



City of Modesto

CITY PRIDE

May 2002

City Wide

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<http://www.modestogov.com>

This information brought to you by the Modesto City Council.

Mayor Carmen Sabatino

Vice Mayor Bill Conrad

Councilmember Denny Jackman

Councilmember Tim Fisher

Councilmember Janice Keating

Councilmember Bruce Frohman

Councilmember Will O'Bryant

City to enforce cable customer service guidelines

The City of Modesto can begin to enforce new AT&T Broadband customer ser-

vice regulations on May 2, 2002.

The regulations require

AT&T Broadband to provide prompt repairs, minimal service interruptions, written notice of programming and prices, accurate and understandable bills, a 24-hour customer service line and other customer services.

If AT&T Broadband fails to comply with these customer service regulations, the City may fine the cable company at varying levels. Penalties range from \$200 for a single day of a single type of infraction to \$1,000 for the

third occurrence of the infraction.

The regulations were established in March as part of the City Council's adoption of the California Customer Services Act and the Federal Communications Commission Cable Television Customer Service Regulations.

If you have a cable service problem, please call AT&T Broadband directly. If your problem remains unresolved, please call the City of Modesto at 577-5223.



City cancels storm drain surcharge election

Early last month the Modesto City Council directed staff to cancel the April 29th Storm Drain Surcharge Election and order City Clerk Jean Zahr to destroy approximately 28,000 ballots already submitted to the city.

In a late closed session last night City Attorney Mike Milich informed council members that the city has under-billed the owners of multi-family, commercial, industrial property for the past decade to the tune of approximately \$1.5 million. The under billing does not affect property owners of single family homes.

Next Tuesday, the council will take formal action to

ratify the direction given to staff.

Milich advised city councilmembers that the significant billing error discovered late last month, after ballots were mailed to the property owners, is reason to believe the city violated that part of the California Constitution known as Proposition 218. He advised the council to cancel the upcoming election, order the city clerk to destroy the unopened ballots, and start the election process over.

Under the Proposition 218, the city must disclose the basis of the rate calculation and all the reasons why an increase in the storm drain rates is necessary.

"Because of the error property owners were not fully informed as to how the city currently calculates the rates and the reasons why the rate increase is necessary. In my opinion these two defects in the notices constitute a violation," said Milich.

The ballots were mailed to property owners on March 12. Soon after, customers who needed assistance calculating their bills inundated the city with phone calls. It was at this time that city staff first identified that the calculation methodology for the proposed charges conflicted with the city's current billing practices.

The problem stems from a complex rate structure de-

veloped in 1991 and staff's assumption that the billing system was charging according to the method adopted that year.

Since 1991, property owners have only been charged for the actual size of their property, rather than in a step-range method, as directed in a resolution adopted by a 1991 city council.

The "stair step" method calls for all multi-family, commercial and industrial property owners within a certain lot size range to pay the same rate. The stair step ranges are established in 3,500 square foot increments. This means a busi-

continued on back page



David Paladini

THROUGH THE EYES OF OUR STUDENT REPORTER City department working to create community, enhance Modesto's neighborhoods

"Freestyle, breaststroke, butterfly..." "The pitch, strike 3, you're out!"... "The kick is up, field goal." These sports are what I have always thought about when I hear about the City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department. I just thought it was about sports and taking care of parks, but after talking with James Niskanen, director of the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department, I realize that this department encompasses much more than I ever imagined.

The full scope of the Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department is vast. It involves many different activities: swimming lessons, after-school fun activities, sports, development of bike trails, housing issues, the "sister city program," neighborhood "signblight" control, and of course, the building and development of city parks. Let's take a closer look at a few of these areas.

The Neighborhood P.A.R.K. program is a fun place to start. P.A.R.K. stands for Programs and Activities Reaching Kids. Monday through Friday, 3:00 to 6:00 p.m., from April to June, children can meet after school for a fun time of sports, crafts, drama and swimming. This program is sponsored by the City of Modesto, and there is no participant cost. For more

information on P.A.R.K. programs, call 577-5355.

Other fun programs for kids are team and individual sports, such as basketball, bowling, baseball clinics,

I have to agree that when there are an excess number it really does look ugly.

The department is also the city's liaison to "Modesto Sister Cities International"



golf, karate, open gym, rock climbing, roller skating, softball for adults, swimming, tennis, gymnastics and more. Most of these sports have a small cost. They give kids a chance to improve in things they like to do. For more information on these programs, call 577-5344.

