund to support this program, and to partner with the community to help promote a clean and attractive environment. This money will cover the first 100 coupons.

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