

THE WEEKLY REGISTER-CALL

Vol. 161 No. 35 February 15, 2024

2023 Winner of seven Colorado Press Association awards

PRICE: \$1.50

THE OLDEST WEEKLY NEWSPAPER IN COLORADO SINCE 1862



GOLD COUNTRY NEWSPAPER COVERING GILPIN AND CLEAR CREEK COUNTIES

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR GILPIN COUNTY, BLACK HAWK AND CENTRAL CITY, ALSO COVERING IDAHO SPRINGS, GEORGETOWN

\$250K, not love, in cozy Black Hawk letter to Central

By Don Ireland
Senior Reporter



Black Hawk wants to give Central City \$250,000 to annex the Briggs Lot (at left) into Black Hawk's city limits. The lot, which Black Hawk owns, adjoins High Street. It is across from the Gregory Point Victorian historic homes and a dozen yards uphill from the west end of Gregory Plaza.

Drone photo by Don Ireland

While Valentine's Day cards and roses have been abundant lately, City of Black Hawk leaders are hand-delivering a "warm and friendly letter" to neighboring Central City officials this week.

It is expected to convey some goodwill toward Central and include what some call a generous "sweet-heart offer" of \$250,000 and some free land from the neighboring city.

For years, Black Hawk has owned and maintained the Briggs Lot across Gregory Street from Gregory Point (formerly Mountain City) and very close to Gregory Plaza. The 3.49-acre lot and surrounding cliff-rock wall, however, lie within the official boundary line of Central City.

Black Hawk leaders are hoping to spruce up the mostly unused parking lot this year and use it to extend its recreational trail system from the Maryland Mountain/Quartz Valley area into the Briggs Lot. To avoid having the plans going back and forth between the two neighboring cities, Black Hawk has an idea: Ask Central City to formally allow Black Hawk to annex the little parking lot.

Black Hawk Council and Mayor David Spellman were scheduled to vote at yesterday's (Feb. 14) meeting to formally request Central's okay to annex the lot into its jurisdiction. All six aldermen and the mayor were scheduled to sign the request letter, hoping Central City leaders would accept it as a friendship request.

In addition, Black Hawk is offering Central \$250,000 to grant its request to annex the lot. The money would be "a one-time donation" from Black Hawk's historic preservation fund to a similar historic fund operated in Central City. "Suggested Central projects the fund could be used for include – but not limited to – the Belvidere project, sidewalks along Gregory and Lawrence Streets in Central, or advancing Central's trail system with the ability to connect to Black Hawk's trail system," according to a copy of the letter that was in the Black Hawk council agenda scheduled for a vote yesterday.

Hollingsworth faces 2 challengers for BoCC

By the WR-C Staff

Two businessmen have announced they will be challengers for the Gilpin County District 3 commissioner's race this year, each seeking to oust incumbent Sandy Hollingsworth.

Corey Marshall is running for the GOP nomination this spring, while Darin Jones will be a

write-in candidate for the General Election in November.

Hollingsworth (D), who won by 85 votes in a three-way race four years ago, so far is unopposed for the Democratic nomination in the June 25 primary. The deadline for candidates to petition to run is Tuesday, March 19.

Continued on page 9

Continued on next page

Economic development discussions attract capacity audience from Clear Creek-Gilpin counties

By Don Ireland
Senior Reporter

Despite cold weather and an anticipated snowstorm, about 100 local business owners and elected officials turned out to hear about the present and future forecasts for business at

the Clear Creek Economic Development Corp.'s first "Rural Resilience" economic development mixer at the new Club Hotel in Idaho Springs last Thursday and Friday.

From Rollinsville in northern Gilpin to Dumont in Clear Creek, the assembled community members were given an optimistic forecast about how more business could be attracted to the neighboring counties, with CCEDC leaders offering assistance to help turn business dreams into reality. (See related story on how the CCEDC helped the Club Hotel launch its new operation.)

The nearly three-hour meeting discussed the demographic trends and the state of the economies in both Gilpin and Clear Creek, presented by Greg Totten, an economist from the State of Colorado Demography Office.

