

## **City looks at purchase of Tajini Alami**

**By Jeanne Davant**

Manitou Springs City Council chose on Tuesday a consultant to evaluate the Tajini Alami property at 10 Old Man's Trail for its use as additional city parking and office or retail space.

Echo Architecture of Colorado Springs submitted the low bid of \$12,300 to perform the evaluation. It will determine the feasibility and cost of rehabilitating the building, cost of repairs to the parking area and how many parking spaces could be provided. The firm also will evaluate the \$ 1.5 million asking price for the property in terms of the current real estate market and estimate how much the entire project would cost the city.

The city received five proposals ranging from Echo's bid to more than \$35,000 to perform the evaluation.

Echo was chosen not only because it was the low bidder but also because the firm was the consultant for the restoration of the library.

"We've worked with them and we believe they would do a really good job," Planning Director Dan Folke said.

Folke said funds of about \$17,500 returned to the city from the now-disbanded Economic Development Council (EDC) could be used to pay for the evaluation.

Dave Symonds, president of the Metro District and a former EDC board member, said the funds are "pretty much sitting there, ready to go"

Echo's proposal budgets \$6,300 to determine costs for rehabilitation or demolition of the existing building, \$2,400 for evaluating the parking area and \$3,600 for evaluating the financial impacts of buying and rehabilitating the site.

Architect Ryan Lloyd, owner of Echo Architecture, said the project could be conducted in stages. If the city decided to stop after the first phase — evaluating the building, it could do so but likely would incur an additional charge.

"If the building is not able to be used and it's a demo, you still need the next step in the number of parking spaces," Council-woman Ingrid Richter said. She also recommended that local realtors be asked to appraise the structure.

Councilwoman Aimee Cox asked whether any other local properties should be considered and how the city would finance the purchase and rehabilitation.

Councilman Rick Barry said the Walton property at the west end of town opposite the bottling plant also is for sale.

Symonds said that property is less desirable because people would have to drive all the way through town to get to it and because of the walking distance to downtown.

Symonds suggested that the Chamber of Commerce property might be a source of funds.

"The property that the Chamber building sits on is city property," Symonds said. "If you sold that, you could have \$300,000 to \$400,000 as seed money."

He said the Chamber has outgrown the building and would be a prospective tenant for part of the Tajini Alami building if it could be rehabilitated. Other revenue could come from leasing the remaining space as a gallery or other business.

"If we can get together — and I believe we can because the sentiment is there, we could cover the debt service if everybody works together," Symonds said. But first, "we need an idea of how much it would cost to develop the property."

The Tajini Alami building once was Hiawatha Gardens, a casino, beer garden and dance hall built in about 1889. It was said that people could dance for hours on the suspended dance floor without tiring.

The current building is in need of a lot of repairs, several council members noted.

Council unanimously approved the Echo Architecture proposal. The firm is expected to have the evaluation ready for presentation to the Parking Authority Board at its March 25 meeting.

## **In other business, Council...**

- Passed on first reading an ordinance revising the city's liquor code. The ordinance includes properties within 100 feet in the notification area for a proposed establishment and specifies that all adult residents and business owners may testify at hearings on liquor license applications.

- Passed on first reading an ordinance that removes regulations specific to a single block of Ruxton Avenue. Folke said the provisions were duplicated in other sections of the code.

- Heard a report from Mayor Marc Snyder, who said he was concerned about a large increase in activity at Snyder Quarry. "Within the last two years they filed an amended reclamation plan and have greatly expanded its use," Snyder said. "They are pulling a lot of rock, and a lot of trucks are coming down from there." Snyder said he favored inviting representatives of the quarry to attend an upcoming council meeting to discuss the increased activity.

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