

North, south sites for Council meetings

Tenaya and Rivera gyms will host the community gatherings

The Merced City Council will hit the road during the months of January and February to hold meetings in northern and southern locations of the City.

The Council wants to bring the meetings to the residents, making it easier for people to get to meetings, and make it a little less intimidating for people to address the Council by holding meetings in less formal settings.

The meetings will be held at Tenaya Middle School on the last Monday in January and at

January 28
7-8:30 p.m.
Tenaya Middle School
760 W. 8th St

Rivera Middle School on the last Monday in February.

The Council wants to hear from City residents about what issues they have and challenges they face.

City residents have been through a well-documented fi-

February 25
7-8:30 p.m.
Rivera Middle School
945 Buena Vista Dr.

nanial crisis and hard-hit by the foreclosure melt-down. Recently there have been signs that the economy is beginning to recover.

Municipal services also have been affected during the recession. Nearly one-quarter of the City staff has been cut over the

last four years and services have been affected.

The Council was able to take its meetings outside of the Merced Civic Center on West 18th Street as a result of an amendment to the City Charter in 2007. Prior to that all City Council meetings had to be held in the Civic Center. The Council is limited in the action it can take at the meetings.

The meetings will run from 7 to 8:30 p.m. with ample time for comments from the public.



Walk, Jog, Ride or Roll Your Way to Better Health

The Merced Get Fit Community Challenge is a FREE fitness challenge to encourage the residents of Merced to get outside and become more active, while utilizing the City's many walking and biking paths. Exercise leads to increased physical and mental health, so we challenge you to take part and 'Get Fit' today! Register yourself or your group at the Office of Recreation at 678 W. 18th Street and you will receive a free pedometer and program guide to help get started. Once certain milestones are achieved, you will receive a small reward. Call 385-6298 for more information. Open to all ages and all levels of physical ability. Co-sponsored by: **Golden Valley Health Centers, Building Healthy Communities, Ingraham Trophies and Gifts, State Farm and Wells Fargo.**

Citizen Alert

Sign up to find out what is happening

The City of Merced is participating in the County-wide Citizen Alert notification system. This free system sends messages to residents alerting them of threats to health and safety.

The alerts can come via cell phone, telephone, text message or email. If you don't get it via your primary method, you get it via a backup method. The system allows you to get the alerts for your home, work, school and other locations in Merced County.

The program is being coordinated by the Merced County Office of Emergency Services. Go to the City's home page www.cityofmerced.org for a link to sign up for the alerts. There is no cost for the service. Sign-ups also can be done at libraries.

Merced City Council

Mayor Stan Thurston
 Council Members:
 Bill Blake
 Tony Dossetti
 Noah Lor
 Mike Murphy
 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, 678 W. 18th St. When Monday is a holiday, such as Sept. 3, Council meets the next day. The agenda is posted online at www.CityofMerced.org.

Contacting us

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

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|------------------------------|----------|
| City Council | 385-6834 |
| City Manager | 385-6834 |
| City Attorney | 385-6868 |
| City Clerk | 388-7100 |
| Airport | 385-6873 |
| Code Enforcement..... | 385-6861 |
| Finance | 388-7900 |
| Inspection Services | 385-6861 |
| Personnel..... | 388-7100 |
| Planning Department..... | 385-6858 |
| Public Works (7:30-4:30) ... | 385-6800 |
| After hours | 385-6905 |
| Recreation | 385-6855 |
| Utility payments..... | 388-7289 |

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 911

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

Ask the City: Court favors City in Wal-Mart case

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.

When will they start building the Wal-Mart distribution center?

A frequent question in the City Manager's Office, the Public Information Office, the Economic Development Office, the City Attorney's Office, etc.

OK, we can't tell you when they will start building that warehouse, but the project got a whole lot closer on Nov. 29. That was the day the Fifth District Court issued its unanimous ruling in favor of the City regarding the Environmental Impact Report done on the project.

Wal-Mart plans to build a 1.2 million

square-foot warehouse and distribution center on Childs Avenue in the University Industrial Park. The site is on land zoned for industrial use near the Mission Interchange.

The center would initially employ about 600 people and ultimately it could employ 1,200 workers. It is expected that the 1,200 Wal-Mart Center jobs could lower the County's jobless rate of 14.7 percent by a full percentage point.

The City's Economic Development Department has worked on the project since 2002. The City did not offer any financial subsidy, relief, property tax rebates, fee waivers, sales tax rebates or tax-free land for the project.

Wal-Mart is paying all of the required fees, which are expected to be approximately \$3 million. Area schools are expected to receive more than \$400,000 in fees from the Wal-Mart project.

Think Green

There's still time to winterize

By now you've received that winter utility bill, so take some steps to save some energy and make your home warmer.

- ✓ Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. Keeping the damper open is like keeping a window wide open during the winter; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.
- ✓ Lower the thermostat setting to between 50° and 55°F.
- ✓ Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120°F). You'll not only save energy, you'll avoid scalding your hands.

✓ Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home, and close them at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.

✓ Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the cold winter months. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.

✓ Add caulk or weather stripping to seal air leaks around drafty doors and windows that let in the cold air.

City offices are closed for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

All City of Merced offices will be closed for the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, Monday, Jan. 21.

There will not be a City Council meeting that night. The Council meeting will be held on Tuesday.

Refuse collection also will be delayed by one day because of the holiday. Those residents scheduled for Tuesday pickup will have trash collected Wednesday, those with Wednesday collection will have refuse picked up Thursday, etc. This schedule applies to people with City refuse pickup.

If you have questions about your trash collection schedule call the Public Works Department at 385-6800 or check the website at www.cityofmerced.org.

King Day Celebration

The 16th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration will be held Monday, Jan. 21.

The event will begin with a march along Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to the Merced County Fairgrounds and is open to the public. The event is sponsored by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Committee and the City of Merced Office of Recreation.

The March will begin at 11 a.m. Monday at the Amtrak station, 324 w. 24th St and end at the Merced County Fairgrounds, 900 Martin Luther King Jr. Way.

Inside the Exhibit Building at the fairgrounds the celebration will continue with a multi-ethnic Unity program featuring entertainment by local school children, youth groups, choirs and speakers. There is no admission charge for the celebration.