

Willows Monthly - January 2024  
2023 Calendar Year Highlights & Retrospective

Happy New Year!



## Upcoming Meetings

### City Council

- February 13 at 5:30 PM (Closed Session), 6:00 PM (Regular Session)
- February 27 at 5:30 PM (Closed Session), 6:00 PM (Regular Session)

### Planning Commission

- February 21 at 6:00 PM

## CITY COUNCIL - 2023 Highlights

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### **New Council Members Appointed!**

With the unexpected departure of former Councilmembers Jeff Williams and Casey Hofhenke from the City Council, two new members were appointed in 2023 to fill those vacant Council seats and finish the terms of office. The City of Willows welcomes Councilmember Forrest Sprague and Vice-Mayor Evan Hutson, and thanks Jeff Williams and Casey Hofhenke for their service to the Willows community.

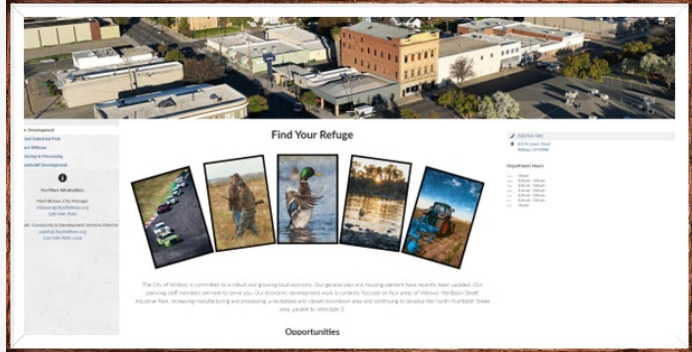
## ADMINISTRATION - 2023 Highlights

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### **Economic Development Efforts**

Using USDA Rural Business Development Grant (RBDG) funding and in partnership with Jody Sammons of EB3 Development, the City launched an [Economic](#)

[Development web page](#) in May 2023 that includes videos and focused marketing materials about the city including the Downtown, Humboldt Street, and Basin Street (in South Willows). Local businesses are also highlighted telling their individual success stories. The new web page is intended to help market the city to interested investors and developers.



### **Appointed new City Staff and Contractors**

Management hired several new employees in 2023 filling key vacant positions, including Joe Bettencourt, Community Development & Services Director, Joanne Moore Accounting Manager, Amos Hoover City Clerk/Assistant to the City Manager, Byron Turner (LACO Associates), contract City Planner, Jaimie Fuentes, Fire Engineer, Josh Reed, PW Maintenance Worker, Matt Randolph, PW Maintenance Worker, and, most recently, Gina Massolo, Finance & HR Specialist. They are very welcome additions to the City of Willows team and we look forward to working with them in 2024!

### **Council Chamber Audio-Visual Technology Upgrades**

The City installed significant Audio-Visual improvements to the Council Chambers in 2023. These improvements have allowed the City to both live stream public meetings via Zoom and publish video recordings of the City's meetings on YouTube to be viewed at the public's convenience. When you have a chance, check out the [City's YouTube channel](#).

### **Overhaul of Willows Municipal Code (WMC) and Master Fee Schedule**

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the City launched a complete overhaul of its Municipal Code and Master Fee Schedule. Some sections of the Code have not been updated since the 1950's. The updated Municipal Code will institute consistent modern standards, include previously overlooked regulations, and help to ease implementation both for development applicants and city staff, among other benefits. The Master Fee Schedule is woefully below market with some fees 50% or more below current market standards of the surrounding region. Some fees have not been updated since the early 1990's. By updating the Master Fee Schedule and accurately reflecting the cost of doing business, the City will be able to increase its revenues helping to address its structural deficit.

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## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & SERVICES**

**Planning, Building, Code Enforcement, Engineering, Public Works, Sewage, Public Facilities, Fleet and Capital Projects**

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## **Engineering Division - 2023 Highlights**

### **South Tehama Street Bridge Repair**

In February 2023, All American Construction completed necessary repairs to the South Tehama Street Bridge (that crosses the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District canal). Turbulence, generated as water falls off the apron on the downstream side, caused erosion of the soil under the concrete apron. As a result, the apron that protects the bridge's footings had slowly deteriorated over the past 100 years since it was originally constructed and raised serious safety concerns. Under the supervision of the City Engineer, the contractor was able to complete all required repairs within the very tight window of less than 30 days during the canal's annual drainage. The project cost approximately half of the budgeted amount and saved the City \$26,347!