Gilpin County Manager Ray Rears and Ryan Englund, president of the Better City consulting organization, discussed resilience and diversification in Gilpin County. Rears was appointed to the CCEDC board last year to inform Gilpin business owners and leaders of how the non-profit organization serves them.

Speaking on resilience and diversification were Brian Bosshart, manager for Clear Creek County, and Willie Wilkins, Colorado State University's Mountain regional specialist for expanded rural engagement.

Continued on page 11

SUBSCRIBE TO THE WEEKLY REGISTER-CALL NOW - NEWS@WEEKLYREGISTERCALL.COM

Economic development discussions attract large audience at Clear Creek–Gilpin counties event

Continued from page 1

Longtime Clear Creek resident Kelly Flenniken, chair of the CCECC, said she was pleased about the turnout from those who work in the two counties and wanted to hear the various reports presented during the session. “A lot of us believe that a good quality of life depends on a good, quality job,” she told the audience.

“Why does economic development mean in a small rural community and why should you care?” asked Flenniken. “I can tell you that it matters in all communities because it’s a series of different programs, policies or initiatives that seek to improve that economic well-being in that community. We want to build a diverse tax base and don’t want to be overly reliant on one industry. We need to think about how to build our community and have more quality employment. We need to think about how we can have quality housing and employment, plus a robust education system. All of these pieces are connected.”

Central City Mayor Jeremy Fey said he didn’t know much about the CCEDC before he attended the Rural Resilience event. “It was a great networking opportunity, and I was actually impressed by the turnout,” he said. “I was a little bit embarrassed that – until recently – that I didn’t know much about them. Lyndsey Valdez, their president, gave a short presentation at our council meeting recently. However, I didn’t realize that they were available in Gilpin County. I’ve actually gone to their website to learn about the process of what it takes to apply for a loan.”

Rears joked, “Prior to 2019, Gilpin County’s economic strategy was to build another casino. During the pandemic, the county laid off about one-third of its staff. We realized we really needed to diversify our economy.” Following the pandemic, Gilpin received a grant, which it used to hire Better City, a consulting organization that helps communities develop plans for their futures in the U.S. and other countries.

Englund of Better City commented that Black Hawk has begun adding additional attractions to bring in tourists not interested in gaming for an extra day. He said Gilpin would like those visitors to expand their stay by offering other items. Increasing the number of businesses in Rollinsville and developing more information about available trails and historical places in the county could help leaders and businesses accomplish that goal.

“Central City is in a different situation,” noted Englund. “They have a larger population and room to expand [along the Central City Parkway]. Then there is Rollinsville, where businesses there would like it to be a true destination. We had 24 people show up for a meeting there by people who want to change the community themselves. They’re working together and using their own money. They’re trying to figure out a way to make Rollinsville a true destination. Parking is a big issue. This is a work in process but there’s a lot of good things going on there.”

Englund said installing broadband would help those who work and live in Gilpin County, a project currently being developed by the county government and its partners. Gilpin Grant Manager Jamie Boyle said Maverix Broadband received a \$6.78 million grant to expand broadband service in northern Gilpin

County, including Rollinsville. The Better City consultant reported that more than a third of residents work from home sometimes, so better internet service is vital to them.

According to Englund, another item that could attract more people to visit is the national forests in the county. “Trail access is a big thing. It’s amazing how many little trails come out from Rollinsville. One of the problems is that there isn’t enough parking, and many of the trails aren’t marked. If you can get people to come and stay an extra day, that would be good if they came up to spend more time on the trails.”

Wilkins said a large part of Clear Creek’s economy comes from mining and tourism. One idea being considered for the county is an increase in sales taxes, which could help fund additional tourism-related projects. However, “some people don’t want to see more growth in the community,” he commented. “Summers are crazy in Clear Creek County, and there are people who don’t want more traffic.”

Among the ideas discussed are special events or festivals during the off-season months, which could bring in more tourism revenue. Wilkins said fishing or hockey tournaments at Georgetown Lake are possibilities. It is also possible a “round-up program” could be considered, where shoppers would be asked to round up their purchase price receipt to the next dollar – with the difference used to pave roads or pay for additional events.

