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Developer accused of swindling homebuyers



By MIKE WIGGINS
The Daily Sentinel

Saturday, March 29, 2008

The man looking to build a subdivision neighbors fear could threaten the Old Spanish Trail is in legal hot water, a position that could leave his project in limbo.

Mark Strodman was indicted last week by a Weld County grand jury in a mortgage fraud case that caused homeowners to go into foreclosure.

According to the indictment, Strodman and another man, Dean Juhl, who was indicted for mortgage fraud last year, bought a group of land parcels in Greeley in 2004 and received financing to build homes on the lots. Strodman then deceived buyers to purchase homes owned by his real estate company, JS Real Estate LLC, and lenders to buy loans for the land. Buyer's incomes, assets, rents, employments, bank records and outstanding loans were falsified, the indictment said.

Strodman is charged under the Colorado Organized Crime Contract Act with 11 counts of theft, 11 counts of forgery and one count of racketeering. He faces up to 48 years in prison if convicted.

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The Weld County District Attorney's Office said in a news release last week that Strodman had agreed to turn himself in. As of Friday, however, Strodman had not turned himself in or been arrested, DA spokeswoman Jennifer Finch said.

Strodman is being sued by many of the same homeowners listed as victims in the indictment. Homeowners allege Strodman deceived them into buying homes they couldn't afford by forging loan documents, then left them filing for foreclosure or attempting to sell their houses back to the bank when they discovered they couldn't refinance their loans as promised.

Records with the Secretary of State's Office show Strodman has owned at least 14 businesses in Colorado since 2000, half of which the state dissolved because Strodman failed to file an annual report or maintain a registered agent, according to secretary of state spokesman Rich Coolidge.

Coolidge said business owners are given a year to file an annual report or notify the state of who their business agent is. If they don't maintain those records for another two months, their business is dissolved, he said.

Two of Strodman's other businesses are noncompliant, two are in good standing, one was voluntarily dissolved, one "expired" and one "exists," according to state records.

Coolidge said it's not unusual for someone to have so many businesses registered with the state.

"A lot of people will register an LLC because of the ease and then forget about it," he said.

He said there are other cases of businesses being dissolved by the state, but he did not know how many.

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