

OUR VIEW

Editorial: Vote no on change to legal notices in Castle Rock

Posted Wednesday, October 14, 2015 4:07 pm

Castle Rock voters will soon receive ballots from Douglas County. Among the items to decide are six potential changes to the town charter — one of which directly affects these newspapers.

Question 2C, if approved, will allow the town's website to become the only place where citizens can find advance notice about important proposed town actions (public notices), from public hearings to proposed laws, by eliminating publication of those notices in our newspapers.

We think that is a bad idea and urge a vote of no on Question 2C.

There are four key elements to a public notice that are essential to society's democratic process, government accountability and the public's right to know:

- Independent: A public notice is published in a forum independent of government.
- Archivable: A public notice is archived in a secure and publicly available format.
- Accessible: A public notice can be accessed by all segments of society.
- Verifiable: A public notice and the source of the notice are able to verify the notice was published.

The Douglas County News-Press has provided this service for 114 years. As the paper of record, it is where residents know to go for public notices. These same notices are also published in the Castle Rock and Castle Pines editions of the News-Press. The three editions of the News-Press reach nearly 20,000 homes each week in print.

Publishing a legal notice in the News-Press is independent from the town and is archived, verified and easily accessible. Plus, the News-Press provides a signed affidavit from the publisher, eliminating any concerns as to whether or not proper access and notice has been given before approving an ordinance. The News-Press also uploads all town legal notices to the newspaper website and to the important, easily searched statewide legal notice website. All of this would be lost if voters approve 2C.

The town has asserted 2C would be a cost-cutting measure. And the Blue Book the town is sending to residents says publishing online at the city would be free. But programmers would need to be hired. Staff members would need to upload the notice to the website, check it, and prove the notice was available on the website for an adequate advanced notice. And, finally, the town would need to be prepared to verify this if questioned. Currently, the News-Press does all of this - and achieves the four key elements of a public notice - for \$4,400 per year.

We don't think this is about money for the town, which budgeted to add 17 new full-time employees this year and has a projected 2016 budget of \$191 million. Plus, one needs to consider the potential costs to the town mentioned above.

It's not about money for us, either. Although in today's newspaper industry every penny counts, the loss of \$4,400 a year is certainly not our primary concern. What's at the heart of the issue is the transparent accountability a free press provides to the public of government actions.

That's why we believe Castle Rock's legal notices should stay independent of the town and remain in print, and on the newspapers' and statewide legal notices' websites.

Therefore, we urge a vote of no on 2C.

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Resident

You have got to be kidding. I checked the editorial section of this website and aside from this editorial there aren't any other editorials. I have checked the editorial section for years and there has never been an editorial. So, you are telling us that of all the things that have happened in our county over the last several years, this is the only one that deserved an editorial?

Granted web distribution won't be perfect, but neither is your system as huge chunks of the town don't get the paper.

Stop with the self-serving editorials and how about doing some real work

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