"Signblight" is an interesting word that director James Niskanen has coined. "'Signblight' is not found in the dictionary," Mr. Niskanen said, "but the meaning of it serves our purpose." He explained that blight is anything that de-beautifies something or makes it ugly. It is actually illegal to create signblight by hanging signs on utility poles or trees. I was unaware that hanging yard sale signs on telephone poles is illegal, but

(MCSI). Modesto has five sister cities across the globe, cities. The idea is to create goodwill and understanding between different cultures. It really is a cool program.

The department also is responsible for administering the Federal Community Development Block Grant (CBDG), the HOME Investment Partnership Program and the Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG). They oversee the Housing Rehabilitation and Neighborhood Revitalization Program, the Down Payment Assistance Program, and the Affordable Housing Development Program.

Seems like a diverse set of programs I know, but it all makes sense when you look at the department's mission:

"Our mission is to create community and enhance neighborhoods through people, parks, programs and facilities." This means people working together in their neighborhoods to benefit all. Luckily, the department has a website that outlines their diverse programs and services at www.modestogov.com/rnd.

I haven't even talked about the parks themselves. That will come in a future article about how a neighborhood park is "born" and the community involvement that brings it to completion.

The City of Modesto congratulates David on his year of contributions to this insert. Thank you David!



Buy one regular priced flat of flowers and get one bag of Mo-Gro Magic FREE or Buy 2 bags at regular price and receive third bag FREE

**MUST PRESENT COUPON AT TIME OF PURCHASE
LIMIT 2 FLAT - BAGS PER COUPON
OFFER EXPIRES 6/15/2002**

Available at these local nurseries:

Scenic Nursery
1313 Scenic Drive
Westurf
1612 Claus Road

Tips to keep our water clean

We all want our homes and gardens to be beautiful and bountiful. But have you ever thought that some of our daily activities - from pesticide application to washing our vehicles - may be harmful to the environment and contribute to water pollution?

For instance, many people use chemical pesticides to control pests. Stormwater testing in Modesto has shown that some active ingredients in these pesticides, especially diazinon and chlorpyrifos, are occurring at levels that could threaten our health and the health of our rivers and wetlands. The testing also shows that most of these pesticides come from Modesto's residential neighborhoods.

Other known household

contaminants found in our storm water include: paint, chlorine, used oil, antifreeze, pet waste and garbage. Call 577-5493 for more information on how to dispose of these and other hazardous materials.

To keep the storm drains chemical free...share these tips with others:

- Lawns & Gardens - avoid products using diazinon and chlorpyrifos; Also, don't over water your lawn and garden

- Pool & Spa Cleaning - drain the old water to your sewer system (shower, bathtub, wash tray, sink drain or sewer cleanout)

- Auto Cleaning - use a professional car

wash or wash vehicle on the lawn and NOT in the driveway or street

- Auto Maintenance - recycle used oil and dispose of antifreeze by calling 577-5493.

- Garbage containers - clean or rinse out on lawn and NOT in the driveway or street

- Pet Wastes - pick up animal wastes regularly and dispose of them in the black garbage container or toilet, NOT down the storm drain

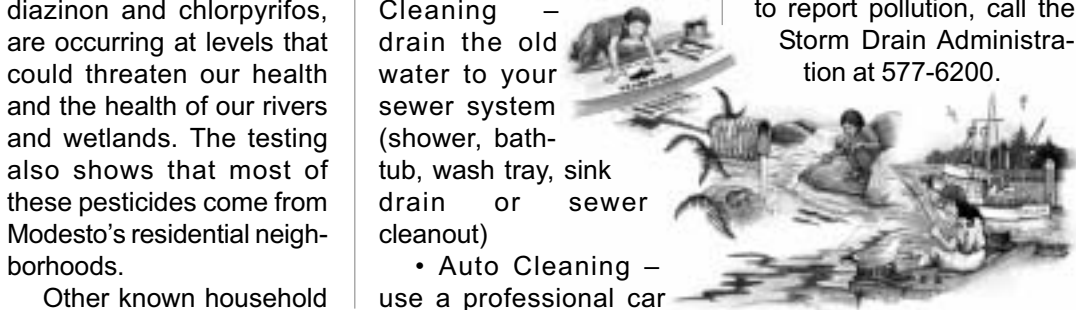
For more information or to report pollution, call the Storm Drain Administration at 577-6200.