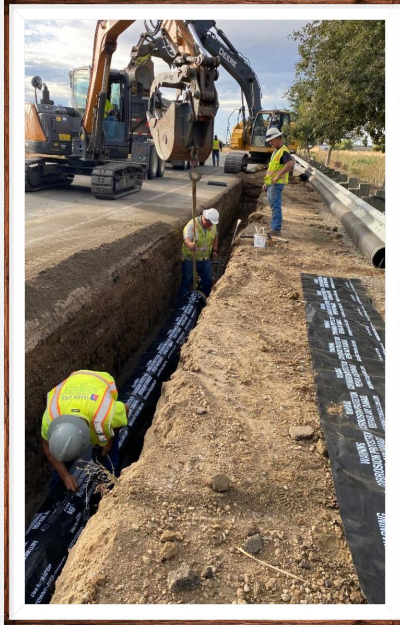


### **South Tehama Water Main Extension Project**

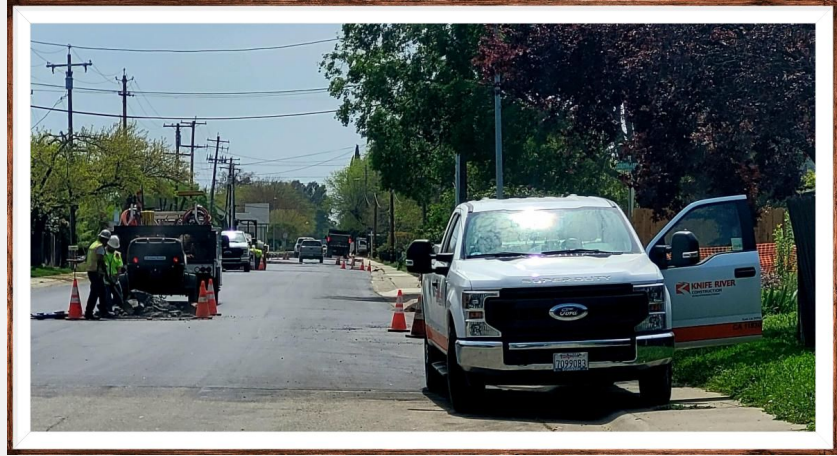
At the tail end of 2023, the City also completed a water main extension from Cal Water's system (near Rumiano Cheese) south to City-owned wells near Road 57. By completing design and construction, the City was able to transfer the responsibility of water purveying services, for its three remaining customers that receive potable water from City wells, to Cal Water. Transferring these water management responsibilities to Cal Water, removes potential liability from the City to treat potable water to State and Federal standards. The new water main connection furthers infrastructure improvements in South Willows helping to promote new development and investment in the area.

### **Rehabilitation of Pacific Avenue, Green Street and Jefferson Street**

In 2023, Three major road rehabilitation projects were completed: Pacific Avenue, Green Street, and Jefferson Street. The roads were repaved with asphalt, and damaged concrete curb, gutter and sidewalks were replaced (between Sycamore and Wood Streets). In addition, several trees were removed that presented a potential hazard or were damaging the public right of way. Curb ramps were installed on all street corners in the project area increasing pedestrian accessibility and compliance with the American with Disabilities Act. The project was fully funded using monies from the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Gas Tax Fund, and Senate Bill 1 (SB1) Fund.



*South Tehama Water Main*



*Pacific Avenue - Under Construction*



## **Building & Code Enforcement Divisions - 2023 Highlights**

### **Building Inspections & Permitting**

In 2023, the Building Division issued 279 permits. Permit issuance types included accessory dwelling units, additions, alterations, electrical, mechanical, and

plumbing. This represented a year over year increase of approximately 18% in both building permit applications submitted and issued. Additionally, with the diligent efforts of the building inspection team, the city experienced an annual increase of 57% in building inspections that were finalized!

### **Improved Code Enforcement Efforts**

With the onboarding of a part-time contract Building Inspector in 2022, the City experienced a year over year increase of 42% in code enforcement case investigations! The largest number of these cases was at Cedar Hills Apartments. The Building and Fire inspection teams worked diligently with the property owners throughout 2023 to identify and correct numerous code violations. Many improvements have been completed; however, work continues today to ensure the public health and safety of the property's residents.

