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PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

**Xcel Energy is hosting public open houses in
Aurora and Parker for proposed transmission line project**

Xcel Energy is hosting four public meetings on the proposed Pawnee-Daniels Park 345kV transmission line project to take comments and answer questions from landowners and interested stakeholders. The meetings will include detailed maps that display the project corridor, as well as experts who can discuss project need, construction, engineering, environmental and other transmission-related issues. Please stop by anytime to provide your comments on the project. No formal presentation is scheduled.

If you are unable to attend, you can find more information and submit comments on sb100transmission.com or by calling 303-318-6307.

PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE

Meeting #1

Date: Monday, March 17

Time: 6:00p.m.-8:00p.m.

Location: Parker Arts Culture & Events Center (PACE)
20000 Pikes Peak Ave.
Parker, CO 80138

Meeting #2

Date: Tuesday, March 18

Time: 4:00p.m.-6:00p.m.

Location: Heritage @ Eagle Bend
Golf Clubhouse
23155 E. Heritage Pkwy.
Aurora, CO 80016

Meeting #3

Date: Wednesday, March 19

Time: 6:00p.m.-8:00p.m.

Location: Highpoint Church
6450 S Southlands Pkwy.
Aurora, CO 80016

Meeting #4

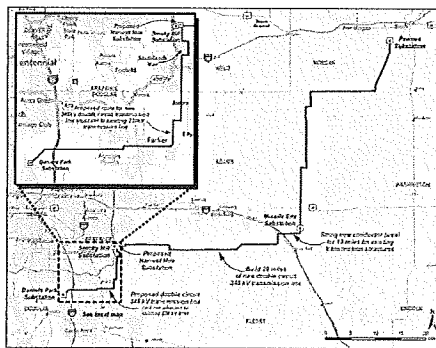
Date: Thursday, March 20

Time: 6:00p.m.-8:00p.m.

Location: The Wildlife Experience
10035 Peoria Street
Parker, CO 80134

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Question of Aurora moving to city-county may come down to cost

BY RACHEL SAPIN
Staff Writer

Aurora Mayor Steve Hogan says he hopes the initial sticker shock of becoming a city-county will wear off, because despite some big numbers of what it would cost the city to become a city-county similar to Denver or Broomfield, he thinks it looks pretty good.

In a worst-case scenario study, incorporating the city into its own county could cost \$325 million in new buildings and expenses. The study predicted a funding shortfall, at least to begin, according to the results of a nearly two-year analysis by Tischlerbise, a firm commissioned by the city council to examine the issue. According to the study, the gap between operating revenues and expenditures would cost the city around \$20 million a year for the next 20 years.

The study itself is a worst-case scenario that looks at what it would cost Aurora if it were to build all of its facilities from scratch and hire the maximum amount of staff to keep service levels the same as they are today after combining both governments. Now, city officials will begin looking at consolidations and ways to mitigate, reduce or offset costs. Hogan said he's optimistic that many of the costs can either be reduced or must be regardless of whether Aurora pursues city-county status.

"The interesting thing will be how it comes back," Hogan said. "How much would Aurora spend, for example, on services that Arapahoe County would be spending on anyhow?"

Aurora may be spread between three counties, but nearly 90 percent of Aurora's 339,000 residents live and pay taxes in Arapahoe County.

Hogan points to the cost of a new jail, which according to the study, would be the most expensive facility to build at \$97 million.

"Arapahoe County is going to spend money on a new jail in the next 20 years. The cost of the jail is in here, and Aurora citizens are going to pay for it one way or another," he said. "We don't have to build a brand new county jail, (at least not immediately). We can retrofit the city jail and turn it into a county jail for less than \$10 million. There are all kinds of things that are going to come out when we get more numbers to work with."

The study is vast and complicated. The numbers are big because the subject of the study are two of the state's largest governments: Aurora and Arapahoe County. When you drill down to

individual homeowners, the cost is easier to comprehend.

