



Grant keeps apartment complex 'affordable'

By JAY GENTILE

Thanks to the work of the Estes Park Housing Authority (EPHA), the 10-unit apartment complex on 157 Cleave St. will remain affordable for many years to come.

The EPHA was successful in achieving a \$100,000 grant from the Colorado Division of Housing, which it put towards the purchase of the property.

The EPHA agreed to pay \$375,000 for the structure, with the understanding that the EPHA would complete an additional \$30,000 to \$40,000 worth of rehabilitation work.

Most of the work will involve plumbing

improvements with some electrical work as well. Currently two of the units are vacant because they have no water pressure.

After closing on the property in February, the remodeling work will be initiated and the EPHA hopes to move people in by late spring or early summer.

"The rents will be equal or slightly below the current levels," said EPHA Board member Sam Betters.

The eight one-bedroom units will go for \$460, the one two-bedroom for \$500 and the one efficiency for \$300. All prices include utilities.

One unit will be targeted for people who make less than 30 percent of the Larimer Coun-

ty median income. This is for a family that makes less than \$11,800 a year.

Three units will be for people who make 60 percent of the median income, while the rest will be for people who make 50 percent of the median income — \$22,500 for a family of two and \$28,150 for a family of four.

Currently three of the units are vacant. Existing tenants have the option of staying or moving.

"We won't be displacing anyone," Betters said. He added that it would cost too much to relocate anyone who is displaced, therefore "we will avoid displacement in any program that we do whenever that's possible."

The move to buy the property was part of the EPHA goal of retention.

"Right now the rents are pretty affordable," EPHA Housing Manager Jean Michaelson said. "We saw this as an opportunity to maintain affordable housing."

Michaelson said the Cleave Street property will remain affordable "for as long as we own the property."

Betters said the Colorado Division of Housing was impressed with the level of commitment towards affordable housing on the part of the Estes Park Town Board, which will be splitting

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In search of compassion

Many Hispanics face discrimination and abuse as they try to make their home in Estes Park and Colorado

Part two of a two-part series. Part one appeared in Wednesday's Trail-Gazette. Copies are still available at the T-G office.

By JAY GENTILE

Consider the following recent examples of "holiday cheer" in Estes Park:

At the end of November, a Hispanic employee of a local construction company was informed that his employer didn't have enough money to pay him for the full month.

He'd make it up to him in December, the employer said. As December came to a close, the worker was told he wouldn't get that month's salary either.

Due to his being stiffed for the past two months, the worker was unable to pay his rent.

The worker's landlord, who also happened to be his employer, evicted the worker.

In another holiday incident, seven Hispanics who were living in a local two-bedroom apartment were informed they would be evicted.

They were to be out by Christmas Eve, the landlord said.

Luckily in this case, the family's mother had been on the maternity assistance program with the Larimer County Public Health Department. So she at least knew of a place to go and ask for help.

The mother approached nurse Barb Wahl and told her the situation. With Wahl's help and a stroke of luck, the family was able to find an opening in a low-income housing complex.

The man in the first case was not so lucky. Like most Hispanics here, he didn't know where to go for help — or was afraid to seek it out due to fear of deportation.

According to interviews with local community leaders, many of Estes Park's Hispanics are illegal immigrants who fear formal institutions and keep on the fringe of society.

These institutions take different stances on the issue of illegal immigrants.

"If we come across an undocumented alien, we'll refer the information to the INS,"

Assistant Town Administrator Randy Repola said.

The last INS sweep occurred in 1993 or 1994, Repola said, when seven or eight people were taken away by the INS.

Last summer, however, the INS came to Estes Park with a different goal in mind: to make it easier for Hispanics to extend their work visas by allowing them to do so in town.

And that is the route that the Town of Estes Park prefers to take in dealing with the situation, Repola said.

"There's not been any indication from anyone in the community that there's a problem," Repola said. "We prefer to facilitate things for people in a legal manner rather than try to take people away."

At the Jan. 3 meeting of the Estes Valley Community Services Coalition (EVCSC), Repola told the Coalition that the Town of Estes Park may even be willing to provide funding for the hiring of a bilingual services coordinator, which is one of the EVCSC's top priorities in its quest to assimilate the Hispanic population into the community.

"I don't think it'd be inappropriate to ask," Repola said. "This year's budget has already been set, but it doesn't hurt to have this in front of them so they can review it (when they look at next year's budget) in August."