## **Planning Division - 2023 Highlights**

## **New Contract Planner Hired!**

In September 2023, the City hired a new contract City Planner from LACO Associates, Byron Turner. He has done an excellent job integrating with the team and, from day one, hit the ground running and began working with customers to move projects forward to completion, including:



- Several site plan reviews for building permits, as well as review and processing for sign permits.
- Design review approval for Willows Tire Service and Auto Care for a new 900 square foot commercial building.
- Permitting and design review of the Beverage House Market façade (that moved into the old Circle K building).
- Design review and use permit for the Hampton Inn Hotel project on North Humboldt Avenue.
- General Plan Amendment and Rezoning of five parcels owned by North Valley Indian Health to facilitate planned new construction.
- Design Review Approval for Red 88 Noodle House on West Sycamore Street.

## **Public Works Division - 2023 Highlights**

### **Seasonal Public Works Activities**

The Public Works crew works on a variety of maintenance activities throughout the year such as storm drain clearing, pothole filling, flood mitigation, park and building maintenance, tree trimming and removal, sewage line clearing and monitoring, and leaf removal, as well as other tasks and activities that arise throughout the year and benefit the community.



Particularly noteworthy, they completed repair work of the Jensen Park playground equipment and addressed several projects around the Civic Center including beautification, flood response and clean-up, and replacement/upgrading of the Civic Center's water fountains.

### **2023 Willows Community Clean-Up Day**

July 2023's Community Clean-Up Day for Willows residents was a huge success! With

assistance from the City's Public Works crew and City staff, Waste Management did an excellent job organizing and overseeing the event. In a single day, they facilitated the collection and removal of 75,000 pounds of trash and recycling!



*Water fountain Upgrades*



*Community Clean-Up Day*



*Jensen Park Playground*

## RECREATION - 2023 Highlights

### Recreation Program Highlights

In 2023, the Recreation Division ran the following programs:

- Youth Basketball (January 21 - March 11),
- Spring Soccer (March 18 - April 22),
- Youth Basketball Camp (June 19 - 23),
- Soccer Summer Camp (June 26 - 30),
- Summer Swim Season (June 16 - August 5),
- Jump Start, Pre-School Program (July), and
- Fall Soccer (September 30 - November 4).

A total of 1,733 participants participated in all programs. These programs also require recruiting volunteers and hiring temporary, part-time seasonal employees including life guards, referees, coaches and managers.



*Jump Start Program*

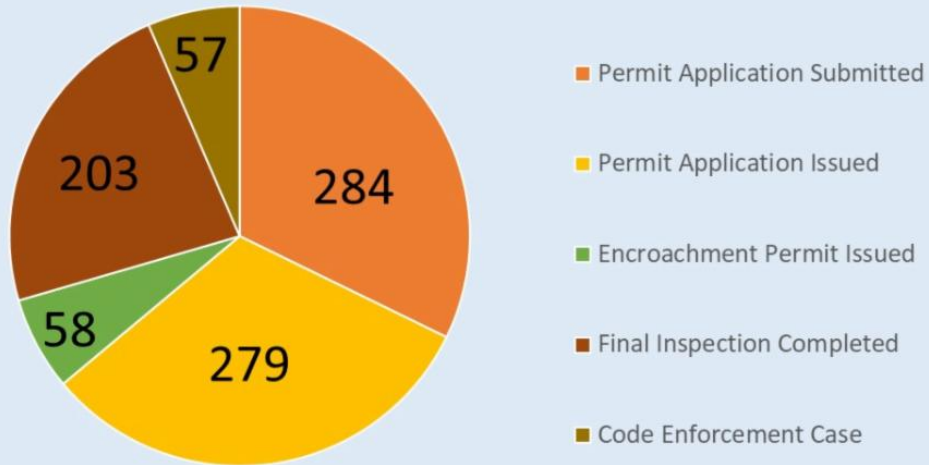


*Summer Swim Program*



*Spring Soccer Program*

Community Development Activity  
January - December 2023



Public Works Division Activity  
January - December 2023



Tree/Stump Removal - 87  
Tree Trimming - 29



Call Requests - Sewage Line Issues - 40



Poured 15.51 tons of cold patch  
to fill potholes.