Stipulating that the worst-case-scenario cost of Aurora turning city-council works out to about \$20 million a year, it could mean local taxes needed to pay for that would come to about \$8 a month for an average Aurora homeowner. That very rough estimate was not provided by the city, but by using estimates created by a failed 2011 Aurora bond issue question. In a 2011 city council workshop that looked at estimated taxes, the city predicted it could raise about \$6 million a year by increasing residential property taxes by about \$16 a year for every \$100,000 in property market value.

According to real-estate tracker Trulia, an average home in Aurora now sells for \$189,000. Using the 2011 estimates, the city would need to increase residential property taxes about \$53 a year, or around \$4.50 a month to close the city-county financing gap.

City Finance Director Jason Batchelor did not respond to emails about those numbers, but says it's too early to tell how the city will raise money for city-county financing.

"We haven't made that final decision with council with where they want to land in terms of the sales tax and the property tax," he said.

Aurora's Deputy City Manager Michelle Wolfe said the study is meant to set a baseline moving forward rather than a budget to immediately act on.

"It's a model to run scenarios. It's premature to focus on those numbers because they're going to change," she said. "We're not going to proceed any further if we can't close that gap."

And Wolfe said Aurora has options for how it could do that if council takes the issue further.

"There are six total county-required positions under state law. Whether we elect or appoint those and how we provide those services is another opportunity for efficiencies," she said. She pointed to Broomfield, a city-county model the study includes as an example for Aurora, which contracts with Adams County for a coroner rather than providing its own.

Hogan says he thinks given the time city staff will need to come back to council with efficiencies, the issue will most likely not make the November ballot.

"My guess, it really is a 2015 issue," he said.

Council would have to go through multiple steps to make Aurora City-County a reality. It would first have to put a ballot question to the voters, and if that passed, the Colorado legislature would have to agree to put it to a statewide vote.

Dreams over time, one at a time

He has always dreamed.
Of what could be.

When he was 8, picking strawberries in the fields of his Mexican town.

When, at 12, he left home for the big city to sell popsicles and snow cones to help his parents provide for their family.

When, at 17, he walked from Tijuana over the mountain range into California, wanting the American dream.

"Era muy triste — la pobreza," he says. The poverty — it was very sad. "And it made me very sad. My dreams were different."

What he saw was a life of possibility — and music.

Singing.
Performing.
Applause.

And although it may not be exactly the original dream, what Ruben Escalera has now, at 54, is close enough to make him happy.

By most days, Ruben is a school custodian who takes pride in keeping his Douglas County high school neat, clean, ready for the students who fill its halls. Other days, he trades his working polo shirt for a crisp button-down, his white baseball cap for a black cowboy hat, and steps onto a stage to croon *norteño* music in a deep, resonant voice before crowd-packed venues in several Mexican states.

He is a wiry, compact man, a divorced father of three with brushes of gray in his sideburns and a closely trimmed beard and mustache. He walks with a measured step, and speaks with quiet assurance born of devout faith that seeks good in what comes his way.

"Gracias a Dios, nunca me di por ven-



Staff Columnist

Ann Macari Healey

cido," he says. Thanks be to God, I never gave up. "Luché, luché, luché, luché."

He fought, always.
And there was much to fight.

He lived in Corona, a rural town in Michoacán, a state just west of Mexico City. He was one of 13 children of a homemaker mother and a father who did everything from plumbing to bricklaying and construction.

Some of his brothers cut sugar cane; Ruben did, too. Mostly he picked strawberries with two of his sisters. He'd arrive at the field at 7 in the morning and pick for an hour, then head to school. At noon, he'd leave school and return to the fields for another two hours, before finishing out the afternoon with play and homework — "the typical life of a boy of 8 years old."

Because he had to leave school to help his father, he repeated first grade four times. He never made it to second grade.

"Es una tristeza," he says softly. "It is a sadness."

That reality derailed an early dream to be a priest, to study in a seminary. Instead, at 12, he left home for Mexico City to sell popsicles and snow cones. He lived with seven others who rented a house together.

"I believed that was the best way I could help my parents," he says.

But another dream — the one in which he was a singer — stayed quietly alive.

