



Unexpected veto kills bill

By JAY GENTILE

With one stroke of the pen, the bill that would have created a tax-levying marketing district in the Estes Valley is dead. Colorado Governor Bill Owens unexpectedly vetoed the bill last week after it passed in the state legislature in May.

The surprise move has left Town of Estes Park officials, who have worked on implementing this district for four years, frustrated and contemplating switching to a home rule municipality.

If Estes Park were to become a home rule town, it would not need the approval of Colorado's politicians on local matters like creating a marketing district. It would be governed by a charter written and approved by local citizens.

The marketing district bill would have allowed implementation of a voter-approved, 2 percent lodging tax on all overnight stays in the Estes Valley. The money would have been used strictly for marketing of the town.

That would have raised the total sales tax collected

by in-town accommodations to 9.7 percent, and to 5.7 percent for out-of-town accommodations.

The marketing district bill "allows the sales tax rate to be increased and thereby may nullify the progress we made in permanently lowering the sales tax rate during the 2000 legislative session," Owens wrote in a June 5 letter to the Colorado House of Representatives.

"Combined sales and use tax collections in Colorado rank 9th in the nation," Owens wrote. "Any further increases in the sales tax would not be desirable. An additional exemption to the sales tax rate structure only further complicates an already complex system of sales taxation in the state."

Two years ago, a similar bill was unexpectedly shot down in the Colorado House of Representatives.

"The governor did it to us this time. Two years ago it was the Republican party leadership," said Town Attorney Greg White. "I believe it was done for political reasons both times. I have a hard time

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Snow — in June!



Photo by Walt Hester

No rainbows today

Ann Gulshen and her 6-year-old son, Kyle, look over the snowy edge of Rainbow Curve, the highest open point on the east side of Trail Ridge Road, on Wednesday. "All we brought was shorts and T-shirts," said Gulshen, who was visiting from Missouri.

Adjustments in library renovations made

By LUCIE R. WILLSIE

The Estes Park Public Library board meeting at 6:30 p.m., Monday, June 11, covered several topics, notably the progress and changes of the new library renovations project currently underway.

Dennis McHenry, reporting from the renovations committee, reported that "the city planners put the kibosh" on the second staircase as originally planned, he explained, "because it is more than half the diagonal dis-

tance of the area being built and that would bring (the steps) too close to the other stairs already there."

Now, however, the second stairway would have to be in the area of the current public typing room — which would have to be moved aside slightly — and which would be used as an emergency stairway, which Roger Thorp from Thorp Associates PC, current designers of the renovations, had built as an alternative in the originally designed library.

This turns out to be a type of blessing in disguise on two counts. One, because now the library can use this additional space that had been assigned for the second staircase. And, two, there might be some extra money available, which could be used to buy new carpeting.

"I'm feeling very, very good about that," McHenry said. "... It's working out as a better plan."

"We're (also) right on track for (regular) expenditures and income," said Ed Volz, library director. "The news is that there is no news (here)." But a big "shot in the arm" financially is expected in July when additional tax money should roll in, said Stephen Little, library board

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10TH-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

The Estes Park Public Library invites the community to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the opening of the cur-

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Grant to help Estes Park residents with housing costs

By JAY GENTILE

For those who don't make enough money to buy a home in Estes Park, help has arrived in the form of a \$475,000 grant from the U.S. government that was secured by the Estes Park Housing Authority (EPHA) earlier this year.

Now the time has come to start taking applications. The amount of money that is available should be enough to help ten or fewer home-buyers, said Housing Manager Jean Michaelson.

Applications must be received by the EPHA by July 2.

To help get the word out, the EPHA will be hosting a home ownership forum next Tuesday, June 19, from 9 to 10:30 a.m. in Room 203 of the Municipal Building, 170 MacGregor Ave.

At the forum, Robert Miller of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Department of Rural Housing Development — the agency that gave the grant — will explain the details of the grant to those in attendance.