No worries

Other service organizations in the community take a more relaxed stance towards the topic of illegal immigrants.

"According to federal law, medical treatment is not based and cannot be based on their INS status," said Ann Widmer, Business Manager at Salud Clinic, "so that is never an issue."

Salud provides medical treatment like physicals, family planning, immunizations and administration for dental care — all at a discounted price for people who don't make much money.

Widmer said a good number of Salud's clients are Hispanic, and that the number of His-

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For peace



Photo by Walt Hester

Second-graders from Anne Leija's class at Park Elementary School hold signs carried in Thursday's "Peace March." Every class at the elementary school took part in the march, which amounted to about 500 students. The march was to honor the birthday of slain civil rights leader Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the 1965 Peace March from Selma, Ala., to Montgomery, the state's capitol. Read more about Dr. King and Monday's holiday in today's Trail Plus. Information about transportation to the march planned in Fort Collins on Monday can be found on the Community Insight page 6.

EPPD in search of new chief

Estes Park streets receive a 'B' on report card

By JAY GENTILE

The Estes Park Police Department is in the hunt for a new police chief. The position of police chief was combined with the job of assistant town administrator in 1999, a new position that is currently held by Randy Repola.

"In 1999, I was then serving full-time as the police chief," Repola told the Estes Park Town Board at its Jan. 9 meeting. "I was offered to be assistant town administrator. Given my background, we combined some duties. Up to this point, that has worked okay."

"In the 2001-2002 budget, we planned for the adding of a full-time police chief, given the demands of that position and the (police) department."

"I talked with (Town Administrator) Rich (Widmer) and we decided that my 10 to 15 percent of my time going to the police department was no longer adequate."

The Board agreed to contract the services of Rainguet-Morrison Associates, who will perform an executive search for a new chief.

Their \$6,000 fee includes recruitment, candidate assessment, final recommendations, notifications, background checks and employee interviews. Additional expenses, possibly totaling a few thousand dollars, for bringing candidates to town for interviews are anticipated.

Repola said a candidate from Colorado

would lower those expenses, and said this person would have an easier time getting settled here because this chief would not have to undergo Colorado certification, which he described as odd and unnecessarily difficult.

Rainguet-Morrison was chosen from a slate of three finalists because they offered the lowest cost and have a reputation of quality, thorough work.

In addition, Fred Rainguet is the former police chief of Fort Collins and lives in Al-lenspark.

"We utilized Rainguet-Morrison in the selection process for lieutenant," Repola said. "They're very thorough. They take a lot of time beforehand to get a feel for whatever you determine the qualities of the candidate should be."

From a slate of finalists, the Town Board will make the final selection of a new chief. Repola said that by the first part of May, a new chief should be selected.

The selection process is open to internal candidates as well.

Streets get a "B" average

The state of Estes Park's streets received 83 out of 100 points awarded by the Estes Park Public Works Department, which gave a presentation on the state of the streets Tuesday night.

Statistics and digital photos of 337 different sections of streets are kept in a database that Greg Sievers, an engineer with the Town of Estes Park, showed to the Board.

The analysis of street conditions revealed that about 3 million square feet of

road is in very good condition, 2 million square feet are in excellent condition, 1 million are in good condition and another 1 million are in need of repair.

"The vast majority of streets in Estes Park are in very good or excellent condition," Sievers said. "Many of our streets should have a 15 to 20 year life expectancy."

No ticket to ride

The City of Loveland Transit (COLT) bus system that had been driving people to and from Loveland and Estes Park has been discontinued due to lack of ridership.

In the seven months that the service was in operation — from May to December of 2000 — a total of 161 people rode the bus, an average of 23 people per month.

"Due to the low utilization of this service, COLT recommended, and I approved, ceasing this service at the end of December 2000," Town Administrator Rich Widmer wrote in a staff memo. "I believe it was worth trying, but the numbers do not justify continuation."

The pilot transportation program cost the Town \$4,000, or \$25 per passenger.

A new service called Dial-A-Ride seems to be getting better ridership, Widmer said. The mini-buses, with the words "Special Transit" written on the side, field calls and then take people around various locations in Estes Park during the three days a week that the buses operate.

"That seems to be getting pretty good ridership," Widmer said. "That one is certainly worth supporting."

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Hispanics: INS helping immigrants complete forms

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rising in the past few years.