Wilkins said the creation of a proposed parking garage and the Argo Gondola ride in Idaho Springs are ideas that – if developed – could help increase tourism. He noted the hot springs and a gondola in Glenwood Springs have helped bring visitors to that section of the mountains.

While most people at the CCEDC event were from the Clear Creek area, it attracted several people from Gilpin County and Rears and Fey. Gilpin County Commissioner Marie Mornis, Boyle, Black Hawk businessman Eddie Miller and a few Rollinsville business owners also turned out. Another Gilpin commissioner, Susan Berumen, sits on the loan committee for the CCEDC.

On Friday, elected officials and leaders from both counties met to discuss what they heard on Thursday night and shared ideas on what future opportunities could be considered.

The CCEDC administers the Region 3 Business Loan Program (BLF) for Clear Creek and Gilpin



Capacity crowd at CCEDC Rural Resilience event.

Photos by Don Ireland

Counties. Since 1985, the CCEDC has provided over \$8 million in business loans, which has leveraged approximately \$17.5 million in area investments. The goal of the loan program is to support business retention and expansion, and new job growth within Region 3.

Loans are generally between \$5,000 and \$200,000 but will be considered case-by-case. CCEDC loans may be used to purchase real estate, furniture, fixtures, equipment, working capital and inventory. For additional information, contact CCEDC President Lindsey Valdez at 303-710-9218 or visit www.ccedc.org.



Ray Rears Gilpin County manager.



Central City Heritage West Realty owner Roy Varela joins Central City Mayor Jeremy Fey at the Idaho Springs Economic Mixer event.

Photo by Bob Sweeney

THRASHER
FOUNDATION REPAIR
PRECISE REPAIR. GENUINE CARE

Keep your home safe with concrete repair

Worrying about your uneven or cracked concrete can make owning a home very stressful. By investing in concrete repair, you can fix your driveway, walkways, patio, and more in one easy lift.

GET A FREE ESTIMATE
877-422-1375

BEFORE
AFTER

(Editor's note: The name of the Clear Creek Economic Development Corp. might sound a little confusing or misleading. It should be noted the organization serves businesses in the Clear Creek watershed in both Gilpin and Clear Creek counties, not solely Clear Creek County.)

Demographics of Clear Creek, Gilpin aging

By Don Ireland
Senior Reporter

After Colorado experienced a population boom for several years after 2010, the state's number of new residents has slowed, according to Greg Totten, an economist from the Colorado Demography Office who spoke during last week's Clear Creek Economic Development Corp.'s Rural Resilience meeting.

He noted that Clear Creek County's population has barely declined during the past two years while the number of Gilpin County residents has slowly increased. He explained that Clear Creek's drop hasn't been extreme since it lost fewer than 100 residents. On the other hand, Gilpin added up to 100 new residents during the same period.

Today, most of the populations in Clear Creek and Gilpin are made up of those who are age 50 and higher. Totten said Gilpin's population began growing in the early 1990s when the casino industry arrived in the county. He said younger families with children moved from the

Denver area to Gilpin to be in a less-populated area while remaining not too far from the metro area.

"A lot of the people who lived in Clear Creek in 1990 still live here today," according to Totten. He said statistics show that more people who live in the county commute to work in other places, a significant number than those who live in other areas and commute into Clear Creek. In Gilpin County, the trend is the opposite: many workers travel into Gilpin from other counties for employment in the casino and hospitality industries.

While Gilpin and Clear Creek's populations have been relatively unchanged, several Front Range communities, including Denver, Boulder and Jefferson counties, have seen significantly more population declines. Growth continued in Weld, Larimer and El Paso counties as the "suburbanization" movement continues, Totten said.

People relocating from communities for new jobs is only one factor for the change. "To a demographer, people do only three things in their lives: they're born, they die and they move," he noted. Totten said the birth rate in Colorado and its 64 counties has slowed during the past decade while some of the state's growing senior population has passed away.

"2007 was the peak year for births in Colorado, which is getting older. Now you have people coming here who aren't in prime fertility age. There are a lot of people who are 65, who won't be having any children, but they are getting closer to passing away," according to Totten.