The event is open to the public. Also at the forum,

two other speakers from Larimer County will explain two other home-ownership assistance programs currently employed by the Loveland Housing Authority.

The \$475,000 Rural Assistance Grant funds are available to buyers of owner-occupied residences that cost less than \$162,500 in the Park R-3 School District.

Successful applicants must also fall within certain income level guidelines set by Larimer County. The \$475,000 grant will be administered through two programs.

In the first program, the applicant must earn less than 50 percent of the county's average median income. They must earn between 50 and 80 percent of that average income level for eligibility with the second program.

That means under program one, a family of one must make less than \$20,350, \$23,300 for a family of two, \$26,200 for a family of three, \$29,100 for a family of four, and \$31,450 for a family of five.

Under program two, a family of one must make

less than \$32,600, \$37,250 for a family of two, \$41,900 for a family of three, \$46,550 for a family of four, and \$50,300 for a family of five.

"This is a beginning step for us to be able to provide some type of assistance in dealing with the home ownership problem in Estes Park," said Michaelson. "There will be others in the future."

Rental assistance

Switching over to rental assistance, the EPHA still has three units left to rent in its 10-unit affordable housing complex at 157 Cleave St. All units are one-bedroom apartments.

The EPHA was able to buy this property after securing a \$100,000 grant from the Colorado Division of Housing at the start of this year.

Extensive rehabilitation work on the units has been completed under budget. The EPHA spent \$42,600 on the rehab work.

With \$64,800 budgeted, that leaves the EPHA with \$22,200 left. Half of this money will be placed into

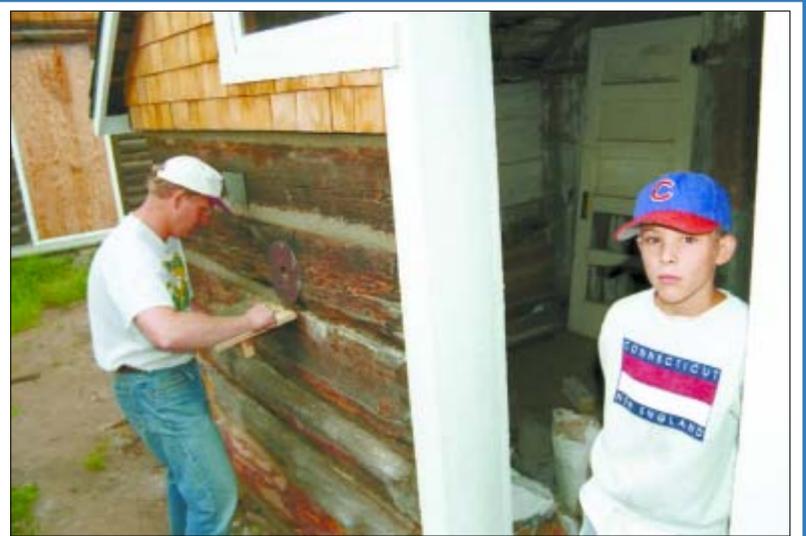


Photo by Walt Hester

Peering through time

James Lindberg stands in the doorway of one of the many historic structures being restored at the McGraw Ranch on Saturday. Jim Lindberg, James' father, applies material between logs of the structure. The senior Lindberg is a member of the National Trust that has contributed \$800,000 to the project.

the EPHA's operating reserve, the other half will be devoted to future maintenance of the units.

The remaining units will rent for \$525 each, including utilities. Contact Ponderosa Team Realty at 586-6500 for more information.

Residents have been moving in since March.

Also on the rental assistance front, the EPHA will be contacting the 11 people

who are on the waiting list for Section 8 rental assistance vouchers.

The EPHA secured 21 vouchers from the Colorado Division of Housing late last year. The EPHA is currently helping 17 people pay rent on their properties. There are four vouchers remaining.