New USA Markings - 424

## FINANCE - 2023 Highlights

### Transition to New Finance Software, Tyler Technologies

2023 was a huge transition year for the Finance Department as it started the transition from the 1970's DOS based MOMS Software to 21st century, state-of-the-art Tyler Technologies. The City is currently



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Processing all Payroll, Accounts Payable, and Accounts Receivable through Tyler, and will continue to transition its recreation fee, permitting, and business license modules in 2024. Staff anticipates completion of the software transition by the end of the fiscal year (June 30).

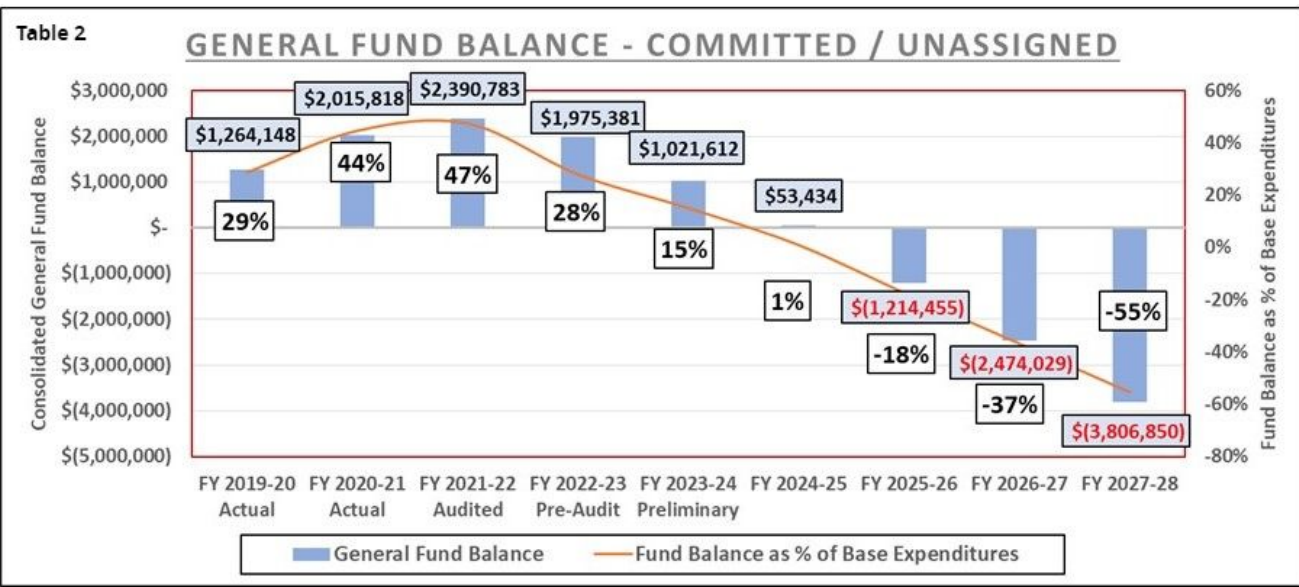
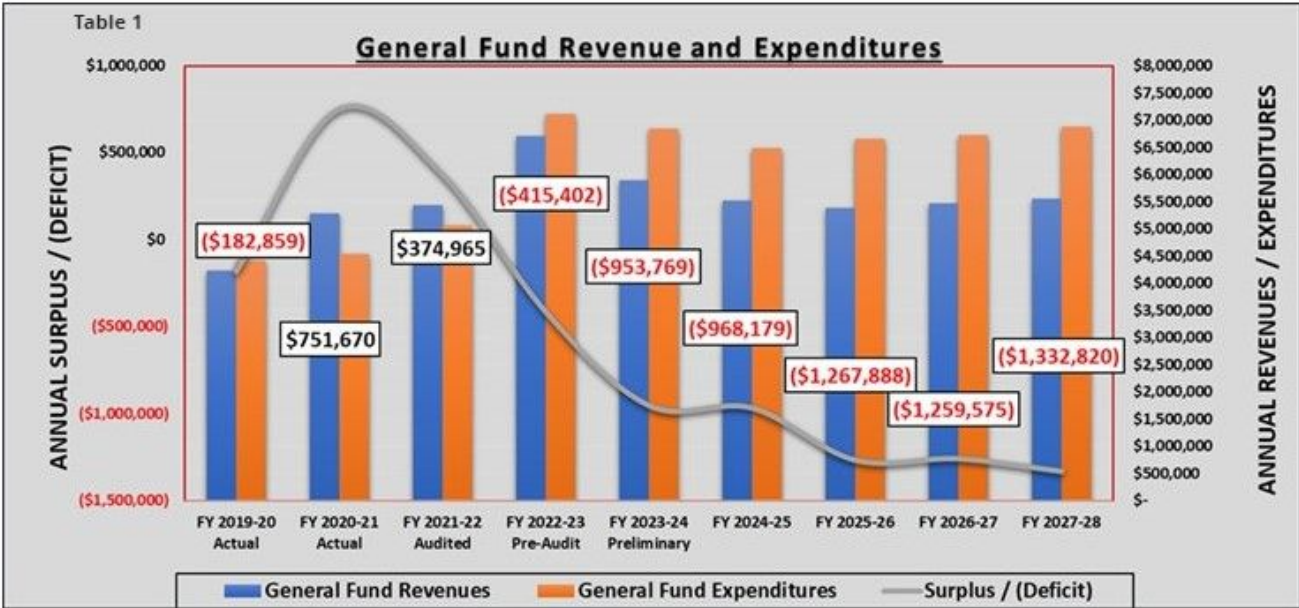
### **Finance Department Challenges & New Hires**

