

West Valley View

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ ♦ Phone (623) 535-8439

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January 10, 2012

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West Valley's top stories of 2011

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Goodyear

Some Goodyear's biggest stories of the past year involved new jobs and businesses along with a reduction in taxes - rare news in a stagnant economy.

The following are some noteworthy stories from Goodyear's 2011.

New council takes office

Goodyear voters elected two newcomers to join the Goodyear City Council and two incumbents returned.

Bill Stipp won in a run-off election against Bill Antonucci; Wally Campbell was successful in her bid for a four-year term.

Incumbents Joanne Osborne and Sheri Lauritano returned for second four-year terms.

Georgia Lord was elected as the city's first female mayor.

Gary Gelzer was also appointed to fill the unexpected vacancy left by Frank Cavaliere, who resigned from the position in late March.

Taxes reduced

In late May, the Goodyear City Council voted unanimously to reduce the food tax from 2.5 percent to 2.25 percent. The measure cost the city an estimated \$400,000 annually.

The issue of high taxes, especially on food, was brought up continuously during the March election.

The reduction began Jan. 1.

Farmers, ranchers wrangle over open ranges

Farmers and ranchers battled each other over open-range issues in the southern reaches of Goodyear.

The issue came before the City Council as a public safety concern after more than a dozen automobile accidents were caused by roaming cattle in the last year.

Farmers wanted the cattle to be contained because they were eating and damaging crops.

Ranchers argued the land was open range and if cattle were required to be contained, then their livelihood was at stake.



GEORGIA LORD became Goodyear's first female mayor in March.

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After months of postponement, the council approved an ordinance making it unlawful for large animals to roam freely.

Private prisons opposed

The area of the Perryville prison complex, a facility for female inmates, was one of five Arizona sites that were under consideration for private prisons after the Arizona Department of Corrections issued a request for proposals in August.

One vendor, GEO Group Inc., a multinational firm based in Boca Raton, Fla., had proposed from 2,000 to 5,000 private beds in Perryville.

The Goodyear City Council officially opposed the proposal, even though it had no legal grounds to do so.

The city cited several negatives to expanding the prison, including effects to economic development and neighboring schools.

State officials released a statement in late December saying the declining rate in growth of inmate populations has reduced the need.

The Department of Corrections is now seeking 500 new state-operated beds and 2,000 from private vendors.

New businesses, more jobs come to Goodyear

It was a big economic development year for Goodyear.

Sub-Zero, a Wisconsin-based manufacturer of refrigerators, freezers and wine coolers, began operations in June.

The company hired about 295 people initially to work at the facility, some of whom transferred from a Phoenix location and from Wisconsin. Fifty more were expected to be hired in the months to come.

Saint-Gobain, the world's largest building materials company, announced that construction has begun at the former Rubbermaid facility at 17300 W. Broadway Road in Goodyear. The France-based business will use 140,000-square-feet-of-space to manufacture solar mirrors.

Dick's Sporting Goods will also set up shop in Goodyear. The company announced in December that it will build a \$60 million, 600,000-square-foot distribution center.

The yearlong construction process will bring an estimated 375 temporary jobs and 120 permanent employees when it opens late this year.

Avondale

Some of the most notable 2011 events in Avondale involved a new public transit system and national recognition for technological strides in government. The following are some noteworthy stories from Avondale's 2011:

President Obama recognizes mayor

President Barack Obama mentioned Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers during a speech at the National Council of La Raza's annual conference in Washington, D.C.

Obama called the mayor's life story "the promise of America" and shared how Lopez Rogers was the first in her family of migrant workers to attend **college**.

The cotton field where her parents used to work has since been replaced by the Avondale civic center, where Lopez Rogers has presided over City Council meetings for more than four years.

Lopez Rogers said hearing those words was a confirmation of the work she's done and a push to continue serving her **community**.

Zoom launched

The Zoom shuttle replaced Start Route 131 to service key destinations in Avondale such as **Estrella Mountain Community College**, Old Town Avondale and Avondale Civic Center.

The Zoom also connects with Valley Metro bus Route 3 and Route 17A to continue service outside of the city.

By switching to Zoom, Avondale anticipates saving an estimated \$2.77 per mile for the 2011-12 fiscal year.

