

Union Annexation passes in Firestone Town votes yes in special election

By Jen Reeder
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FIRESTONE – The residents of Firestone have spoken: they want the Union development to be part of their town. In a special election Sept. 30, over 500 people voted to approve annexing the property, while over 350 residents voted against the project.

“The validation to the elected officials is the strong message here,” said Martin Dickey, COO of 4C Development Group, the property’s developer. “We’re very appreciative of their willingness to partner with us and look forward to partnering with them for years to come.”

Members of the grassroots organization InformFirestone brought about the election by collecting signatures for two petitions calling for a referendum. They needed to have two petitions signed because the Union development was annexed by Firestone in two parts, Ordinances 678 and 679. Likewise, there were

two ballot issues, A, which received 509 yes votes and 359 no votes, and B, which garnered 510 for and 357 against.

The Union development plans call for construction of 300 to 700 homes, including senior housing, and 680,000 square feet of commercial development on the 119 corridor near Union Reservoir.

Development on the property, which is owned by LifeBridge Christian Church, has already been approved by Weld County, and the owners – under the name 4C Development Group – were involved in annexation negotiations with Longmont officials for years, and even approved it in 2007. But the annexation was challenged by residents, and when a new board was elected in November later that year, 4C withdrew its annexation request and turned to Firestone.

The Firestone board of trustees voted to annex the Union development in May 2008.

At a political forum hosted by the Carbon Valley Herald Sept. 24,

InformFirestone co-founder Dan Sanger said the group’s original intention wasn’t to overturn the annexation, just to slow down the process so that residents could get answers to questions about the development. InformFirestone has repeatedly asked about the status of a Public Infrastructure Reimbursement Agreement, which wasn’t completed prior to annexation.

“We felt in some ways that they moved too quickly,” he said.

Then Firestone Mayor Chad Auer and former mayor Mike Simone sent letters to the editors of local newspapers, including the Herald, claiming “much of the opposition to Firestone’s efforts in this case are rooted outside our town – even outside our region. Generously funded special interest groups are integral pieces of the opposition’s efforts.”

Because only Firestone residents are allowed to join InformFirestone, and because the grassroots group had trouble coming up with money to print flyers about the election, Sanger felt falsely attacked.

“It wasn’t until recently that we decided we wanted to actively campaign against this,” he said. “We were cast as opponents in a campaign we weren’t running in.”

After the election results were posted at the Firestone Town Hall, Sanger said that he was pleased with the strong voter turnout.

“We made our case and the people of the town decided (Union) was a good thing,” Sanger said.

Tom Ward, co-founder of InformFirestone, said though the Union annexation passed, the group will continue to monitor it



Photo by Jen Reeder

The Union development on the 119 corridor has been approved for annexation not only by the elected officials of Firestone, but its residents as well.

as well as future developments.

“This isn’t the end of InformFirestone,” Ward said.

Of the defeat, he added, “Not every David and Goliath story ends with the little guy winning.”

The Union annexation still faces challenges from the city of Longmont, which voted June 24 to annex Sandstone Ranch, a property on the 119 corridor, in order to create an overlapping area of dispute.

But for the moment, city officials are savoring the victory. Mayor Chad Auer said he was pleased with the outcome.

“I feel growth issues are always contentious, and as we go forward, it’s important to think progressively. Growth is a reality. What we need to do is do it in a smart way, and that’s what we’re going to do,” he said.

He said he respects the members of InformFirestone and looks forward to working with them in the future.



Photo by Jen Reeder

Connie Powers checks in with Noni Hepp to vote in the special election on the Union annexation at Firestone Town Hall on Sept. 30.

48 creates ‘legal nightmare’

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amendment. “I believe that the woman, the doctor and family have to make the decision. If we change this we would have to change 20,000 laws that are on the books. The way it’s written right now puts all women in harm’s way.”

Whitcomb said that the amendment opens a “world of unintended consequences.” He then suggested that the amendment was sponsored by wealthy interests. “I’m a little bit tired of our state constitution book becoming a coloring book for the rich and famous.” Later, he added, “The bill would not have an impact on the number of abortions. It would have a net impact on the number of abortions done safely.”

Mitchell initially said he’d vote no on the amendment. He did respond to Whitcomb’s allegation that the amendment was backed

by the wealthy and said that he had met the woman who was spearheading the amendment and “she’s neither rich nor famous, but she’s a well-intentioned citizen doing her best within the legislative process.” During his closing statement Mitchell said he hadn’t made a final decision on 48, but was leaning against the amendment because of its “flaws.”

If passed, Amendment 48 would define the term “person” in the state constitution as being any human being from the moment of fertilization. This means that a fertilized egg would have the same legal rights as a person. Proponents say the amendment is a “common sense” way to define and protect human life. Opponents charge that it goes too far and would create “a legal nightmare” in determining how human rights will be defined.

Tri-Town area receives first responder grant

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FIRESTONE – All law enforcement and public works personnel in Firestone, Frederick and Dacono will be able to better serve the Tri-Town area, thanks to a Personal Protection Equipment grant awarded by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The amount of the grant is \$41,485.

Firestone Emergency Manager Lt. Stacy Davis, who applied for the grant, said the protection equipment will help provide “a new tier of response” when dealing with a contaminated environment.

“It is an enhancement to our existing toolbox,” Davis said. “We

recognize the need to provide a high level of service to our community.”

Davis said the PPE grant was very competitive because there have been dramatic federal funding cutbacks.

“For us to receive this award, it is truly a blessing,” she said.

The grant money will help equip a total of 86 first responders, and provide additional equipment to local firefighters. Davis said she applied for the grant not just for Firestone, but for Tri-Towns, because she felt it was important for all of the area’s first responders to be afforded the same provisions.

“There’s a partnership here,” Davis said. “We provide mutual support.”