Toward the end of 2023, the City spent several months without dedicated Finance Department staff. For three months, the City Manager and City Clerk/Assistant to the City Manager coordinated Accounts Payable/Receivable and payroll with two 100% remote contractors (e.g., the City Manager coded AP and the City Clerk PDFed and emailed them to remote contractors for processing). In November, the City hired Joanne Moore, Accounting Manager, and in January 2024, Gina Massolo was hired as the City's new Finance & HR Specialist.

### **City's Fiscal Circumstances**

Starting in April 2023, the Council and staff began, what turned out to be, several robust discussions regarding the City's fiscal circumstances and future. While the City was already facing a structural deficit ~\$415K in FY 2022-23, the new proposed law enforcement services agreement as of June 2023 further exacerbated an already concerning fiscal situation catapulting the projected ongoing deficit to ~\$953K in FY 2023-24 and continuing to grow to \$1.25-1.33 million by FY 2026-27 and 2027-28 (Table 1).

As Table 2 illustrates, the City will exhaust its General Fund Reserves by June 30, 2025 with a projected Ending Fund Balance of \$53,000 (or 1% of the General Fund). The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommends that cities maintain a minimum of 17% Reserve or two months operating expenses. As the projections show, the City of Willows is projected to end FY 2023-24 with 15% Reserve and 1% by June 2025 (far below the GFOA's recommended 17%). As a result of the City's rapidly decreasing Reserves, the City Council will consider placing a 1.5% Transaction and Use Tax measure on the November 2024 ballot.



## FIRE - 2023 Highlights

### Fire Response, Prevention & Emergency Medical Services

#### 2023 Response Highlights

Responding to 1,070 calls for service, it was a busy year for the Willows Fire Department. Highlights from the year include:

#### Commercial Structure Fire (January)

Firefighters responded in the early morning hours to a fully involved commercial outbuilding fire with power lines down. With the goal of preventing the fire from spreading to nearby businesses and homes, Firefighters initiated a defensive attack. PG&E also responded due to the live arching powerlines. Willows Fire Department received aid from Orland and Artois Fire Departments through the City's automatic aid agreements.

### **Commercial Structure Fire (February)**

Willows Fire Department responded to a commercial structure fire at the old Gas Station at the corner of Wood and Tehama Streets. Within three minutes, the first engine had arrived to heavy smoke and fire coming from the rear of the structure. An aggressive fire attack ensued limiting the damage to a small portion of the building.

### **Residential Structure Fire (May)**

Willows Fire Department (WFD) was dispatched to a residential structure fire in the area of Wood and North Plumas Streets. Units arrived to find smoke exiting the rear of the structure. The WFD began an aggressive offensive interior attack and a primary search of the structure for victims. Fire was located in the laundry room and was extinguished with minor damage to the rest of the home.

