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Oildorado coming back in October

By Doug Keeler
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Better late than never, Taft's Oildorado celebration is coming back this fall after it was postponed by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Planning is still underway for the big event, which will be held from Oct. 8-17, but many of the major traditional events have been confirmed already and Taft Oildorado should be naming the grand marshal soon.

"We don't know exactly what everything is going to look like but we're hoping its going to have the same feel its always had," Oildorado Inc. President Shannon Miller said.

There is still a bit of uncertainty about what effect the Covid-19 pandemic could have on events.

Miller said the executive board is working on contingency planning and could have to move some events to outside venues.

"We are trying to do everything as safely and compliant as possible," Miller said

Most of the major events like the traditional kickoff luncheon, Maids of Petroleum Contest and whiskerino, Tessie Garratt and costume contests, are scheduled to be held at the Oildorado Headquarters at 501 North Street.

The Oildorado Store will be there, too, and a big Sept. 24 grand opening is being planned.

The celebration starts on Friday, Oct. 8 with the traditional Civic Luncheon that always draws a large crowd and will bring in top local political leaders including Congressional Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy.



City to seek funding in special election

By Doug Keeler
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The City of Taft is turning to the taxpayers to help generate revenue to keep city services funded.

The city has lost several major revenue sources and is facing a major increase in the cost of fire protection, city officials said, and it can't continue to offer the same level of fire police and other services without additional funding.

So, after months of online conversations with residents, the city is going to hold a special election on Nov. 2 to

raise and additional \$1.6 million annually.

City officials hope that will be enough partially offset the revenue lost when the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation closed the Taft Modified Community Correction Facility in May.

Couple what with an anticipated doubling of the city's annual payment of about \$500,000 to the Kern County Fire Department for fire protection and the city faces steep cuts if it doesn't generate more revenue.

Without additional funding, city officials warned, Taft could face reduced fire protection and increased response times to 911 calls.



Jackson Berry throws pass in front of assistant coach Eric Newton. Berry is one of a handful of Wildcats with varsity experience.

TUHS football team starting workouts



New Taft Union head coach Brian Durkan works with players during opening week of practice.

By Doug Keeler
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Brian Durkan has stepped into a unique situation.

The new Taft Union High School football coach stepped into the job this spring when George Falgout resigned and now he's putting together a team with players who haven't played football in two years and most who have never played varsity football.

"It's been quite a challenge," said Durkan. "Like defensive coordinator Russ Emberson said, it's a puzzle and were trying to figure out all of the pieces."

The good news for the Wildcats is they have a lot of players this year.

Well over 30 students have checked out varsity gear, and there are about 50 on the JV squad.

Most years teams return around half of their starters. But the juniors on the last football team, 2019, have graduated, and only a handful of sophomores were on that team.

Their teammates were all on the junior varsity.

Most of the players took part in a conditioning program through July and are in good shape.

Practice started last week and

players who have five days of workouts are now in pads.

Durkan said the Wildcats will be using a spread offense to take advantage of their athleticism.

Tat will be playing six road games and just four at home this year.

Durkan is new to the varsity head coaching job but is a fixture at Taft High. He graduated in 1988 and, played football for Al Baldock at Taft College.

After brief coaching stints at TUHS, Tehachapi and Ridgeview in the 1990s, he returned to TUHS coaching in 2001 and was junior varsity head coach from 2001-2008 before becoming a varsity assistant since 2009.

The Wildcats open the season with a pair of road games against Kern Valley on Aug. 20 and at California City on Aug. 27.

They open the home season on Sept. 3 against Desert High from Edwards Air Force Base on Sept. 3.

After a final non-league game at Foothill, TUHS opens the South Sequoia League season at Kennedy High in Delano on Sept. 17, then hosts Shafter on Sept. 24 before a bye on Oct. 1.

After that, its a road game in McFarland on Oct. 8, home against Chavez on Oct. 15, back on the road to play Wasco on Oct. 22 and then the final regular season game at home against Arvin.



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