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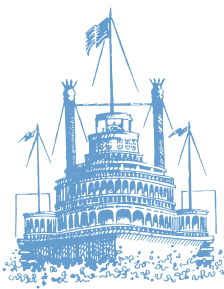
THURSDAY

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STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, COLORADO

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ROUTT COUNTY'S DAILY NEWSPAPER

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INSIDE: Longtime director, Pat Carney, to step down at Old Town Hot Springs in April • page 17

City Council members weigh in on PR policy

Scott Franz
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Steamboat Springs City Council members have different views on the city's controversial new PR tactic of having a public relations manager manufacture quotes for city leaders in news releases.

While most of the council members say they won't let quotes be written for them, some supported the practice.

"I don't have such a problem with it," Councilman Tony Connell said. "I think a professional person is much clearer than I am. I'm just not that articulate. I appreciate having a script and answers scripted for me."

Connell, who plans to resign next month because of increased demands at work, encouraged his fellow elected officials to utilize the city's new PR manager for help with their future communications to the public.

Councilwoman Robin Crossan shared Connell's position.

"You know what you're thinking, but it's hard sometimes to write that down and get that point across," she said. "I think it's a fair thing to be able to do" to consult with a PR professional or other council members.

But several other council members said they won't let the new communications position help them produce more polished quotes in city news releases.

Councilwoman Heather Sloop gave an impassioned speech against the practice.

"Our words are our words, and if you mince them, what are they? They aren't ours," Sloop said. "Our community relations manager's job is to give that transparency and be open and honest about what the city is doing,

See **Quotes**, page 3



MATT STENSLAND/STAFF

An aerial photo from a Classic Air Medical helicopter shows the path of an avalanche that injured a Routt County Search and Rescue volunteer during a Jan. 12 mission on Buffalo Mountain. The Search and Rescue team came in through a draw on the right side before traversing the steep slope and triggering an avalanche.

Surviving the slide

Rescuer Jay Bowman caught in avalanche Jan. 12

Matt Stensland
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Routt County Search and Rescue member Jay Bowman has a long plate with 13 screws holding his shattered arm together, some broken bones in his leg and five staples in the back of his head to remind him of the avalanche that nearly took his life Jan. 12 on Buffalo Mountain.

"It's not my first rodeo with rehab," the 54-year-old Steamboat resident said while telling the story of how the volunteer rescuer himself needed to be rescued during a mission about save an unprepared skier and snowboarder from Minnesota who had gotten lost in the backcountry.



Become fully immersed by watching a 360° Video with this story at SteamboatToday.com.

Only four years ago, the same men had called Search and Rescue because they had made the same mistake in the Fish Creek Canyon.

"So, that's very frustrating for us," Bowman said.

This time, the lost men called 911 at about 3:45 p.m.

Bowman was shuttled by snowmobile to the top of Buffalo Mountain, along with rescuers Harry Sandler, Dan Gilchrist and Tyler Gilman. All are expert backcountry skiers.

"We had their GPS point, so we knew where they were, but we thought the easiest way was to track them," Bowman said.

When they reached the side of the steep slope going into the canyon, Gilchrist dug a pit to test the stability of the snow.

"We got some immediate red flags from the pit," Bowman said. "We knew at that point the snow was unstable. But also at that point we were still on the tracks."

One at a time, the rescuers skied across the tracks the lost men had left.

"Basically, we had three sets of eyes on the one person that was in motion," Bowman said.

He was the third to cross when the

See **Avalanche**, page 2

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Steamboat Sotheby's INTERNATIONAL REALTY

City addresses snow removal

Scott Franz
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

Steamboat Springs City Manager Gary Suiter is attributing a recent flurry of snow-removal complaints in the city to a combination of frequent, heavy snowfall and small private contractors not following plowing rules.

"Most of the problem comes from private contractors pushing snow into the public right of way or snow storage that is reserved for us," Suiter said. "They can just pile it up or push it over a berm, and then our plows catch it."

Some of the complaints stem from that snow piling up on someone else's property or on city streets.