### **Commercial Structure Fire (June)**

Willows Fire Department (WFD) was dispatched to 640 Canton Street for a reported commercial structure fire. The initial engine company arrived to find a vacant commercial building engulfed with fire. Automatic aid from Orland and Artois was engaged per standard mutual aid agreements. Firefighters initiated an aggressive interior attack, achieving knock down and saving 75% of the building.

### **Strike Team Deployment (August)**

Willows Fire Engine 14 was dispatched with three firefighters as part of strike team 3025C - immediate need to the head incident for structure defense in the Klamath National Forest. Willows Engine 14 returned to Willows on August 30 after a successful 14 day assignment.

### **Residential Structure Fire (October)**

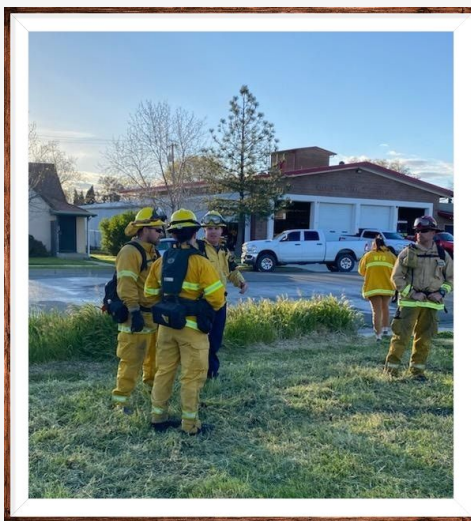
WFD was dispatched to a residential structure fire in the area of North Butte Street and First Avenue. Career staff arrived at the scene to find fire and smoke billowing from the structure and immediately initiated an aggressive offensive fire attack. The fire was extinguished by fire personnel and the property was turned back over to the property owner.



*Calls for Service*

In early 2023, Volunteers and Career staff placed into service and familiarized themselves with the Fire Department's new inventory of equipment including radios, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs), Thermal Imaging Cameras, and fire hoses and nozzles. All of this new equipment was acquired through grant funding that was received in 2022. Additionally, the department acquired three new vehicles in 2023, a staff utility vehicle, a new Command vehicle, and a federal excess engine.

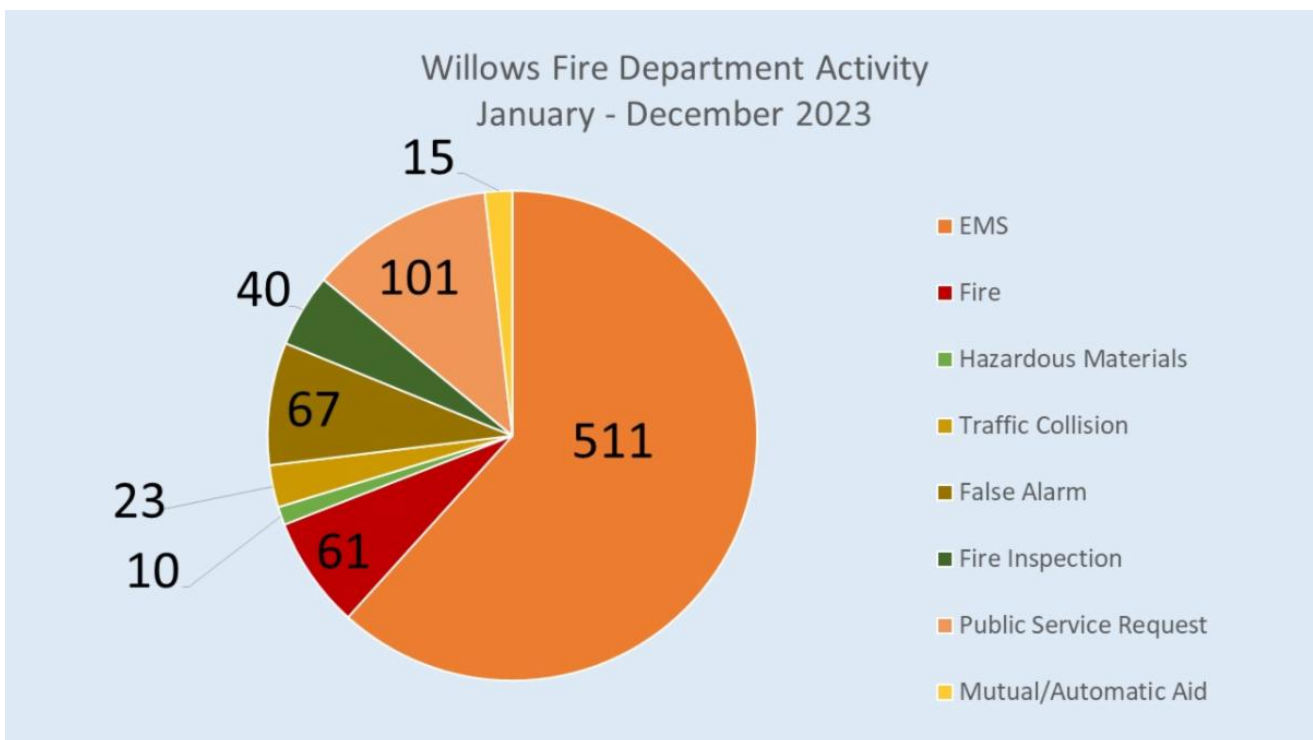
Over the course of the year firefighter training also included: search and rescue, firefighter survival, hose line deployment, fire suppression techniques, forcible entry, fire behavior analysis, and auto extrication training using the Jaws of Life. From February through April, Willows Fire Department career staff paramedics also taught an Emergency Medical Responder Course that certified students as emergency medical responders with the ability to provide basic life support care.



