

Office Memorandum: CITY OF TEHACHAPI

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR SMITH AND
COUNCIL MEMBERS, ALL CITY
EMPLOYEES, ALL CITY RESIDENTS

DATE: May 16, 2013

FROM: GREG GARRETT, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT 2012/2013

It is with great pride that I can say for the fifth year in a row, that the City of Tehachapi received an excellent review from the Kern County Grand Jury.

On January 24, 2013, representatives of the Grand Jury came to Tehachapi to meet with City Staff. During that very cordial meeting, Staff members discussed our departmental operations, the City's budget, capital projects, emergency operations and more.

This positive report is due in large part to the continued hard work of our wonderful Staff. It is also due to all of those members of the public and Council that strive to make Tehachapi a better place. Thank you to everyone. Let's keep up the good work.

CITY OF TEHACHAPI

PURPOSE :

The Cities and Joint Powers Committee (Committee) of the 2012-2013 Kern County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) visited the City of Tehachapi (City) on January 24, 2013, pursuant to California Penal Code §925a. The visit included the City Manager and numerous department heads.

BACKGROUND/FACTS:

The City of Tehachapi is located 35 miles East/Southeast of Bakersfield and West of Mojave. Tehachapi has an elevation of 3,970 feet. The name of Tehachapi originated from the Kawaiisu language. The name derived from Hard Climb or Tehachapia. The settlement was formally known as Tehachapau, Tehachapa, Tehachapi and Summit Station.

The first permanent white settlers were John Moore and Amanda Brite arriving in the Tehachapi Valley in the fall of 1854 from Texas and three years later moved to Brite Valley. In 1909 the Tehachapi settlement was incorporated and the City of Tehachapi was legally established. An act of the State Legislature changed the City's official name to Tehachapi in 1946.

The City previously known as Old Towne was established during the 1860s. The City is registered as California Historical Landmark #643 and is the oldest settlement in the Tehachapi Valley.

The most recent population numbers are broken down approximately: 9,000 in the City, 4,000 at California Correctional Institution and 35,000 overall including outlying areas such as Golden Hills, Sand Canyon, Bear Valley Springs, Stallion Springs, Alpine Forest and other small communities near the City.

A. Tehachapi and nearby points of interest:

- Tehachapi Museum
- Tehachapi Loop (Loop) is considered one of the greatest engineering feats of the 19th Century. The viewing area is a popular destination in the region. The Loop was a solution to the problems of sending a train through the Tehachapi Mountains. By creating a unique track system, engineers were able to tackle the difficult terrain.
- Tehachapi Railroad Depot
- Woodward West Action Sports Camp
- Wind Farms
- Indian point Ostrich Ranch
- Tomo-Kahni State Park

- B. Tehachapi Bus Schedule includes Dial a Ride and the East Kern Express Services.
- Dial a Ride is provided Monday through Friday to the communities of Tehachapi, Old Towne and Golden Hills. Passengers may transfer to the East Kern Express in Old Towne and Tehachapi.
 - The East Kern Express Service is provided Monday through Saturday. Services provide intercity service between the communities of Bakersfield, Keene, Mojave, Rosamond and Lancaster. Passengers may transfer to other regional carriers in Bakersfield, Mojave and Lancaster.
- C. The City received a \$20,000 donation from Lehigh Southwest Cement on October 17, 2012, to assist in the construction of Freedom Plaza. The donation will help the City construct a new pedestrian plaza celebrating the five main branches of the United States Military as well as a newly improved public parking area. The new Plaza and downtown parking will be built on the Southwest corner of the intersection of Curry Street and Tehachapi Boulevard with a planned start date in late spring 2013.
- D. Main Street Tehachapi hosts many events during the year:
- The Harvest Moon and Beer Walk
 - Hotdog Festival
 - Oktoberfest
 - Star Light Ball
 - Super Stocking Give Away
 - Trunk or Treat
 - Valentine Wine and Chocolate Walk
 - Chili Cook-off and Red Hot Classic Car show
 - Farmers Market
 - Mountain Festival and Rodeo
- E. Community Orchestra and Theatre-Tehachapi Community Orchestra now called Tehachapi Symphony Orchestra was founded in 1997 and incorporated in 1998. Most of the Tehachapi Pops Orchestra was founded in 2006 and most of the five or six concerts each year are free to the public. The Halloween Concert at the Bekay Theatre along with the Tehachapi Community Theatre does charge a small fee to attend.
- F. Tehachapi is called the Land of Four Seasons and the climate accommodates the name quite well. The changing of the leaves in the fall is beautiful and the apple crops thrive.
- G. The construction of Highway 58 and Highway 14 place Tehachapi within a one-hour commute of Bakersfield, Lancaster and Edwards Air Force Base.
- H. The July 21, 1952, earthquake was the largest earthquake in Southern California during the 20th century. The 7.5 earthquake was felt as far as away as Reno