Suiter recently took a tour of snowplowing operations with Streets Superintendent David Van Winkle

The city manager said some of the snow woes can also be attributed to some residents parking their cars where a windrow of snow would normally be deposited.

On a second pass, a plow then pushes that built-up snow into a neighbor's driveway.

"It's just neighbors being inconsiderate of one another," Suiter said.

He compared the situation to someone polluting a river and having the trash show up on someone else's property downstream.

"It's the same thing with the snow," he said.

Suiter said his takeaway from the tour is that the city can do a better job of educating residents about plowing etiquette.

He said he would like the city to focus more on education rather than beef up its enforcement of snowplow rules by issuing tickets.

The city is responsible for clear-

ing 152 miles of streets, 6 miles of alleys, 37 parking lots and 105 cul-de-sacs. They also must dig out 1,100 fire hydrants.

Residents and visitors can help make sure snow-removal operations run smoothly by not parking in restricted areas overnight.

Residents also cannot move snow from their property into a public right of way.

Suiter said he saw someone recently blowing snow from a driveway onto a city street, which is against the rules.

No parking is allowed on Lincoln Avenue or Ski Time Square from 3 to 6 a.m., and no parking is allowed on all city streets in the winter from 2 to 8 a.m.

Parking also is not allowed on the streets in the Anglers Drive area and south to the city limits from midnight to 8 a.m.

A ticket for violating the city's parking rules costs \$50.

Bowman: Incident prompts look at policy

Avalanche continued from 1

slope let loose, and Bowman said it felt like a wave.

"I was immediately carried downward and into some trees," Bowman said. "It accelerated extremely fast."

Rescuer Harry Sandler was fourth in line to make the traverse.

"I felt it, and I heard it," Sandler said. "A woomph and a collapse."

The light from Bowman's headlamp disappeared, and the rescuers turned on their avalanche beacons to pick up Bowman's signal.

They quickly reached Bowman, who had not been buried.

"I saw a red jacket on top of the snow and didn't need my beacon after that," Sandler said.

During the slide, Bowman hit a tree and shattered his humerus bone. If he had not wrapped his knee around another tree about 350 feet down, Bowman could have slid another 400 feet.

"I wanted to fight as hard as I could to come home to my family," Bowman said. "I definitely thought about that and said it's worth fighting to stay alive."

The rescuers quickly found Bowman.

He was injured but fortunate-

ly he did not suffer a severe head injury. He was not wearing a helmet.

"One of the luckiest things was we were able to find both my skis at the bottom," Bowman said. "I don't think I could have post-holed out of there."

The rescuers stopped Bowman's head from bleeding and made a sling for his arm.

"There is nobody I would rather be in the backcountry with than these guys," Bowman said.

The snowy weather made it too dangerous for a helicopter to fly in and help, which meant Bowman would have to continue skiing out.

"I was extremely cold, and it felt better moving," Bowman said.

After finding the lost men, everybody made it to the Uranium Mine Trail, where a snowmobile was waiting to take Bowman out.

"That might have been the most terrifying part," Bowman said. "To be no longer in control and trying to hold on with one arm and one leg."

On Tuesday, Classic Air Medical volunteered its services, so Search and Rescue could return in the daylight and see the avalanche aftermath from the air.

This will not be the last time a

skier needs to get rescued in the canyon, and Sandler did reconnaissance to identify helicopter landing zones and a potential safer route into the drainage.

While the rescue group did use extreme caution during the mission, Bowman said the incident has prompted Search and Rescue to look at its policies, such as whether rescuers need to wear helmets during similar rescues.

Above all, Search and Rescue hopes the incident will help educate the public about the dangers that face the all-volunteer, non-profit group.

Search and Rescue never charges for its services, because it does not want people to be discouraged from calling for help, but it can be frustrating when people do not use common sense.

"They also have to realize they are putting other people in danger as well, and they have families," Bowman said.

In addition to having made the same mistake before, the lost men did not have any of the necessary equipment, which includes a headlamp, fire-starting device, avalanche beacon, probe, shovel, food, water, navigation equipment and additional clothes.

"I had an extra down jacket, and that thing saved my life," Bowman said.



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