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Annexation on the run



Tuesday, May 06, 2008

Once the Grand Junction annexation process has started, it doesn't screech to a halt easily. Just ask Mark Strodman — if you can find him.

If you do know where he is, authorities in Weld County would like your assistance. Strodman was indicted there in March on 23 criminal counts that included theft, forgery and racketeering. All were related to housing developments he owned there.

Although he pledged to turn himself in after the indictments were handed down, Strodman has since disappeared. Law enforcement officials believe he is in Mexico.

Strodman is also the owner of The Shores LLC, a company that has purchased nearly 400 acres on Orchard Mesa. On 17 of those acres, the company plans to build a subdivision of 30 to 40 homes, and it has applied to Grand Junction to have that land annexed.

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A hearing before the City Council is set for June 30, and officials with the city planning department said Strodman's indictment won't affect the city's handling of the annexation petition.

Of course not. Why should criminal indictments halt the annexation process? Why should allegations that Strodman and a partner falsified documents and deceived both home buyers and lenders in Weld County to make a development in that county succeed be of any interest to those who must make a decision on his development plans in Grand Junction?

And being an alleged fugitive from justice? What's that got to do with anything?

Orchard Mesa residents concerned about Strodman's development proposal are worried about how it may affect access to a portion of the Old Spanish Trail, and that is a legitimate worry. But the issue now isn't about the trail.

Scores of developers work with the city of Grand Junction each year, seeking to get housing or commercial projects approved. Many are successful, but some get rejected for a variety of reasons.

Those who work diligently to go through the city process would have good reason to wonder why they bothered if Strodman proves someone can successfully negotiate the first step of the development process while allegedly on the lam in Mexico.

The city has no obligation to move Strodman's project forward while the criminal investigation of him is ongoing. The City Council should reject the annexation of his property when it comes up next month.

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