Nevada. Twelve people died in the quake and severe damage was done to buildings and rail lines in the area.

- Downtown Tehachapi is 15 miles from the White Wolf Fault, six miles from the Garlock Fault and 30 miles from the San Andreas Fault. The Garlock Fault last ruptured 500 years ago. In 1857, the Fort Tejon earthquake and the San Andreas Fault let loose with a 7.9 earthquake but no records have been found of the local effect on the City.
- I. In 1932 the first State Women's Prison was built in Cummings Valley. The 7.5 earthquake in 1952 caused major damage to the City and the Prison. The inmates were moved to Frontera. After repairing the facility in 1953 the State made the Prison a branch of the California Institution for Men at Chino. In the mid 1960's a new Medium Security Facility was built in Tehachapi. In the mid 1980s two Maximum Security Prisons were constructed. In 1998 the Prison now known as the California Correctional Institution (CCI) was annexed into the City. The prison is currently the largest employer in the region with almost 1,700 persons on the payroll.
 - J. The City's Wastewater Treatment upgrade was high on the infrastructure priority list. The upgrade includes \$4.5 million dollars of new investment to improve the treatment process and increase capacity.

FINDINGS:

- F1. The dissolution of the Redevelopment Agencies by the State of California affected the City but the City is recovering well and continues to move forward.
- F2. The City has a Five-year Budget with a positive variance of \$1.2 million dollars in funds this year. Last year there was \$3.88 million in the general fund.
- F3. The new Hospital Facility will break ground in early 2013.
- F4. The Police Department is planning to build a new facility utilizing an existing structure and retrofitting the structure to the new Police Station. The City believes the new facility should be sufficient for approximately the next 20 years.
- F5. In April 2012 the City adopted the new General Plan now available online if the public wants to view the Plan.
- F6. Wal-Mart construction is moving forward. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was challenged. The City expects a new EIR addressing the three items brought up in court concerning noise, traffic and infrastructure to be completed during the summer of 2013.

- F7. The City completed a Bicycle Master Plan in parallel courses with the County of Kern. New plans will help the community develop a more effective bicycle network for both travel and recreation.
- F8. Improvements continued throughout Downtown Tehachapi in 2012 with the addition of landscaping, lighting and accessibility enhancements at multiple intersections on South Green Street additionally on Tehachapi Boulevard from Robinson Street to Hayes Street. The projects totaled nearly two million dollars in investment in downtown and were funded with grants.
- F9. Tehachapi Airport experienced record fuel sales in 2012 and saw continued enhancements with grant funds from the Federal Aviation Administration.
- F10. The Airport in Tehachapi is owned and operated by the City. The Airport is located on 260 acres. The Airport receives \$160,000 a year from the City to operate the Airport and do the maintenance on all signs in the City. The Airport employs two people full time.
- F11. Tehachapi Unified School District's Board of Trustees voted unanimously to approve a 6th through 12th grade Curriculum for Safe and Inclusive Schools.

COMMENTS:

The benefit of living in a smaller community like Tehachapi is immeasurable. Everyone seems to know the neighbors and everyone quickly become friends. Tehachapi appears to be a safe and peaceful community where people enjoy bringing up children and enhancing life along the way.

RECOMMENDATION:

None

NOTES:

The City of Tehachapi should post a copy of this report where it will be available for public review.

Persons wishing to receive an email notification of newly released reports may sign up at www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury, and click on Sign up for early releases.

Present and past Kern County Grand Jury Final Reports and Responses can be accessed on the Kern County Grand Jury website: www.co.kern.ca.us/grandjury.

NO RESPONSE REQUIRED