City officials said they believed that a change in the city's transit system could increase ridership, thereby increasing Avondale's chances of building a light rail system sometime in the future.

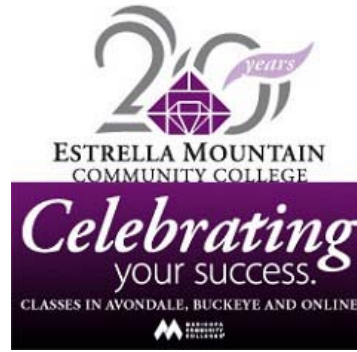
City earns technology award

The Center for Digital Government honored Avondale as one of the top cities in the country in its 2011 Digital Cities Survey for its commitment to and innovations in digital government.

Avondale was the only Arizona city to receive the award.

In July 2001, Avondale became one of the first West Valley cities to start producing electronic agenda packets instead of paper, saving compiling time, paper costs and reducing negative impact on the environment.

Avondale also requires members of the City Council and other municipal staff to use electronic tablets to read agenda packets and other documents.



General Plan updated

Avondale released an update of its General Plan 2030 which identified three major growth areas for economic sustainability and development.

These areas encompassed Interstate 10 and 99th Avenue corridors, southeast of Litchfield and Lower Buckeye roads and along Avondale Boulevard approaching Phoenix International Raceway and the district surrounding it.

General Plan 2030 also included three infill incentive projects comprising the Old Town, Cashion and Las Ligas communities to help build more sustainable neighborhoods. More trails, open spaces and parks throughout the city were also included in the plan to provide residents more opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Approximately 85 Avondale residents and business leaders attended the release of the general plan and provided input.

Buckeye

Buckeye focused on growth this year. The town expanded services to residents, land area in the form of parks, and educational opportunities.

Here's a wrap up (in no particular order) of Buckeye's accomplishments in 2011.

Educational opportunities grow

The Town Council in January approved a 30-year lease agreement with the Maricopa **Community College** District. The A Wing of Buckeye High School, which is owned by the town, became the latest expansion of the **college** district. Classes, which include English, math and computer science, began in the fall.

New ER center opens

Buckeye's first stand-alone emergency facility, the West Valley Emergency Center, opened in July.

The \$5.6 million, 20,000 square-foot building is the closest such facility for those needing care in the far West Valley.

More than 45,000 people are expected to use it annually.

The 24-hour facility can handle everything from cuts to CAT scans, MRI's and X-rays.

Major park planned

Buckeye annexed 8,675 acres for the future Buckeye White Tanks Regional Park.

The land was essentially free from the Bureau of Land Management, which requires the town to develop it under certain requirements.

Buckeye submitted an application to the BLM to receive a Recreation and Public Purposes lease for a period of 25 years as part of the Recreation and Public Purposes Act. The lease was approved in July 2010 by the town and then in December 2010 by the BLM.

When the lease ends in 2035, the BLM will have the option to convey the land to the town.

Park-n-ride opens

Phoenix commuters welcomed the opening of the East Buckeye Park and Ride on Dec. 15.

The facility, a first for the town, is north of Interstate 10 on Jackrabbit Trail.

Goodyear's Express Route 562 will expand services to the Buckeye facility in January with two morning and two afternoon trips.

The majority of the park-and-ride was funded through a \$4.8 million grant from the Valley Metro Regional Public Transportation Authority. The regional half-cent sales tax passed by voters in 2004 funded the grant.

The project cost \$5 million. It includes 250 parking spaces, which will be expanded to 500 in future years when there's greater user demand. It will also have arrival and departure spots for up to four buses.

Council loses member

The Town Council mourned the death of District 3 Councilwoman Elaine May when she died of cancer in early November.

May had served the town for nine years. She was first elected in March 1986 and served until 1988. She was elected to a second term in March 2004 and was then re-elected to a third term in 2008. She served her first two years as vice mayor.

A Town Council sub-committee appointed 35-year-old Michelle Hess to fill the vacancy.

Reader Comments

Posted: Tuesday, January 03, 2012

Article comment by: **Amy Hayslett**

Banner announces it will start construction of the Verrado medical facility.

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