"Our providers are competent (in Spanish)," Widmer said, "and we do have a totally bilingual counselor."

At Crossroads Ministry, at least 100 of the 400 families that receive emergency assistance are Hispanic, said Crossroads Director Father Rex Rorex.

But at this point, Crossroads can only help Hispanics in small ways like providing food or gas money or as it did in one case, letting people temporarily store their belongings there after they get evicted.

"Since the summer of 1998, the Mexican population here has burgeoned enormously," Rorex said.

That statement jives with a statement from local Hispanic Olga Rojas, who said "in the last three years is when I've seen more people.

"When one family moves here, they'll know another family in Longmont whose struggling to find a job and they'll recommend here," Rojas said.

She said she moved here after her brother visited the area from California. "He told us about this town and that's how we ended up here," she said. "We came here to work."

She said most Hispanics work "in the motel areas and restaurants, cleaning and all that stuff.

"Most are just here for the summer," she said. "In the winter I don't see many people. They'll leave (back to Mexico) in the winter. They have to pull their kids out of school."

And the stories of employer discrimination are true, Rojas said.

"I've been in a couple of places where my bosses will cheat me out of my paycheck," she said. "What helps me all the time is I speak English. I can only imagine what they do to people who don't speak English at all."

She said that while abuses do occur in Estes Park, they are not as frequent as other places like San Bernadino, Calif., where Rojas lived for three years in between Mexico and Estes Park.

"I think most of the people in Colorado are very nice," she said. "People are so nice and understandable about every-

thing. They understand that people like us need help."

She said, however, that many Hispanics mistrust formal institutions and the police, who often write tickets to Hispanics driving without driver's licenses or insurance.

This very thing happened to Rojas' 17-year-old brother. "He got arrested and he didn't know why because he didn't speak English," she said. "They get horrified of that. It was the last thing we needed."

Deputy Police Chief Gregg Filsinger said the Estes Park Police Department does not keep statistics on how many Hispanics are involved in crimes or written tickets because it is not involved in racial profiling.

"We're simply responding to the issues," he said. "People of all ethnic backgrounds to some degree may or may not be involved."

While the police do have people that speak Spanish, the need for translators is apparent in many other facets of the community.

For example, Rojas gets "a lot of calls" from local pharmacies asking her to translate, which she does for free. But "it's a lot of work," she added.

"If I'm here I'm glad to do it," she said, "but what if I'm not here when people need medicine? They should hire someone whose bilingual. It's only fair if they're paying for the medicine."

Barb Wahl of the Larimer County Public Health Department has also noticed the recent explosion in the Hispanic population in Estes Park.

"I have 10 or 11 Hispanic clients in the maternity program, which is about half my clients," she said. "Three years ago, I didn't have anyone who spoke Spanish."

And her department, like Salud and Crossroads, does not base service on INS status. "The Health Department does not interface with immigration," she said. "I tell people that straight out."

Finding housing is another issue that Hispanics deal with. Because the housing costs here are "just ridiculous," Rojas said many families are forced to cram extended family members into small spaces, invoking the

ire of many landlords.

"If I have family that doesn't have a place to live I'll take them in," said Rojas, who has 15 siblings, two who work in Estes during summer. "I don't care if I'm totally full because I know the struggle to find housing."

Jean Michaelson, housing manager at the Estes Park Housing Authority, said there has been some Hispanic interest in rental assistance vouchers, but it is not yet known if any Hispanics have been awarded the vouchers.

Despite the myriad of problems Mexican immigrants encounter here, many are infused with the traditional hopes and dreams for a better way of life and are willing to stick it out for their children.

"I don't think I'll ever go back to Mexico," Rojas said. "My children are gonna have things that I never had when I was a little girl."

A recent census analysis conducted by the Denver Post reported that Colorado saw the highest increase of any state's foreign-born population over the past 10 years. Mexicans were the biggest population within that group.

With more Hispanics moving to Colorado and Estes Park, the issue of how best to serve this growing population will no doubt become a significant issue in Estes Park's near and long-term future.

"It's already something that really needs to be dealt with and it's going to become even more so," Rorex said. "Let's deal with it before it becomes a cancer that envelops that whole organism."

In a report on the subject drafted by Rorex, he urges more community contact with Hispanics and even some common community-wide events like an occasional mariachi concert in Bond Park or a Cinco de Mayo celebration with Mexican food.