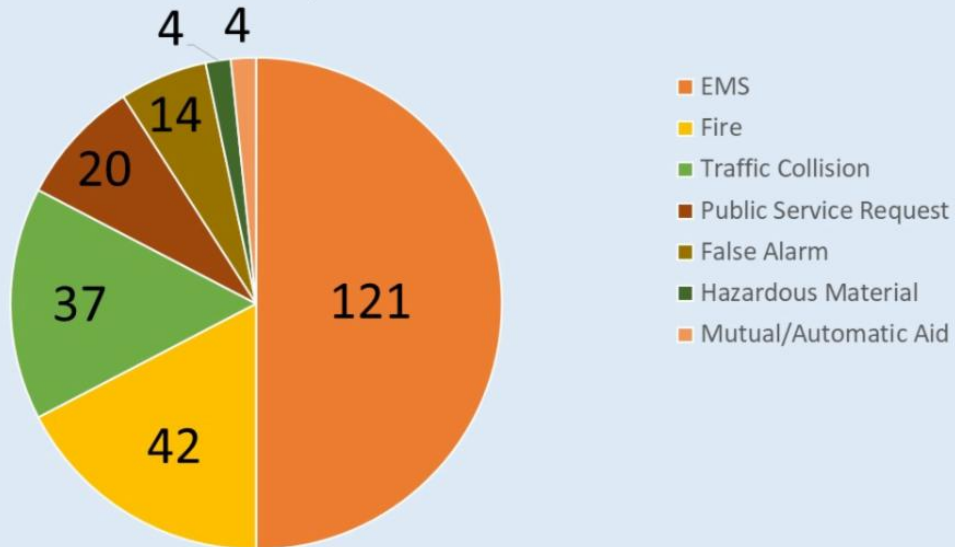
Training



Training - Extrication



## Willows Rural Fire Protection District Activity January - December 2023



## LIBRARY - 2023 Highlights

### Library Partners with Glenn County HHS

Partnering with the Willows Library, the Glenn County Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) provided \$100,000 to fund public health education, including timely access to COVID-19 mitigation, treatment, and prevention information to the residents of the City of Willows and Glenn County. The Library is enthusiastic about this opportunity to help make the community a safer and healthier place for everyone!

### Full-Time Children's Librarian

Library patrons may already be familiar with our Children's Librarian, Ashley Arellanes; however, did you know that she is now a full-time city employee? She is now able to provide even more services and programming for the youth of our community!

### Library is opened on Mondays!

In December, the Library announced that Monday hours from 1:00 to 5:00 pm would be restored in 2024 as a result of the expanded Children's Librarian position from part-time to full-time providing services to students and families after school and to all community members.