It was born in his home, among the instruments dispersed in corners — the guitar, the violin, the *guitarrón* of the mariachi tradition. His father played them all. His mother sang with "a precious voice." And his brothers and he joined in also.

"Nos traían esa herencia," he says. They gave us that heritage.

And much happiness.
At 9, he had won his first singing competition at the local theater, the first of many such performances in those young years.

But at 17, searching for a better life, he crossed the border illegally to join his brother in Los Angeles. He washed dishes and cars, worked in metal and carpet factories. He also learned to play the bass guitar and joined a mariachi group that performed in Mexican neighborhood nightclubs. It became a second, welcome source of income.

His voice, smooth and sonorous, brought him work in variety shows in Los Angeles and Las Vegas on long weekends.

When he married at 25, he turned to *norteño* music, most comparable to American country music, Ruben says. And for seven years he performed with a band. During that time, in 1986, Ronald Reagan's immigration policy, which provided amnesty to 3 million illegal immigrants, opened the door for Ruben to become a legal resident.

But then came the "sickness in his throat." Cancer. He stopped performing for two years to treat it, then joined an-

other band, the most successful one, with which he toured throughout the U.S. and Mexico for four years.

In 1999, the cancer returned. And "with all the pain in my soul, I had to leave the band." For much of two years, he communicated only by writing, praying that God would let him keep his voice. Eventually, his throat healed.

That twist in the road, however, brought him to Colorado and to the job he now holds and which, he says, he loves.

Six years ago, working hard to improve his English, he became a U.S. citizen.

Five years ago, he began to sing again.

The first time he performed, he cried. "It was a very big emotion, very big, very big. ... The people, they liked my work, accepted my style. ... I was happy."

He calls himself "El Vale de Michoacán," after the nickname his late father called him as a child — *vai-ay*, buddy. Two to three times a year he heads to Mexico to perform.

Life is good. He is content.

But he harbors one more dream, to one day dedicate himself only to his music.

Dreams are important, he says.

"When you know you can be someone, but you don't have the means, well, it is dreams that one uses to fight."

Like Ruben did.

Un sueño, one dream, at a time.

To listen to Ruben Escalera sing, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWysVfyFmg0.

Ann Macari Healey's column about people, places and issues of everyday life appears every other week. She can be reached at ahaley@coloradocommunitymedia.com or 303-566-4110.

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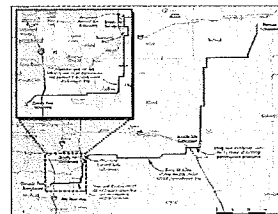
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Thrift shop helps those in need

Ideal Garage Sale offers deep discounts

By Chris Michlewicz
cmichlewicz@colorado-communitymedia.com

No matter how many times she gets knocked down, Jan Scharnell finds a way to pick herself back up.

She has endured a string of tragedies that would overwhelm the most hardened person: a fire consumed her home and everything inside at age 16; she lost her brother in 1988; most recently, in December 2012, her husband passed away.

During her times of financial need, Scharnell has managed to find help with food, clothes and bills, but says she doesn't often come across a resource for everyday necessities.

"When your house burns down, where do you go for that kind of stuff?" she said. "What if you no longer have a coffee pot? I would freak out if I don't have my coffee."

That's why Scharnell, 51, created a business that seeks to lend a friendly hand, shoulder or ear, along with deep discounts. Ideal Garage Sale, a consignment store tucked in a strip mall near Costco, has nearly 4,000 items in stock to prop up those who are going through a difficult time.

In a place where status is

a known commodity, there is little visible evidence of the family struggles that Scharnell and human services agencies know exist in the community.

"We make it comfortable for people to talk about it," she says.

Along with her longtime friend, Chris Dailey, and Lily, a Shar Pei/German Shepherd rescue who spends her days lazing on the merchandise, Scharnell has built a store that's becoming known across all demographics.

A constant flood of donations and consignment items keeps things busy, as does a steady stream of customers. Ideal Garage Sale also is connected with Air Scharnell, a hobby shop that specializes in remote control aircraft. With merchandise of all shapes and sizes overflowing the shelves, it might appear as though the store is in disarray, but everything is carefully marked, organized and categorized.