He added that neither county saw a sharp increase in births during the past few decades. Overall, Colorado saw its largest growth arrive from younger people in their 20s and 30s, who moved to the Centennial State after graduating from college. "Colorado is [considered] a young state because of all the 25-to-35-year-olds who live here," according to Totten. He contrasted the rate with Arizona, which experienced a sizeable senior growth rate during the past few decades as people 60 and over headed to the warmer-weather state

to retire. In California, the state has maintained much of its younger population, although many older residents have left for other states in recent years.



Greg Totten CO demographer

Between 2010 and 2020, Colorado had one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States – adding about 100,000 people over several years. By 2020, it ranked sixth in the nation for its 14.6 percent population growth rate. However, the trend has significantly slowed since the days of the pandemic, Totten said.

During 2020-21 and 2021-22, the state grew slightly but wasn't one of the 19 states that lost population between 2021 and 2022, he said. Colorado's population is 5.7 million, expected to grow to 7.5 million by 2050. Most of the projected growth will occur along the I-25 corridor in the Front Range.

Totten reported that not all older people retire after age 55 or 60, saying significant numbers of senior citizens continue to work full or part-time well into their early 70s.

Economic impact

Totten said 26 percent of Clear Creek County's GDP comes from the mining industry, followed by revenues generated in the accommodation/hospitality and tourism industries. "That's not surprising," said Totten of the tourism impact on the county. "It's beautiful up here, and a lot of people from Denver come up to get away."

Tourism in Idaho Springs has also increased sales taxes collected for the county in recent years, he added.

In Gilpin, about 75 percent of the economy is derived from the gaming and associated hospitality businesses. The county's economy fell sharply during the pandemic in 2020 but rebounded quickly when health-related restrictions were lifted the following year.



There will always be changes in the mountain economy

By Bob Sweeney
WR-C Publisher

As WR-C readers have noticed, we consider Clear Creek County is a crucial adjacent neighbor of friends, entrepreneurs, mining and gaming employees, and folks who like to dine at Marian's, making Idaho Springs and Georgetown home. Throughout the lengthy history of mining, the communities have formed a strong bond, including the Argo mine tunnel that runs from Central City to the mine. We can't forget the "Oh My God" winding road to the Clear Creek mills.

Last Thursday evening, I was a guest at the Rural Resilience Economic Development mixer at the newly refurbished Club Hotel in Idaho Springs by owners Jonah and Lana Hearne.

Arriving early as an Elks Club member of 1566 Craig Lodge, I spent a few minutes in the Lodge. It was a beehive of activity as the Square Peg Catering staff were preparing the appetizers for the mixer at the Club Hotel across Colorado Street, using the Elks Club kitchen. And what a great job they did. The abundant trays of tasty appetizers were a big hit, with dozens who attended during the dinner hour.

Lindsey Valdez, president and CEO of the Clear Creek Development Corporation, welcomed the packed house in the new meeting room to hear demographic

and state-of-the-economy reports for both Clear Creek and Gilpin Counties. Kelly Fleniken, board chair of the Clear Creek EDC, also presided. The room was filled with county commissioners, city managers, council members, city officials, organization members and guests.

Members of the press included myself and Don Ireland from the *Weekly Register-Call*. Gilpin County Manager Ray Rears was on the program; Commissioner Marie Morris and Mayor Jeremy Fey were spotted from Gilpin County as participating members in the two-county EDC organization.

Don and I wisely sat on the front row where we could read the fine print on the many demographic charts shown by Greg Totten from the State of Colorado demography office. The charts showed that mining, tourism, and restaurants, but not gaming, were the two major employers in both counties. Ireland took furious notes on the chart statistics found elsewhere in this week's edition.

A gripping portion of the program came from Ryan England, president of Better Cities, who has been consulting with business leaders in Rollinsville. He said the historic railroad community wants to become a more viable destination and significant community. There is a strong movement, led by Gov. Jared Polis, to commence railroad passenger service from Denver through Rol-

linsville through the Moffat Tunnel to Steamboat Springs and Craig. This could mean passenger service stopping in Rollinsville, including winter ski business, gaming interests, lodging, food, and great hiking trails.