"Our starting point is the basic premise that we are dealing with human beings who deserve to be treated with respect, consideration, compassion, and civility," Rorex wrote, "simply by virtue of the fact that they are human beings."

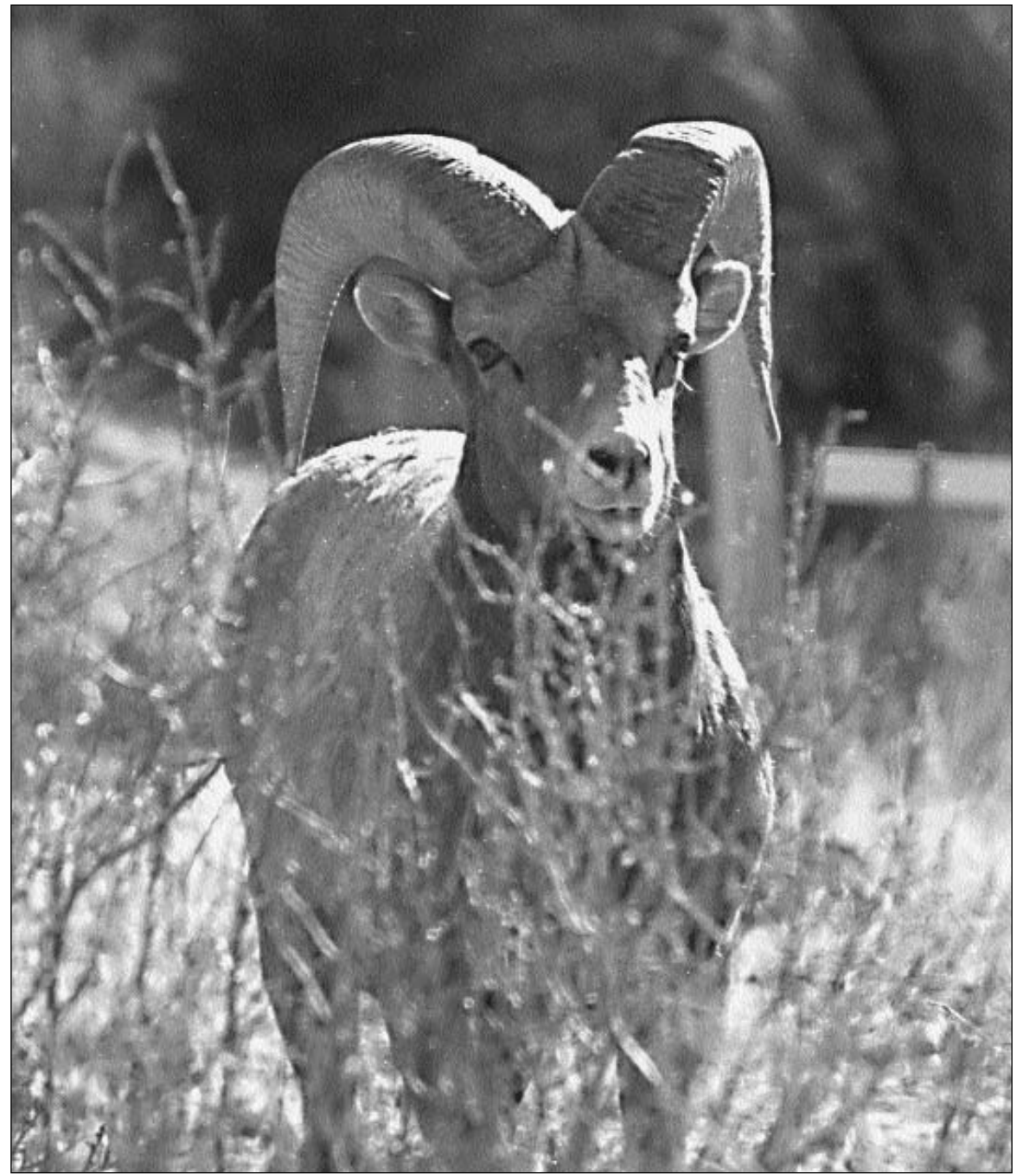


Photo by Walt Hester

Taking a break

A bighorn sheep takes a break from his morning meal north of Fall River Road.

Housing: New officers elected

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the remainder of the cost of 157 Cleave St. with other funding sources — some of them local.