### Library brings Video Streaming Collection to Willows

The Willows Public Library announced in November that Kanopy, a streaming video collection, is now available to library patrons. Patrons can watch movies, documentaries, foreign films, classic cinema, independent films and educational videos that inspire, enrich and entertain through the [library's Kanopy site](#) and via the Kanopy

application.

### Library Receives Zip Books Program Grant

The Willows Library was awarded a Zip Books grant for 2023 in the amount of \$7,517 from the California State Library. The purpose of the Zip Books program is to provide patrons with speedy access to materials that they might not otherwise be able to get through the library, without the wait times often associated with new purchase or Interlibrary Loan (ILL) requests. It also adds a patron driven collection development approach to the library's usual process, resulting in a collection that more closely matches the needs and wants of the community.



Children's Librarian, Ashley Arelanes



Storytime

### Library Activity January - December 2023



Door Count – 8,944



Public Computer Use – 1,198



New Library Card - 296



Items Added to Collection – 1,000



Program Participants – 2,153\*

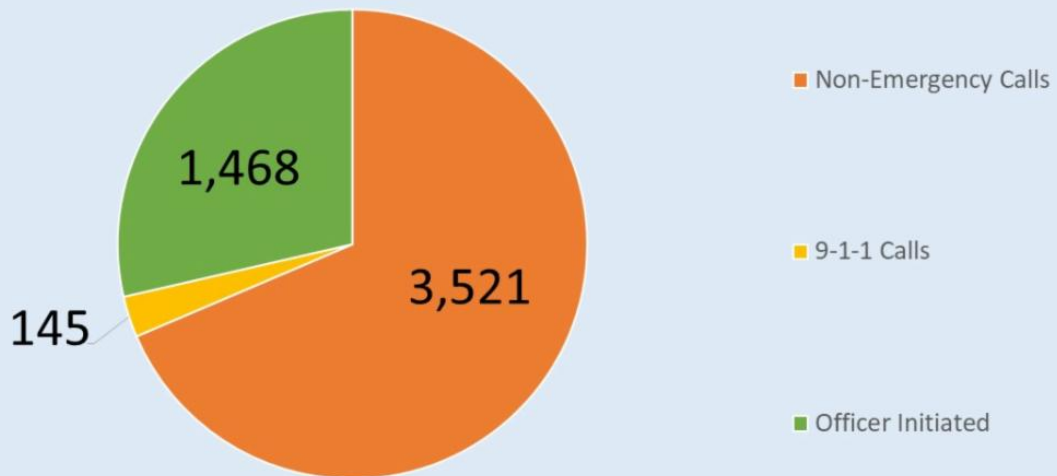
\*Includes 132 programs and 765 Storytime  
"To Go kits" distributed.

Circulation of Materials  
January - December 2023

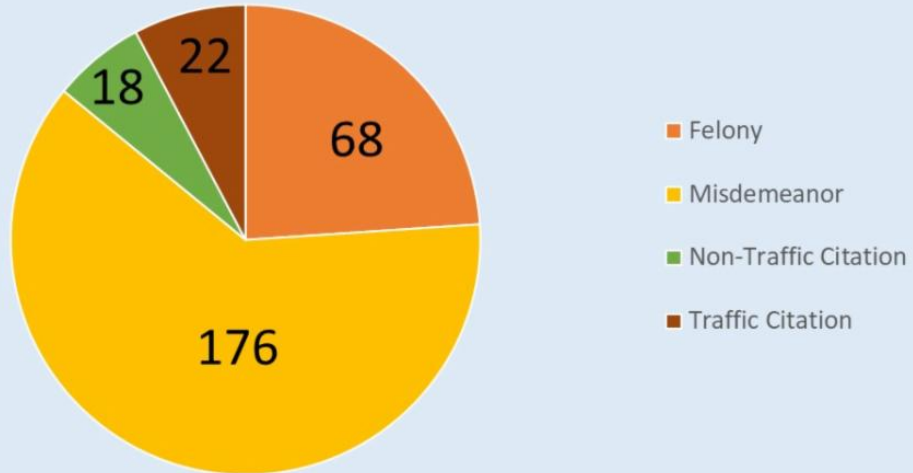


## SHERIFF - 2023 Highlights

Sheriff Department Activity – Calls for Service  
January - December 2023



Sheriff Department Activity – Arrests & Citations  
January - December 2023



## City Of Willows

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