I remember my Chamber of Commerce days in Craig as mayor 50 years ago as we sought new industry for that remote corner of Colorado, and we landed four coal-fired power plants that ballooned Craig from 4,000 residents to 15,000 in several years. Colorado Local Affairs, directed by Gov. Dick Lamm, awarded the community \$1 million for a new high school. The tax base boomed, creating many career jobs for residents and high school graduates.

Today, while China builds a power plant every week, the Craig coal plants are shutting down as environmentalists promote wind and solar. My hometown is struggling to gain a new identity that will be based on tourism, outdoor recreation, hunting, fishing, golf and 40 miles downstream from Steamboat Springs, one of the best ski resorts in the world. Real estate in Craig is selling fast, far less than in the Steamboat Springs area, with the concept of driving a little and saving a lot on real estate.

The challenge with that type of economy is a bedroom community with many industrial resident payrolls lost to

other areas.

It was interesting in Craig that when our economic development efforts were successful, some older residents told us we were destroying the town with newcomers and rising home prices. A few crusty residents sold their homes for five-fold profits and left town. Locally, gaming created a housing shortage in the area, and much higher prices exist today. Great if you already own a home.

Living in the foothill mountains of Eastern Colorado, there will be continued growth for fresh mountain air, solace, and privacy, and a growing demand for people to escape the ever-increasing city populations and poverty challenges.

Seeing the energetic audience welcoming growth and development and creating a sound economy for jobs and business was heart-warming. The welcome mat is definitely out for Martin Marietta and the stellar Climax Molybdenum, who provide most jobs in Clear Creek County and huge amounts of taxes. Gaming may last longer than mining somewhere in the distant future, but we will always have the majestic mountains and tourists seeking beauty.

However, we may need oil lanterns when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

We no longer write this, "But all had a good time."



Lindsey Valdez
president CCEDC
Photo by Don Ireland

Owner praises CCEDC helps establish new Club Hotel

By Don Ireland
Senior Reporter

Jonah and Lana Hearne had praised for the Clear Creek Economic Development Council, which helped the couple purchase and remodel a problem-filled old building into what recently opened as the Club Hotel in Idaho Springs.

Jonah Hearne said the creation of the Victorian-feel Club Hotel at 1601 Colorado Blvd., formerly the Hanson Lodge, was possible because of loan funding through the CCEDC. The hotel was the site of the CCEDC's first "Rural Resilience" economic development mixer last week, which attracted business owners and elected leaders from Gilpin and Clear Creek counties.

"I was looking for a good investment property," Hearne told the audience at the meeting. "I wanted to put some money into something, fix it up and start a business. My wife and I were looking at a place in Boulder County. We couldn't find the right price, so we kept on looking around. We stumbled upon this "gem" – it was a little rough at the time."

Continued Hearne, "My wife is a little brave because she signed off on purchasing the property before she even visited it. Fortunately, we were able to get to the right price [on it]. We got kick-started on the project in 2022. We came to a good resolution with the historical preservation committee on what this building should look like. We've also gotten to



Jonah Hearne, owner of the Club Hotel in Idaho Springs.
Photos by Don Ireland

Different economies, share common links

By Don Ireland
Senior Reporter

ANALYSIS

While neighboring Clear Creek and Gilpin counties have similar rich mining histories dating back to the 1859 Colorado Gold Rush era, their paths have taken different routes in the last 160-plus years.

Clear Creek's primary catalyst for employment continues to be mining, including the Climax Molybdenum Henderson Mine near Empire and the Martin Marietta Walstrum Quarry (formerly the Albert Frei & Sons). Gilpin County, which once heavily relied on mining, has evolved into a casino-gaming-focused county during the past 32 years.

Both counties rely heavily on tourism to bolster their economies, support businesses and generate sales-tax revenues for local government entities.

Interstate I-70 is critical for the economies of both counties, particularly in Clear Creek, because the highway travels alongside the county's largest town, Idaho Springs, and passes next to Georgetown and other nearby communities. There are three exits for Idaho Springs along I-70, giving drivers a few chances to pull over to see what the community offers.