Ideal Garage Sale stocks a range of items, from comfy leather recliners and kitchen tables to antiques and toys. Even though the store has only been open for six months, Scharnell and Dailey have heard their fair share of stories and met plenty of people in need. One single mother of five recently loaded up on household goods at prices that were too good to pass up. Prices start at 50 cents.



Chris Dailey and Jan Scharnell, co-owners of Ideal Garage Sale in Parker, talk about the variety of items that are donated or left on consignment. Photo by Chris Michlewicz

"Even though we're a consignment store, a thrift store, whatever you want to call us, we work just like a garage sale: everything is negotiable," Scharnell said.

All of the proceeds from the sale of donated items are put into a separate "ministry fund" used to rescue people who are down on their luck. Ideal Garage Sale is not a nonprofit and has no ties to one particular organization, but victims of tragedy are sent from churches, task forces, the American Red Cross and

law enforcement agencies.

"If we don't have what they need, I will take money from the ministry fund and go get it for them, because I've been there," she said. "I

know what it feels like to not be able to afford anything."

Ideal Garage Sale, 18320 E Cottonwood Drive, Suite G-2, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Fri-

day and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

For more information, visit www.idealgaragesaleparker.com or call 303-840-1779.



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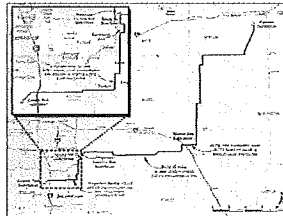
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News

Your Community

Council approves backyard chickens

By Megan Mitchell
YourHub Reporter

Chickens will soon land in the backyards of Aurora residents who launched a grassroots campaign last spring to end the city's ban on urban chicken farming.

"A year ago, myself and two other ladies were sitting at my kitchen table, talking about how to get chickens in Aurora," said Ward I councilwoman Sally Mounier. "We decided that we would have a grassroots campaign, and (we do)."

Mounier was looking out to a crowd of nearly 100 residents who packed the council chambers for a public hearing Feb. 24 to argue for their right to keep up to four hens in their backyards.

Many of the citizens who spoke were linked to Chicks in Aurora, the neighborhood movement that started at Mounier's kitchen table with the goal of bringing urban home-steading to Aurora.

One co-founder of the group, Clea Danaan, launched a blog and held meet-up groups on the advice of Mounier. Danaan circulated petitions and encouraged other members to call their ward representatives relentlessly.

"We needed to prove that people wanted this," Danaan said. "Our focus was on finding people who were interested in supporting chickens and ... (being) constantly present in the ears of their representatives."

The chicken ordinance passed an initial vote of 6-4. Dissenting council members Bob Roth, Molly Markert, Bob Broom and Brad Pierce all said they couldn't support it because too many of their constituents didn't want hens in Aurora.

"I was at a town hall meeting 10 days ago and I asked for feedback on this issue," Roth said. "People were overwhelmingly against

chickens in Ward 5, and I represent these people."

Molly Markert said most of her Ward IV constituents didn't think too much of the proposal, and that's why none of them came to speak at the public hearing.

"People could not believe this was serious," she said. "I imagine we'll see some people storming the chambers to repeal it."

She said that since the ordinance doesn't negatively impact residents' safety or property value, most indignant citizens will carry on not caring.

"Most of us would like a more sophisticated, suburban image," Markert said. "Chickens are agricultural creatures that belong in a farm setting."

Residents of Aurora can't order their hens just yet, but the permitting process should be hammered out by this summer, officials in Aurora's neighborhood services department said.

The final vote is March 24, followed by a 30-day wait period.

According to the ordinance, urban chicken farmers need to have a permit and pay a one-time fee of \$40. They do not need to seek the approval of their neighbors to have hens, but they do need permission to place a coop closer than 15 feet from their neighbor's property.

Council also amended the ordinance to impose a \$150 fine on any chicken keeper who keeps a rooster more than 30 days after being warned. Roosters are not allowed in residential areas.