Of those who have been housed with the EPHA, nine have chosen to stay where they currently live

while eight moved into a new location.

Three of the 17 already housed were males, the rest females. Ten were families, five were disabled and three were elderly.

No one has complained that the selection process was unfair.

"To date, we have not had one grievance filed," said Michaelson. "It's not

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Library renovations: Board will discuss Children's Interest Protection Act

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vice president.

Additional activity

- The board voted to discuss the issue of filtering in relation to the Children's Interest Protection Act (CIPA) — a new FCC law — by July, 2002, as required by the act.

- Compact disc and video usage for the month of April was again at record rates compared to a year ago: 162.5 percent for CDs and 165.5 percent for videos.

- Volz requested four more PCs from the Bill Gates Foundation.

- Al Howard has worked on an additional redesign of the library's Web site. Volz recommends checking it out again for those who haven't seen it in a while.

- A letter of thanks went out to the Friends of the Library for again funding the pamphlet for the Children's Summer Reading Program.

- Membership in the Friends of the Library is dramatically down and another mailing is planned to help build membership.

- Jim Pickering, author of "This Blue

Library open house: Continued from page 1

rent library building from 5 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, June 23, in the Hondius Room.

Historical photographs, a video of the construction of the library, a Power Point demonstration of the library's new Web site will be featured, along with wine, cheese and non-alcoholic beverages. Plans for the library's second story addition will also be on display.

And, although the library doors will be open for this event, the circulation, reference and Internet services will not be available.

Hollow," will speak at the library at 1 p.m. on Saturday, July 28, and is free and open to the public.

- The next library book sale is coming

up on Friday, Aug. 3, for members of the Friends of the Library, and on Saturday, Aug. 4, for the public, at the Conference Center.

- The transfer from the current CARL library computer system to the new The Library Corporation is progressing on schedule. The library board is still waiting on TLC to finish putting their next part of the project together.

The only concern with this project currently is possible additional expenses to make sure the computer firewall protection is adequate.

Tax bill: No contact prior to veto

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reconciling what the governor said in his letter with reality."

Both White and Town Administrator Rich Widmer said there was absolutely no contact between Owens or any member of his staff with the Town prior to the surprise veto decision.

White and Trustee Jeff Barker testified before various Congressional committees on several occasions as legislators considered and eventually passed the bill this year. "Throughout this whole process, nobody has said this is a bad idea," said White.

Widmer said he expected Owens or a member of his staff to contact the Town and talk about what was wrong with the bill before deciding to veto it. But since no one had raised any issues or made any contact, Town staff "had no reason to believe the governor would not sign this" — as White said last month.

"The governor gave his reasons" for the veto, said Widmer. "We don't agree with his reasons. We don't think his reasons are correct. I don't think the governor's staff understood the legislation. We are preparing a letter to the governor that would explain why we are not happy with his decision."

Now what?

One way to get around future disappointments like this is to switch from a statutory community ruled by state laws, as Estes Park currently is, to a home rule community — which would allow the citizens be governed under laws that they write into their own charter and requiring voter approval.

"To my knowledge, every resort community in Colorado is a home rule

community except Estes Park," said Widmer. White said Estes Park is probably one of the biggest towns in Colorado that isn't home rule.

According to literature from the Colorado Municipal League, 74 Colorado communities — representing approximately 90 percent of the state population — are home rule. No community in the state has ever decided to go back to being a statutory city.

That includes places like Denver, Colorado Springs, Boulder, Fort Collins, Loveland, Longmont, and Vail — which recently created a marketing district due to its status as a home rule town.

"So now we're in a bad competitive position," said Widmer.

Town officials were hoping that the lodging tax — which would have added about \$600,000 to the \$750,000 the Town spends each year for marketing — would help Estes Park compete with places like Vail, which spends \$20 million on annual marketing.

To create a home rule community, a group of citizens would be elected to write a charter, which would cut and paste existing town rules that drafters would like to keep the same, while adding certain powers that the community has deemed desired.

