

City Hall/Civic Center hours change this month

As a result of the on-going downsizing of City staff, the Merced City Hall/Civic Center will have new hours starting August 1.

City Hall offices will be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. People can make utility payments from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Other City buildings will continue their current hours.

The regular 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. employee work day will not change, only the building hours at 678 W. 18th St.

The change in the hours will allow the reduced City Hall staff to concentrate on all of the behind the scenes tasks that must get done in order for the City to function.

These include preparing the agendas and minutes for the City Council and 15 boards and commissions that must meet the stringent timelines of the Brown Act and other state laws.

The Finance Department, as just one example, has to make

vendor payments, process receivables, bill state and federal agencies for grants, file documents and prepare for audits, process paychecks and perform other behind-the-scenes work, in addition to maintaining counter hours and handling customer inquiries by phone, email and the Internet.

The phones will also remain off to the general public, with calls going to voice mail until 10 a.m., with some exceptions, such as Inspection Services that already keeps early phone hours.

The Finance Department counters will remain open during the lunch hour, other offices in the City Hall/Civic Center will continue to be closed from noon to 1 p.m.

The 15 percent budget cut this fiscal year, in addition to the reductions from previous years, has resulted in major decreases in the staffing levels of some departments, notably Finance, Support Services, Parks and Community Services and Development Services.

In June, the City laid off 36



employees, and in the last four years it has eliminated more than 120 positions. Inside City Hall, the fulltime staffing levels have decreased more than 80,000 hours in the last 5 years. That doesn't factor in temporary staffing, which was eliminated due to budget cuts.

While staffing has been cut, there has not been a corresponding decrease in workload.

After an in-house review, it was determined that attempting to maintain the building hours at the same level while completing the necessary and required core services with the reduced personnel would result in poor counter service and costly errors..

Reducing counter hours gives limited staff the time to focus on each task and complete them with diligence. Not allowing them the proper time to do their jobs isn't fair to the public or to the staff members.

Changing hours is not new in the City, the Public Works Department switches to summer

hours every year. Offices on the third floor often close their doors when secretaries are out sick or on vacation. Other government organizations have changed their hours to deal with the "new normal" that has been caused by budget shortfalls.

Many government agencies have closed their doors for a day during the week, but staff believes that offering City services five days a week is important, including providing adequate customer service throughout the workweek.

Closing the counters for two hours in the morning will allow the remaining staff to perform those necessary duties that are required by law and good business practices.

Notices of the new hours have been mailed with the utility bills and are being posted at counters and office doors.

The new hours also are being posted at other City buildings. Notification is being provided in English, Spanish and Hmong.

**Effective August 1
City Hall open 10 am-5 pm**

**Efectivo el 1° de Agosto el nuevo
horario de la Ciudad Sera
10 am-5 pm**

**Pib lub 8 hli ntuj vas thib 1, cov xooj
hmoos tshiah rau City Hall yog
10am – 5pm**

Merced City Council

Mayor Bill Spriggs
 Council Members:
 Bill Blake
 John Carlisle
 Michele Gabriault-Acosta
 Noah Lor
 Josh Pedrozo
 Mary-Michal Rawling

Contact the City Council by email at Citycouncil@cityofmerced.org, by calling 385-6834 or writing to Council members at the Civic Center address below.

Council meetings

The Council meets on the first and third Monday of the month at 7 p.m. in the Council Chambers in the Civic Center, except when there is a holiday, such as Sept. 5, then it is on Sept. 6. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

The Web site, www.CityofMerced.org, contains City Council information, the Muni Code, General Plan and other information. Contact the Newsletter at newsletter@CityofMerced.org, call the Public Information Office at 385-6232 or write:

Merced Civic Center
 Attn: Public Information Office
 678 W. 18th St.
 Merced CA 95340

The Civic Center is open Monday-Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., except holidays.

Call us

City Council385-6834
 City Manager385-6834
 City Attorney385-6868
 City Clerk388-7100
 Airport385-6873
 Code Enforcement.....385-6861
 Finance388-7900
 Inspection Services385-6861
 Personnel.....388-7100
 Planning Department.....385-6858
 Public Works (7:30-4:30) ...385-6800
 After hours385-6905
 Parks/CommServices385-6855
 Utility payments.....388-7289

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Fire Department.....385-6891
 Police Department385-6912

Ask the City: Access to Lake Yosemite

Ask the City is an ongoing column answering questions that have been submitted to us by mail, email or phone. Readers can submit their questions to the addresses in the column on the left.

Does the City of Merced issue any type of annual or lifetime pass to enter Merced Lake Park? As of now is there a fee to enter the park?

B.R.

Many City residents enjoy Lake Yosemite for swimming, boating, fishing and picnicking. The Lake is so scenic, the UC Merced campus is located next to it. (There were some other reasons for locating the campus there, too.)

However, the regional park is not a City park, it is operated by the County of Merced. It's actually a man-made reservoir owned by the Merced Irrigation District, which uses the lake to store water and to supply local farmers. From 1899 to 1917 Lake Yosemite



provided drinking water to City residents. In 1917 the City water supply changed to wells, and that has been the source of our water ever since.

The answer to your question is, yes, the County does offer an annual pass to Lake Yosemite users for \$50. There is a senior citizen discounted pass for \$30. If you visit the lake regularly, either pass will save you a lot off of the \$6 per vehicle admission.

New zoo rates here

The City Council has approved new admission fees for the Applegate Park Zoo. The fee increase is intended to help offset the City's costs to operate the Zoo.

The new rates are:

Age	Fee
Under 5	Free
5 - 15 yrs	\$2.00
16 - 61 yrs	\$3.00
62+	\$1.50

The Zoo is located at 1045 W. 25th St. (the corner of R and 25th streets). The Zoo is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer months.

City offices closed for Labor Day holiday

City offices will be closed Monday, September 5 to observe the Labor Day holiday.

Refuse collection will be delayed for all residential users by one day that week.

People with regular collection on Monday will have their trash picked up Tuesday, and people with Tuesday pick up will get it collected Wednesday, etc.

The regular Council meeting will be held Tuesday, Sept. 6. Normally the Council meets on Monday.

Think Green

Save energy at home, and save some money

The average home spends about \$1,900 a year on energy costs, according to the State of California, but you can lower your energy bills and help save the environment!

Be a speedy chef: Nothing is more energy efficient than your microwave. It uses two-thirds less energy than your stove.

Push a button to wash your dishes: Surprise! Your dishwasher uses less water than washing dishes by hand. Then let dishes air-dry to save even more!

Fill up the fridge: Having lots of food in your fridge keeps it from warming up too fast when the door is open. So your fridge doesn't have to work as hard to stay cool.

Turn up your thermostat: Set your thermostat to 78 degrees when you are home and 85 degrees or off when you are away. Use ceiling or room fans and set the thermostat higher because the air movement will cool the room. Take into account health considerations and be sure to drink plenty of fluids in warm weather. (Save: 1 - 3 percent per degree, for each degree the thermostat is set above 72 degrees)

Replace air conditioner filters: Dirty filters restrict airflow and can cause the system to run longer, increasing energy use. Replace filters monthly for maximum benefit. (Save: 1-2 percent)