The number of I-70 exits for Gilpin County is fewer, although the interstate also plays a crucial role for the county's two gaming towns, Black Hawk and Central City. Exit 243 of I-70 leads to the Central City Parkway, a windy and sometimes steep four-lane highway

that stretches nearly eight miles to downtown Central City. While Black Hawk has a listed exit along I-70 on Floyd Hill (Exit 244), most of its traffic comes from Highway 6 in Jefferson County to reach the city. The current \$700 million I-70 construction project is in the spotlight in Gilpin because too many highway restrictions could translate into fewer people visiting the area.

During warm-weather months, rafting along Clear Creek (the stream), touring the historic Argo mines, lounging at the Indian Hot Springs indoor pool, or sampling the restaurants, bars, and locally-owned gift shops attract thousands of visitors to Idaho Springs. Finding an available parking space in downtown Idaho Springs during the summer tourist season is nearly as tricky as finding the proverbial needle in the haystack.

In nearby Georgetown, the lake, local businesses and the Georgetown Loop Railroad excursions also attempt to lure tourists who may be traveling toward the state's world-renown ski resort towns that host warm-weather events in addition to skiing during the winter.

Gilpin County draws thousands of hikers and campers to its two national forests, the Arapaho and Roosevelt forests, which stretch through several Colorado counties but are closer to Denver and the Front Range than other places.

Continued on next page

2 counties, different economies, yet share common links in terms of history, demographics

Continued from previous page

Central City and Black Hawk faced complex financial problems after most local mines closed nearly a century ago. It wasn't until 1991 that Colorado voters threw the two a lifeline by permitting limited-stakes gaming in the struggling old mining communities. In 1992, Central City, called "The Richest Square Mile on Earth," and Black Hawk, "The City of Mills," were given a chance to bounce back from decades of misfortune.

Today, the flashing lights and noises of slot machines in Black Hawk and Central City attract more year-round tourists to the two small cities within Gilpin County. Both cities are part of the national historic district because of their roots in the local gold rush era when prospector John Gregory discovered gold in the ravine between the two communities in 1859.

Central City's historic opera, the fifth oldest in the country, and its variety of Victorian-style homes and historic storefronts in the business district help attract out-of-towners to the city. Central and several of its organizations also sponsor various summer activities – including the Madam Lou Bunch bed races along Main Street, the Great Central City Beer Festival and Stills in the Hills, to name a few. Attractions and events sponsored by

the Gilpin Historical Society and the Gilpin Arts Society also bring new visitors.

Presently, at least five new potential casinos are being eyed for some of the shuttered storefronts in the Main Street business district in Central City. Local leaders are also discussing a new parking garage to accommodate the potential upswing in business.

Further north in Gilpin County, small business owners in Rollinsville (along Highway 119) have opened a distillery, pizza parlor and coffee shop to attract younger visitors who come to the area to visit the national forests nearby.

It is Black Hawk, however, that primarily accounts for the largest influx of visitors to the county. The city boasts 15 casinos, several offering high-rise towers filled with guest rooms, restaurants, swimming pools and spas. Black Hawk generates more than 75 percent of all gaming revenues the state collects annually and can attract as many as 20,000 or more visitors weekly, especially during the warm-weather months. Property taxes and other revenues from Black Hawk also is the primary source of income for Gilpin County. The city also donates some of its sales taxes to help finance the local school district.

However, Black Hawk isn't solely interested in being known as a casino town. City leaders have worked for

several years on an "ongoing renaissance" plan to diversify Black Hawk into a resort destination for visitors, even if they don't like gambling.

Black Hawk is continuing to develop its Gregory Street area, which includes retail shops and restaurants. Its Gregory Plaza is home to a volunteer firemen's museum, and the well-decorated main plaza is used for the city's annual Founders' Day each June and a growing number of local outdoor activities. At least one new restaurant, the Copper Kitchen Pizzeria, is expected to open in the plaza in 2025. Across the street, the city plans to spend more than a million dollars to open a gold-mining tour for visitors.