For example, the town of Mountain Village near Telluride recently went to home rule to give part-time residents voting rights.

"We explored the possibility of home ruling in the past but put it aside because there wasn't a pressing issue that would necessitate become home rule," Widmer said. "This may be the pressing issue. That's for (the Town Board) to decide."

Widmer said becoming home rule is "typically not

something city councils do by themselves in a vacuum. Typically it's a response to the community."

The caution with becoming home rule is making sure that drafters don't "write something weird" into the charter. White said examples could be laws that force the Town to bid out all projects or not allow major development without a vote.

Tangential issues from special interest groups have gotten tangled up in charters in the past. White said in Boulder, the charter barred officials from going into executive sessions, which he said has hindered the government's negotiating capacities.

"You generally become more flexible," Widmer said of home rule. "You have the powers your local community wants you to have in response to your local community. You take your politics into your own hands."

White said home rule could limit the power of the Town, but not necessarily. He said the key is putting things into the charter that "everyone would agree is a good idea without special interest groups putting in a provision you don't like."

Other ideas for how to implement a marketing tax include approaching Larimer County with a county-wide lodging tax, which Widmer called "a lot of political work," or going back to the legislature.

"We've invested a lot of time, money, effort and brain damage the last three to four years" under the Capitol dome, Widmer said. "Unless we have assurances from the governor that he'll give some different response, we're wasting our time" approaching the legislature again, said Mayor John Baudek.

Puppet show to be performed at library Wednesday

To kick off the Estes Park Public Library's summer reading program performance series at 1 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20, puppeteer Patti Smithsonian will put on her presentation of "Jack and the Beans Talk!"

Taking place inside of a 6-foot milk carton, Jack is having a run of bad luck. Through some misadventures, however, Jack realizes exactly how wondrous his life is.

But the story would not be complete without a singing cow, a very good fairy, a silly giant and his wife, a talent agent from New York, and, of course, a Technicolor beanstalk. Smithsonian has been

thrilling kids — and parents alike — with her performances for the past 25 years. Her solo performances using puppets and masks have toured throughout the United States. She has also taught puppetry throughout Colorado.

For more information on this program or any of the other summer reading programs at the library, call Kerry Aiken at (970) 586-8116.



Photo courtesy of Children's Summer Reading Program

Patti Smithsonian will present her puppet show "Jack and the Beans Talk!" at 1 p.m., Wednesday, June 20, at the Estes Park Public Library.

EPHA: Preference given to EP residents

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work.

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Three of the 17 already housed were males, the rest females. Ten were families, five were disabled and three were elderly.

No one has complained that the selection process was unfair.

"To date, we have not had one grievance filed," said Michaelson. "It's not unfair and people don't deem it to be unfair," said EPHA Board Chair Sue Doyle.

Selection criteria gives preference to

those who work in Estes Park, those who live in Estes Park, the elderly, and those who enroll in a self-sufficiency program.

Budget reorganization

At a June 12 study session with the Estes Park Town Board, the EPHA was given a block grant and more power to directly administer its own funds instead of having to go through the Town Board on financial issues.

The Town Board also agreed to chip in money to pay for half of 25 sewer taps and half of 25 water taps for future housing maintained by the EPHA. That agreement saved the EPHA about \$70,000.

In total, \$241,358 has been earmarked for the EPHA within the Town of Estes Park's 2001 budget. That figure includes the tap fee matches, leaving \$170,733 in actual money for the EPHA — up from \$150,000 last year.

Also, the EPHA won't have to return any unused funds to the Town Board at the end of the budget year. It will be able to carry over those funds into the next year.

"We'll have a little more control," said Doyle, adding that the EPHA was pleased with the level of Town Board support. "We've got good things ahead of us."

The EPHA Board then broke into executive session to discuss property acquisition. So far, 15 sites have been reviewed and inspected for potential acquisition.