

Public hearing on Walmart Supercenter is Tuesday

By Denise Madrid, staff writer

The Porterville Recorder, Feb. 6, 2012

There's a flyer circulating through town encouraging Walmart proponents to voice their support for a new Walmart Supercenter during a public hearing Tuesday.

"We need the city's approval in order to bring a new store to Porterville. Please join Walmart supporters and voice your support for a new store in the Riverwalk Marketplace and the many benefits it will bring to Porterville," the flyer states.

The Porterville City Council is set to review the matter during its regularly scheduled meeting, set for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, in the council chambers at City Hall.

Proponents and opponents alike will be allotted time to speak during the public hearing portion of the meeting.

After the hearing, the council will consider certifying the project's Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), a document that describes the environmental impacts associated with the project and also presents mitigation measures to reduce such impacts.

If the council approves the document and it withstands any legal challenges, the project will likely move forward.

Council review of the Final EIR was delayed in May after the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District requested a study to determine if the proposed store's pollutant emissions would violate state or national air-quality standards. The California State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) also contributed to the delay, after it raised several concerns related to traffic and circulation.

The approximately 22-acre project site is located northeast of the Highway 190 and Highway 65 interchange and is bounded by Indiana Street to the west and Springville Avenue to the north.

The size of the full-service supermarket store was reduced from 181,463 square feet to 161,602 square feet in July 2010. It's expected to operate round the clock and will require a staff of about 300 employees.

Also on Tuesday's agenda:

- The council may authorize Parks and Leisure staff to negotiate a contract with Visalia-based Quad-Knopf, Inc. for landscape, architectural, and engineering design services for the Chase Avenue Neighborhood Park.

Staff anticipates the consultant fee to be approximately \$135,000 to \$150,000 for complete engineering and architectural services.

A little bit of rain, cooler temperatures expected today

By Jill Cowan, Californian staff writer

Bakersfield Californian, Tuesday, Feb. 7, 2012

It was windy and warm in Kern County on Monday thanks to a low-pressure system headed this way from the coast, said National Weather Service Meteorologist Brian Ochs.

But by this afternoon, he said, that same pressure system is expected to bring a bit of rain – the first Bakersfield has seen since Jan. 23.

Less than one-tenth of an inch is expected to fall this afternoon and tonight.

In the meantime, Ochs said, winds gusting at 25 to 30 miles per hour Monday afternoon were "just enough to blow stuff around." Later Monday afternoon dust was reported as a factor in several traffic snags.

However, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District issued a health cautionary statement Monday afternoon, reminding valley residents with heart or lung disease that dust and particulate matter in the air could aggravate such conditions. The caution is in effect until this afternoon.

The statement also said older adults and children should avoid prolonged exposure to blowing dust.

Ochs added that gusts reached more than 50 mph on the Grapevine at about 10 a.m. Monday.

The winds, he said, were forecast to continue Monday night, picking up to reach speeds of about 35 to 40 mph. Then, as morning approaches, the winds "should taper off," dropping to 10 to 15 mph.

Temperatures hovered in the low 70s Monday afternoon and were expected to hit 76 degrees today.

That's warmer than normal for early February, Ochs said, with temperatures for this time of year typically coming in at about 60 degrees.

Still, today's rain will likely cool things down considerably.

Wednesday, expect a high of 60 degrees, which will rise throughout the rest of the week to the upper 60s by Friday and through the weekend, Ochs said.

