



Legislation Text

File #: 21-0628, Version: 1

Agenda Item Wording:

Receive Presentation and Update on the Visalia Community Services Department.
Deadline for Action: 12/6/2021

Submitting Department: Community Services

Contact Name and Phone Number: Jeremy Rogers, Community Services Director, Jeremy.rogers@visalia.city <mailto:Jeremy.rogers@visalia.city> 713-4042; Alvin Dias, Parks and Buildings Manager, Alvin.dias@visalia.city <mailto:Alvin.dias@visalia.city> 713-4564; Laurissa Roggenkamp, Laurissa.roggenkamp@visalia.city <mailto:Laurissa.roggenkamp@visalia.city> 713-4336

Department Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the City Council receive a presentation and update regarding the status of the Community Services Department.

Background Discussion:

The Community Services Department is currently comprised of 45 Full Time employees plus an additional 6 vacant positions. Each of these positions plays an important role in delivering an exceptional level of service to our citizens and other City Departments.

The Community Services Department includes the following divisions:

Parks, Recreation, Urban Forestry, Building Maintenance, Farming, Rawhide Baseball, and the newly added Animal Services. Animal Services was presented to the City Council under the General Services Department and therefore will not be discussed tonight. Farming was reported on earlier this year and baseball will be coming to Council in the near future so will also not be part of tonight's presentation.

The Community Services Department budget is funded primarily by the General Fund and fees for services.. The data included in this report, and presentation, contains data and other department measurables from calendar years 2017 through current 2021.

The current Community Services Department General Fund budget related to the divisions being discussed tonight is as follows:

	REVENUES	EXPENSES	SURPLUS (SHORTFALL)
Recreation Division	\$ 1,849,500	\$ 4,184,500	\$ (2,335,000)
Parks Division	\$ 2,460,100	\$ 6,962,813	\$ (4,502,713)
TOTALS	\$ 4,309,600	\$ 11,147,313	\$ (6,837,713)

The Department also receives the following funding through Measure N:			
Measure N Parks, Buildings, Urban Forestry	\$	216,000	

The Community Services Department has a variety of challenges and opportunities to continue pursuing. Some of these challenges facing the Community Services Department are increases in vandalism, homelessness, staffing levels, and Covid-19.

The Parks, Urban Forestry and Buildings divisions have seen a large increase in vandalism in the parks, trails, and other City facilities. Some of this vandalism has been caused by the increasing number of homeless in parks and on trails. With the St. John’s River cleanup, many of the individuals have relocated into the parks and trailways. Examples of this vandalism is destruction of restroom facilities, arbors, and park amenities, as well as discarded personal belongings and trash left behind.

The pandemic has also created new challenges for the entire department. The Parks and Urban Forestry divisions saw an increase to workload as the number of residents utilizing the parks increased over the course of the pandemic, especially during the lockdown, with many residents wanting a place to go to get out of the house.

The Building Maintenance Division has also experienced an increased workload from making City facilities safe for employees and residents by adding touchless restroom fixtures, plexiglass partitions, and disinfecting worksites that may have been exposed to the Covid-19 virus.

Recreation has also lost most of their staffing, full-time and part-time, during the lockdown and have been working on recruiting new staff and bringing back programs for the community that meet the ever-changing and varying CDC guidelines for public activities requirements..

Other, more normal challenges, that face the department are recruiting and maintaining part-time staff, aging infrastructure, staffing levels to maintain the growing community, athletic fields to meet the numerous sports leagues and cost increases in supplies, and contracts.

Another aspect of the Community Services Department is oversight of the Farming and Rawhide contracts. Community Services Director, Jeremy Rogers, presented to the City Council in the Spring of 2021 on the bleak outlook for farming. Things are looking up though still not a huge revenue generator at this point. The expenditures in 2019 and 2020 have created more healthy trees which in turn creates greater nut output. The Fall of 2021 harvest has come to a close and the preliminary numbers look very good. Unfortunately, even though our expenditures are down and our trees are producing more nuts, the market for nuts is still near record low numbers due to the pandemic and foreign trade restrictions. A full report on the nut farming operation will be brought forth once the final payments are received.

The Rawhide completed their first season under new ownership, FirstPitch Entertainment in September of this year. The season did not go as planned from a win-loss perspective, but just having baseball after a canceled pandemic season in 2020 was a huge success. Major League Baseball has completely changed the way they look at Minor League Baseball. Several cities across the county lost their Minor League teams due to a reorganization. Because of our deep history in baseball and the passion for baseball that is in this community, Visalia was able to make the cut and stay as the Single-A affiliate of the Arizona Diamondbacks. Major League Baseball is making several changes that will affect our ballpark over the next several years. Our clubhouse, outfield fence, and

stadium lighting are not up to the new standards and will have to be updated if the City wants to keep professional baseball in Visalia. There will be more coming on this over the next few months.

The Community Services Department is committed to meeting the current needs of our community by providing top notch recreation programs in safe and clean parks, facilities, and buildings.

Fiscal Impact:

None

Prior Council Action: None

Other: N/A

Alternatives: N/A

Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):

No motion required.

Environmental Assessment Status: N/A

CEQA Review: N/A

Attachments: Presentation