

## **Council OKs Cliff House design changes**

**By Jeanne Davant**

The Cliff House's plans to build a new hotel and conference center on the Wheeler House site have been approved again, but it will be six months or more before "construction can begin.

The Cliff House is required to conduct a weeklong study during the high-traffic summer months to determine the project's impacts on surrounding streets, said Dan Dick, vice-president of Gal-Tex Hotel Corp., the Cliff House's parent company. That won't happen until June at the earliest.

Manitou Springs City Council approved Tuesday the Cliff House's request to demolish existing structures on the Wheeler House property and build a new hotel with 79 guest rooms, three ballrooms, several meeting rooms, a pool and spa, and a parking structure for 170 cars.

The newest plan for the Cliff House West project includes design modifications recommended by a historic architecture consultant. The Historic Preservation Commission mandated the consultant's review.

Most of the changes are subtle, said Doug Comstock of Comstock & Associates, the Cliff House West's designer.

"The original idea was a composite 'of the Wheeler House and the Cliff House," Comstock said. "(The historic architecture consultant) suggested making (the Wheeler House elements) stronger."

The design replicates the historic height and form of the original Wheeler House turret in the three turrets that will be built, and incorporates the former Wheeler House porch into a patio area. A glass-enclosed corridor between the Wheeler House and the new structure will provide visual separation.

On the north side, which faces Grand Avenue, the historic architects suggested simplifying the design to better fit in with the neighborhood.

"I think we've been able to achieve that. It's very visually contiguous with the neighborhood," Comstock said.

Council's unanimous approval came after a Jan. 5 Historic Preservation Commission hearing on the new plans. The commission also unanimously recommended approval.

In contrast to previous Council meetings, no one from the Grand Avenue neighborhood spoke Tuesday in opposition to the project.

"Evidently there's no objection from the neighborhood," Comstock said.

"You've been extremely responsible, especially to the neighbors' concerns," Mayor Marc Snyder said.

Dick said the Cliff House would be coming back before Council by September to present the results of the traffic study.

"After that, we can start the permitting process," he said.

Tuesday's action completed a second round of approvals for the Cliff House West.

Council originally approved a development plan for the \$18 million project in June 2009. Because of the sour economy and internal issues the parent company was forced to deal with, the company took no action and the approval lapsed after 12 months.

Council approved a new development plan Dec. 9. Neighbors from Grand Avenue and the Agate Hill area appeared at that meeting to express their concerns, especially about traffic issues. City Attorney Jeff Parker said the owners would be required to address any issues revealed by the traffic study.

The Wheeler House was built in 1891 as part of the Windemere estate owned by Jerome Wheeler, a former president, of Macy's Department store who made a fortune in mining. It housed guest rooms, a billiard room, a shooting gallery and a bowling alley.

The estate also consisted of Wheeler's home, which stood on the site of the Post Office, a carriage house and greenhouse.

Most of the buildings were demolished in the 1920s. The "historic bowling alley" was converted into a motel, and additional buildings on the property date from the late 1940s.

Folke said that only the "historic bowling alley" is considered a contributing resource subject to historic preservation regulations.

## Three ordinances passed

Council approved three new ordinances on second reading Tuesday.

One of the ordinances brings the parking spaces on Canon Avenue adjacent to the Cliff House into the downtown parking zone. The city has removed the 15-minute restriction on those places and made them three-hour spaces.

"Staff has received comments that this is impacting traffic" on Canon and Grand avenues, Folke said.

The spaces on the east side "used to be a nice blue pullover" where Canon Avenue residents could park to get their mail, said nearby resident Clint Lewis. "Now, because they are open to Cliff House people, they're usually full. They have to head up the street, turn around and come back down. I really think it was nice the way it was."

"Our intent was for (the Post Office) to put up a sign, saying, hey, you can park here and run into the Post Office," Folke said.

Another ordinance regulates placement of dumpsters, storage pods and similar objects limits the amount of time these items can be placed on public streets and sidewalks and requires issuance of a permit before they are placed. Fees for placement on Manitou, Canon, Park or Ruxton avenues will be higher than for other locations.

A third ordinance brings the city's regulations into compliance with state law by raising the limit for misdemeanor possession of marijuana from one ounce to two ounces.

The change allows these offenses to be prosecuted in Municipal Court, Leslie said.

While it might appear that the regulation loosens the rules on possession, "on our end, we're tightening them," Councilman Matt Carpenter said.

## In other business, Council...

- Got good news from Finance Director Mike Leslie, who reported that November's taxable sales increased 13.4 percent in November 2010. For the year through November, taxable sales grew 7 percent over the same period of 2009. All sectors of the city's economy showed improvement.

- Said "no thanks" to a request from the attorney for the trustees of Timothy Jaynes' estate. City Attorney Jeff Parker said the trustees asked that the city contribute \$ 1,300 to costs for preparing deeds and effecting transfers of property Jaynes bequeathed to the city — in effect, returning money it has already received from the trust. Council did authorize Parker to tell the trustees they are welcome to submit a written request and invoice for the money.

- Approved a request from John and Carol Mason to use their two cottages at 329 and 331 Ruxton Ave. as vacation rentals.

[Return to Article Index](#)