Please remember that outside watering is prohibited from noon to 7 p.m. daily. If you need to water your lawn or wash your car, make sure you do it before noon or after 7 p.m.

The Modesto Police Department recently began an 18 - 36 month accreditation process. The Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies will conduct the accreditation process.

City offices will be closed on Monday, May 27 for the Memorial Day holiday.



Pruned refuse collection schedule for 2002

2002 PRUNED REFUSE COLLECTION SCHEDULE

The calendar below provides you with specific information about when you should place your Pruned Refuse out for collection.

Refuse is only collected once a month. Remember: it takes approximately two weeks for crews to pickup the entire City.

Earliest day you should place refuse out for collection is 72 hours prior to the Monday of collection (first Monday of the month)

KEY	○ →	Only Days you may place out your Refuse for collection
	◊ →	Days crews start to pickup (First Monday of Each Month)

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL							MAY							JUNE																			
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S													
					④⑤						①②								①②			①																			①													
⑥	⑦						③	④						③	④														⑤	⑥												②	③											

DECEMBER 2001: LEAVES PICKED UP ONLY. NO PRUNED REFUSE
LEAVES WILL BE COLLECTED ON THE STREETS ONLY. NO PLASTIC BAGS, BOXES, ETC.

LEAVES ONLY
No Green Waste

Council cancels storm drain election

ness on a lot size of 3,501 square feet would pay the same fee as a business on a lot size of 7,000 square feet.

"The bottom line is keeping the faith of the voters," said City Manager Jack Crist. "Not only are we accountable for our actions,

but we are accountable for the actions of our predecessors."

All six council members present agreed that despite the significant expense already incurred by the city, that canceling the election is the right thing to do.

The intent of the election

was to fund ongoing maintenance costs of the city's storm drain system -- a deficient system that causes many city streets to flood, even during mild storm conditions.

"This problem is very upsetting to us because our storm drain system is badly in need of maintenance and overall improvement," said Crist.

As a result of the under billing, the council asked city staff to develop a new storm drain sewer surcharge rate resolution that conforms to the city's current billing practices. The new resolution would be deliberated at a future city council meeting.

The council also directed city staff to conduct an analysis of all utility billings to assure that billing practices conform to adopted resolutions in all cases.

It is not known when the city will hold another election for a storm drain rate increase, but one thing is certain, a proposed rate increase will not be put before the voters again until these issues are resolved.

Property owners still in possession of election ballots are asked to destroy those ballots.

Questions may be directed to the City of Modesto Customer Services at 577-5395.

Only MTBE-Free fuel allowed at reservoir



Jet skis and boats with standard two-stroke engines will have to be fueled with MTBE-free gasoline.

Remember, MTBE-free fuel is the only gasoline sold at the Modesto Reservoir and visitors are no longer allowed to enter the park with their own gas containers.

The policy is part of Stanislaus County's plan to reduce methyl tertiary butyl ether (MTBE) at the local reservoir. The reservoir provides a large portion of the drinking water to Modesto area residents.

Owners of jet skis and boats with standard two-stroke carbureated engines must enter the park with empty fuel tanks and fuel up at the marina or loading

dock in the reservoir.

Another alternative is to fuel up at C.L. Bryant's Union 76 station in Waterford where you will receive a validated tag indicating you have fueled up with MTBE-free fuel.

MTBE is a gasoline additive designed to reduce engine pollution. It was planned to be banned in California by December 2002, but Governor Davis recently delayed that action. In the meantime, City of Modesto and Stanislaus County officials are working to reduce or eliminate the amount of MTBE detected at the reservoir.



FREE TIRE COLLECTION EVENT for City of Modesto Residents Only *Proof of residency is required*

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Date: | Saturday, June 22, 2002 |
| Place: | Downey High School Parking Lot |
| Time: | 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. OR UNTIL TWO COLLECTION TRAILERS ARE FILLED. NO EXCEPTIONS. |
| Limits: | Eight (8) tires per coupon - no size limit
One (1) coupon per household
Tires with or without rims - OK
Eight (8) tires per vehicle, limits will be strictly enforced! |

NO BUSINESSES OR DEALERS ALLOWED

Questions?

**Call the City of Modesto Solid Waste Office at
577-5494**

Funded by the California Integrated Waste Management Board