Black Hawk also has developed a recreational area for hikers and mountain bikers just north of the downtown gaming district. The Maryland Mountain/Quartz Valley trail system typically results in filled-to-capacity parking lots during warm-weather months. Within the next two years, the city plans to extend the trails to reach Gregory Street – close to Gregory Plaza – and extend them to another developing area on Gregory Hill (formerly Miners Mesa). That section of the city will feature several distilleries and offer overnight lodging in geodesic domes or luxury Airstream trailers for those who prefer to sleep in a scenic hilltop area primarily sur-



Lyndsey Valdez president CCEDC, Central City Heritage West Realty owner Roy Varela joins Central City Mayor Jeremy Fey at the Idaho Springs Economic Mixer event.

Photo by Bob Sweeney

rounded by mountains and forests.

Over the years, external factors have impacted the economies of Clear Creek and Gilpin. Four years ago, health-related COVID-19 pandemic restrictions forced many business owners to close their shops temporarily. While some were able to reopen later, others weren't as fortunate. In Gilpin County, the state ordered casinos closed for three months – essentially crippling the government economies. It took nearly a year before casino patrons returned. When they

did, the formerly sheltered-in-place patrons helped Black Hawk shatter any previous economic performances.

Local elected leaders and business owners are trying to figure out the best ways to improve their economies and attract new potential jobs to their areas. As CCEDC Board Chair Kelly Flenniken commented, "A good quality life depends on a good quality job."

With some creative local planning and a little luck, the futures for Gilpin and Clear Creek counties could be heading for better futures.

Gilpin School district may have to pay county additional \$60,000 for SRO

By Ruth Rodgers

Education and Community Reporter

Funding for the School Resource Officer (SRO) for the Gilpin County School was one of the topics at the Feb. 6 Gilpin County School board meeting.

Dr. David MacKenzie has been notified by the Gilpin County Sheriff's Office (GCSO) that the GCSO will charge the district for the full cost of the position rather than the \$35,000 it currently pays to the sheriff's office. According to MacKenzie, the SRO could cost the district an additional \$60,000.

It was the school district's understanding in the past that they would share the expense with the sheriff's department, but budget cuts at the county level seem to be changing the allocation of funds.

The board discussed what options may be available, including hiring private security. Other issues were safety implications, and

pulling one deputy off the road to be an SRO would be challenging.

He hopes to meet with Sheriff Kevin Armstrong and Division Chief Sean Wheeler to discuss the additional charges. After that, he will be able to have more specific information, including the cost and any revisions to the current intergovernmental agreement between the district and the county.

During his report, MacKenzie said the district has applied for the necessary permits for the atrium and elementary entrance and ramp, which must be approved before the work begins in April.

The contract with ESCO Construction Company of Evergreen will be signed

soon for the sewer project and will be discussed at the Feb. 20 board meeting.

Bonds will be used to pay for part of the project, and MacKenzie said that a Request For Bids for a Certificate of Participation has gone out, which means he should have more information on financing the project by the next school board meeting.

In the public participation portion of the meeting, two members of the Missouri Lakes HOA board shared their concerns about a proposed historical site marker the county is planning for the school's area.

The county received a grant to place three or four additional historical markers, one would be placed on the school campus. They

said this would not only bring tourists to a private lake area but could impact safety considerations for the school.

The significance of this location is related to a prototype submarine designed by Rufus T. Owens and built in Central City.

In 1898, the United States was at war with Spain over the sovereignty of Cuba, and the naval battle of Manila Bay emphasized how effective submarines were in the defense of the U.S. coastline. Owen's submarine, named "The Nautilus," was brought to Missouri Lake for a test dive but sank. The submarine was raised to the surface in 1944 and now rests in the Gilpin History Museum.

The HOA representative supports the county's efforts to honor local history and increase tourism. However, they have had difficulty getting information on new signage and fear safety problems. If

people were to pull over on Colorado Highway 119, where students use the crosswalk, they could be distracted, causing accidents and injuries.

They also pointed out that visibility is poor at the proposed location of the marker, which could lead to more crashes on the highway as vehicles merge back into traffic.

They hope to suggest to the commissioners and county manager that the sign be located at the pull-off to Golden Gate Canyon Road, just two miles north of the school, where there is more room for parking and better visibility for merging traffic.

Other concerns included long-term parking across from the school, which could result in additional noise and safety issues.

The board agreed, and MacKenzie discussed the issue with the county commissioners.