Aurora joins chicken-keeping cities like Denver, Colorado Springs, Fort Collins, Lakewood, Centennial and Englewood with the passing of the ordinance.

Megan Mitchell: 303-954-2650, or
mmitchell@denverpost.com

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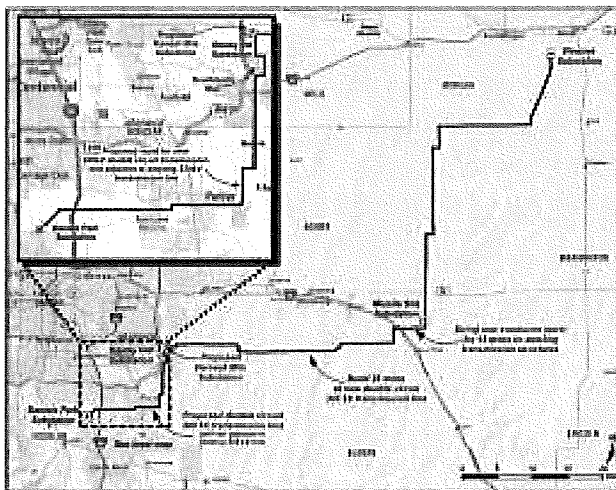
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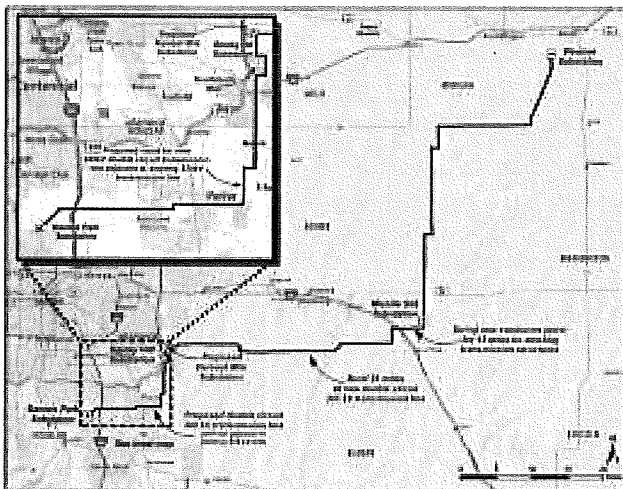
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Your Contribution



Gov. John Hickenlooper signs legislation allowing community colleges to offer some four-year degrees. Joe Marquez, YourHub Contributor

Community colleges to offer some four-year degrees

By Joe Marquez
YourHub Contributor

Gov. John Hickenlooper signed legislation Feb. 27 authorizing community colleges to offer four-year degrees in career and technical fields. Twenty-one other states now offer four-year degrees at community colleges similar to the degrees in this legislation.

The legislation authorizes community colleges to offer four-year bachelor of applied science degrees, which covers a wide array of fields, including dental hygiene, culinary arts, and water-quality management.

This legislation was initiated by the Colorado Community College System to address the gap in Colorado higher education in which students who want to pursue career and technical studies do not have access to a four-year degree in their field.

Many specialized technical jobs increasingly require bachelor degrees for career advancement. However, most career and technical courses are not offered at and/or do not transfer to four-year institutions. This creates situations in which students need to take six years of higher education to earn a bachelor degree.

By allowing community colleges to offer bachelors of applied sci-

ence degrees, the cost and time of achieving a four-year degree is significantly lowered. Also, many students cannot leave their communities because of family and job commitments. By offering students opportunities at community colleges enabled in this legislation, students can stay in their communities and get the education employers are demanding.

Based on a survey of more than 1,300 community college students in career and technical education fields, an overwhelming majority (84 percent) want community colleges to offer this degree.

"These degrees will allow students to stay in their communities where they live and work," said Dr. Nancy McCallin, president of the Colorado Community College System. "This ability is especially critical in the rural communities where it is next to impossible for students to leave to pursue an education and where there are not any four-year degree granting institutions. This legislation will help resolve the significant gap in higher education attainment between the rural and urban areas in Colorado, which is one of the highest in the nation."

Joe Marquez is manager of communications for the Colorado Community College System.