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Developer disappears

By MIKE WIGGINS
The Daily Sentinel

Monday, May 05, 2008

A Weld County developer who plans to build a subdivision some fear could threaten the Old Spanish Trail in Mesa County remains at large more than a month after he was indicted in a mortgage fraud case.

Authorities believe he has fled to Mexico.

The Weld County Sheriff's Department is working with the FBI to try to find and arrest 50-year-old Mark Strodman, Undersheriff Margie Martinez said Monday.

A grand jury indicted Strodman on March 24 on 11 counts of theft, 11 counts of forgery and one count of racketeering. An arrest warrant setting bail at \$100,000 was issued the same day.

Strodman and another man bought a group of parcels in Greeley in 2004 and received financing to build homes on the lots. Strodman has been accused of deceiving buyers into purchasing homes owned by his real estate company, JS Real Estate LLC, and deceiving lenders into loaning money for the project. Buyers' incomes, assets, rents, employments, bank records and outstanding loans were falsified, according to the indictment.



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The Weld County District Attorney's Office said the week Strodman was indicted that he had agreed to turn himself in.

Asked Monday whether the DA's office could seek to freeze Strodman's assets, DA spokeswoman Jennifer Finch replied, "As an office, we have several options. I can't elaborate at this point as to what they are."

Another company owned by Strodman, The Shores LLC, has purchased nearly 400 acres adjacent to the Old Spanish Trail on Orchard Mesa. The company has applied for annexation of 17 of those acres at 166 Edlun Road into the city of Grand Junction, with plans to build a 30- to 40-home subdivision.

The City Council is scheduled to consider the annexation on June 30. City Senior Planner Lori Bowers said the indictment against Strodman will not affect the city's handling of the annexation petition.

"It's proceeding as it normally would," she said.

But some neighbors who watched Strodman's Weld County case and researched property records around the Old Spanish Trail project site say city planners should slow down. They plan to ask that city officials postpone any annexation or zoning application.

"It appears he feels he has lots of time," Orchard Mesa resident Vicki Felmlee said of Strodman. "He is in no hurry to return and face his legal obligations. It would appear, therefore, that nobody with the city of Grand Junction should feel that they need to be in a hurry about making a decision about this property."

Felmlee is president of Orchard Mesa Neighbors in Action, a group that formed, in part, to oppose Strodman's project. The group has discovered a perpetual easement that the Bureau of Land Management owns near the trailhead, which is adjacent to Strodman's 17 acres. Those 17 acres, in turn, are adjacent to another 360 acres owned by Strodman and bisected by the Old Spanish Trail.

The BLM's ownership of the easement has raised eyebrows about how Strodman would provide access his development.

"Now we have even more questions," Felmlee said, referring to Strodman's fugitive status, "and we feel like the city of Grand Junction should have questions, too."

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E-mail Mike Wiggins at mwiggins@gjds.com.

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By Joyce

May 6, 2008 12:13 PM | [Link to this](#)

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It is inconceivable and unconscionable that the city council would consider any dealings with this man at all. If he is the one applying for annexation or re-zoning, than it should be tabled indefinitely. Mark Strodtman is not going to miraculously become an honest, trustworthy developer after a 'vacation' in Mexico. He has been charged with forgery, theft and racketeering! Where there is smoke there is undoubtedly fire. Please City Council reconsider your decision to go forward with this madness!

By Joseph Hayes

May 6, 2008 7:49 AM | [Link to this](#)

If a man were indicted by a grand jury for 23 counts of rape, would you let him date your daughter? City Council needs to wake up to this issue and put a stop to any dealings with Mark Strodtman until a court decides his guilt or innocence. Enabling and facilitating a fugitive from justice is not just wrong and stupid, but potentially has serious legal and political consequences for the City of Grand Junction. Annexation of the Strodtman acreage in Orchard Mesa would increase the value of that land and therefore put money in Strodtman's pockets. Aiding and abetting a fugitive is not something City Council ought to be involved in.

By Vicki

May 6, 2008 6:58 AM | [Link to this](#)

Thanks so much, Connie, for the kind words. Fortunately, OMNIA - Orchard Mesa Neighbors in Action - has dozens of members, all passionate not only about the Trails but also the character of Orchard Mesa. Please feel free to visit our web site, omnighbors.com, the site is updated regularly and also has a message board.

By Connie Cass

May 6, 2008 5:19 AM | [Link to this](#)

Keep up the efforts Vicki- city government loves to change the character of OM and even erase community developed plans such as allowing the skate park at Eagle Rim after the community designed volley ball and picnic areas for there, by-passing Intermountain Events Center for the latest developer to over congest the river ecosystem and further decimate the peacefulness of the and river trail and dumping original community planned plans for Las Colonias to a development orientation rather than a wild life education and recreation corridor.

The Spanish Trail is a treasure and the desert ecosystem that surrounds it is fragile as well as beautiful to those of us who have enjoyed the efforts of those who marked and cared for the trail and preserving the history that is the Western Slope's heritage.

I now live on the Erie Canal but my years on OM remain some of my most treasured memories and watching the Spanish Trail desert change across the seasons is definitely near the top of those memories. It is nice to know you continue to watch over the Spanish Trail!

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