To be put towards affordable housing, the Town of Estes Park has budgeted \$298,800 in 2001 and \$306,900 in 2002. "That's for land acquisition, reduced tap fees and administration of the housing authority," said Town Administrator Rich Widmer.

"This is super. This is a great beginning," said EPHA Chair Sue Doyle at the EPHA's Jan. 10 meeting. "There's a lot more on the horizon."

Other business

Bettors informed the EPHA Board that due to a change in federal regulations, elderly and disabled people now need to be given the same preferences as the top applicants under the EPHA's point preference system.

Top applicants are people who work in Estes Park. They are awarded ten points. Therefore people who are elderly and disabled will now receive ten points also.

The points go towards deciding who receives Section 8 rental assistance vouchers.

On that subject, Michaelson reported that several applicants have been awarded Section 8 certificates and have signed leases to pay rent on Estes Park properties with the help of the EPHA.

Under the rental assistance program, the tenant pays 30 percent of their income for rent with the housing authority paying the rest.

Michaelson added that nine people will likely

start receiving rental assistance in February, with the rest of the winners of the EPHA's 20 rental assistance vouchers moving in this March.

To help with securing affordable housing in the future, EPHA Board member Louise Olson drafted a template letter that will be sent to state and federal Congressmen and Congresswomen.

It gives statistics from the 1999 Forward Estes Park study, which concluded that 332 households are cost-burdened, 140 moderate income renters are interested in purchasing a home, 210 housing units are needed to accommodate workers for unfilled jobs, and 127 — 350 units in new growth are anticipated.

Added together, this means Estes Park needs between 809 and 1,032 housing units.

"Because of this, we ask you to use your influence in Congress/the State Legislature to direct funds to low and moderate income housing wherever and whenever possible," the draft letter says.

Bettors said he would add details like what specific programs the EPHA wants members of Congress to support.

At Wednesday's meeting the EPHA also elected new officers, which turned out to be the same ones as before: Sue Doyle will continue as chair, Karla Porter will continue as vice-chair, and Sam Bettors will keep the job of secretary/treasurer.

Town board: Jackson takes EPURA seat

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Other business

The Board approved the appointment of Steve Jackson to serve on the Estes Park Urban Renewal Authority. He is taking the place of Carl Henderson, who is retiring from the EPURA Board after 10 years of service.

Widmer said the resignation of Community Development Director Steve Stamey will take effect today, and Senior Planner Bob Joseph will

serve as Acting Community Development Director.

The Board approved combining one lot into two in Mountain Man subdivision, dividing one lot into two lots in Peak View subdivision, and a preliminary plat in Bristlecone subdivision.

A report on business licenses, which are paid annually and cost between \$150 and \$375, brought in \$221,125 in 2000, up from \$209,865 in 1999

and \$198,140 in 1998. The money goes towards advertising and marketing of the town.

Mayor John Baudek reminded residents that customer service cards entitled "Tell Me What You Think" are available at the Municipal Building and other places around town. They offer opportunities for anonymous people to give their opinions on how well Town of Estes Park employees are serving their public.

Public Agenda

Tuesday, Jan. 16

Estes Park Planning Commission noon, study session; 1:30 p.m., regular meeting; Municipal Building.
Estes Valley Recreation and Park District 7 p.m., 18-hole golf course.

Wednesday, Jan. 17

Estes Park Urban Renewal Authority 8 a.m., Municipal Building.
School Board 7 p.m., June Patten Administration Building.

Thursday, Jan. 18

Public Works Committee 3:30 p.m., Municipal Building.

Tuesday, Jan. 23

Hospital Board 7 p.m., Prospect Park Nursing Facility conference room.
Town Board 7 p.m., Municipal Building.
Upper Thompson Sanitation District 2 p.m., 2220 Mail Road.

Commissioners name Rennels chairwoman

The Larimer County Commissioners chose Kathay Rennels, (District 1), as the new Chair of the Board of Larimer County Commissioners.

Glenn W. Gibson, (District 3) was chosen the new Chair

Pro-Tem.

This was the first item of business by the newly sworn in commissioners on Tuesday.

Their next item of business was to organize their duties on the various organizations, com-

mittees and boards.

Biographies and photos of all the commissioners are available on the Larimer County Web site, the Virtual Court-house — www.larimer.org —, starting Jan. 10.