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Council not sold on developer's proposal

Scott Franz
STEAMBOAT TODAY

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The Steamboat Springs City Council thinks a developer's latest water proposal for new neighborhoods on the west side of town still is too risky for the community and its taxpayers.

But the council has resolved to try and keep the housing proposal afloat in the coming weeks through some negotiations. And the developer is committed to looking into how to further minimize any risk the council is concerned about.

"I'd like to see something move forward but not the existing proposal," Councilwoman Kathi Meyer said.

The council was in general agreement that the city will have the infrastructure needed to service the proposed 450 housing units.

However, there was some disagreement as to whether the developer's proposal for how to pay for water infrastructure and future water needs was adequate.

Meyer and some other council members specifically want more money up front from the developers that could be used to help secure a third water source on the Elk River.

They also expressed concern with a proposal to forgo a \$1 million secondary water line into the new development until a second phase of the housing project was underway.

Brynn Grey has proposed that each buyer of a market rate home in the new neighborhoods would pay a \$16,000 fee to the city that it could use to secure future water sources and infrastructure. The city estimates that fee could generate \$4.8 million.

Brynn Grey is proposing to have the fees paid when the homes are bought. But several council members fear that

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MATT STENSLAND/STAFF

Franktown resident Sean Searle is reunited with his wife, Stacy, after Searle was rescued from an avalanche Tuesday in the Flat Tops Wilderness Area. A Routt County man died in the slide.

Avalanche claims life

Routt County man killed, 1 rescued in Flat Tops Wilderness

Matt Stensland
STEAMBOAT TODAY

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS

A Routt County man was buried and killed Tuesday in an avalanche in the Flat Tops Wilderness.

The avalanche occurred in Garfield County, and the coroner there was meeting with the man's family Tuesday night. His name has not been released.

The man was riding a Timbersled, which is a snow bike converted from a dirt bike.

He was riding with 41-year-old Sean Tyler Searle, who is from Franktown, a suburb southeast of Denver.

After being rescued by Routt County Search and Rescue, Searle was flown



VIDEO ONLINE

View a video from the staging area accompanying this story at SteamboatToday.com.

by helicopter to a staging area. He collapsed to his knees after being reunited with his wife, Stacy, and was then taken to an ambulance.

Routt County Undersheriff Ray Birch said authorities were notified

shortly before noon that there was some sort of emergency.

With spotty cellphone reception, Searle was able to send his wife a text message with some information. Search and Rescue went out on snowmobile to search the area around Sheriff Reservoir. Routt County led the rescue, because they were able to respond the fastest.

A Steamboat Springs-based Classic Air Medical helicopter searched from the air, but it was difficult.

"One of the problems was there have been a number of slides over the last couple of days, and they were seeing fresh slides all over the place,"

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SKI REPORT

Midmountain base	61 inches
Summit base	76 inches
Trails open	165/165
Lifts open	16/16
Total snow*	238 inches

*Midmountain measurement at Steamboat Ski Area since Nov. 2. For up-to-date road conditions, call 511 or visit cotrip.org.

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MATT STENSLAND/STAFF

Avalanche survivor Sean Searle gets help walking away from a helicopter Tuesday after being rescued in the Flat Tops Wilderness Area.

Searle performed CPR on man caught in slide

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Birch said.

After several hours of searching, rescuers found the deceased man in a slide area. Birch was next to the man's wife when the radio traffic came in. Yelling and screaming could be heard from about 100 yards away.

"It was very emotional," Birch said.

At that point, Search and Rescue still did not know if Searle was alive.

Rescuers located boot prints leading up from the body. They followed them and found the word "help" carved into the snow with an arrow pointed in a certain direction.

At about 4:15 p.m., Searle was located.

The helicopter tipped its blades to let Searle know they saw him.

"Then the guy basically collapsed," Birch said.

Rescuers learned that Searle had also been in the slide, but he was able to free himself and locate the missing man.

Searle dug out the man and performed CPR, but it was too late.

Authorities plan to retrieve the man's body this morning.

"It's dangerous during the day," Birch said. "We're not going in at night."

After word of the incident spread, friends and family members arrived at the staging area.

Steamboat resident Daniel Jessen came with his sled to try to search for the lost men, but he was told to let Search and Rescue handle the operation.

The Colorado Avalanche Information Center lists the avalanche danger in the Flat Tops area as "moderate" with heightened avalanche conditions on certain terrain.

Jessen was well aware of the avalanche danger, because he had

witnessed six slides Thursday. He did not want to go out Tuesday with friends.

"They asked me if I wanted to go, and I said 'no,'" Jessen said.

Birch praised the Search and Rescue volunteers for their work.

"They're remarkable," Birch said.

He also acknowledged Classic Air Medical.

"They were all in," Birch said. "Thank God we had a clear day."

This was the third accident involving avalanches in the Routt National Forest.

A snowmobile triggered an avalanche on Rabbit Ears Pass on Dec. 11. Three riders were buried, but everyone had avalanche safety equipment and survived.

On Jan. 12, an avalanche in the Fish Creek drainage injured a Routt County Search and Rescue member who was on his way to rescue two lost skiers.

Residents show frustrations with objections

Council continued from 1

it would take too long for the fund to grow and the city wouldn't be able to do anything meaningful or impactful with it in the beginning.

"We need some money up front," Council President Walter Magill said. "I'm not ready as a council member to become a partner on this project."

Council President Pro-Tem Jason Lacy said not having some money up front makes it seem as if the city is taking on some development risk.

Representatives from Brynn Grey didn't see it that way.

They didn't share the council's concern about risk and noted that the housing units wouldn't generate more demands for water unless they were built. And if they are built, the water fees

would be collected.

Council members had some other concerns.

Meyer took issue with Brynn Grey's claim that it was paying for the water infrastructure to support the new neighborhoods.

She noted that of the \$12.75 million in infrastructure costs, \$11.5 million would ultimately be paid by the new homeowners.

"You might write the check (up front), but it is not a Brynn Grey contribution," she wrote.

Not all council members felt the developer's proposal needs to be revised.

Councilman Scott Ford and Councilwoman Robin Crossan appeared ready to accept the water proposal and move onto other items.

Ford expressed concern that the council could "wear out" the

developer with its demand for changes and concessions.

"Our challenge is to not get into (saying), 'There's just one more thing,'" Ford said. "We will wear people out, and we'll wear each other out."

Ford added he feared that if the council was hypothetically handed a bag of gold, "we'd complain about how heavy it was."

Some residents in the audience appeared frustrated by the council's objections to the developer's water proposal.

Realtor Matt Eidt compared the council's discussion to "paralysis by analysis."

He warned the council that without new housing developments, the city could run the risk of "losing the younger leaders and workforce in this community."