

# Antero says it has no plans to drill in town of Silt

By DENNIS WEBB  
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SILT — Antero Resources officials have sought to dispel speculation by residents that it plans to drill for oil and gas in the town of Silt.

The company's denial of that rumor hasn't fully eased the concerns of some residents about the fact that its operations are moving ever closer to the town.

Drilling used to primarily raise concerns about companies

disturbing wildlife, Silt resident David Hare said in an interview.

"Now they're disturbing communities," he said.

Antero met last week with several dozen residents in Silt. The company holds occasional public meetings to provide updates on its operations between Rifle and New Castle as part of a voluntary development plan it agreed to with communities and residents in the area.

That agreement was consid-

ered a landmark one when it was adopted several years ago and figured prominently as state officials developed new oil and gas rules, which include a similar voluntary process for companies to put together comprehensive development plans to address concerns such as impacts to wildlife and public health.

Antero now is creating such a plan under the state rules for the area between Rifle and New Castle and one for the unincor-

porated community of Battlement Mesa, where it is pursuing a controversial proposal to drill 200 wells.

Rumors of possible drilling in Silt arose after some residents received notices about an Antero well-spacing proposal in the area. Unlike in Battlement Mesa, where Antero is planning well pads within the community, Antero's vice president of production, Kevin Kilstrom, told Silt residents the company wouldn't be drilling within the

town's limits.

Eventually, though, it plans to do much more drilling on the north side of the Colorado River, closer to Silt.

Hare worries that incidents such as well-site explosions could endanger residents. Fellow resident Georgann Barclay wasn't assured by Antero pointing out it planned to drill no closer than 500 feet from homes in Battlement Mesa.

"To have a well 500 feet from my house? I don't think so," she

said after last week's meeting.

Others at the meeting praised Antero for its ongoing efforts to meet with residents and to reduce impacts of drilling through means such as installing water pipelines to limit truck traffic, and not using pits.

Kilstrom said it's to Antero's benefit to constantly look at ways to minimize impacts and keep neighbors happy.

"We have no incentive not to explore an alternative that's better," he said.

## CAREFREE AND CAR-FREE



DEAN HUMPHREY/The Daily Sentinel

A couple walks west in the 400 block of Main Street, dwarfed by an excavator as it removes curb and gutter from the Fourth Street intersection as part of the Main Street Uplift project. The intersection is closed, shutting off a popular southern route through the city.

# County workers may borrow from retirement fund

By MIKE WIGGINS  
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Mesa County employees who may be strapped for cash in this recession soon will be able to take out a loan from their retirement fund under a change approved by county commissioners on Monday.

Commissioners Steve Acquafresca and Janet Rowland agreed to amend the Colorado County Officials and Employees Retirement Association retirement plan to allow employees to borrow against their vested 401(a) account balance. Commissioner Craig Meis was absent from the meeting.

Assistant County Administrator Stefani Conley said county administrators considered permitting the county's nearly 1,000 employees to borrow against their retirement fund after an employee approached them about a month ago.

"This employee said, 'I've got some critical financial needs. If I could get funds for this, it would help immensely,'" Conley said.

Conley told commissioners employees can borrow up to 50 percent of their vested account balance — between \$2,500 and \$50,000 — for any reason. Employees can take out only one loan at a time.

Loans will be repaid through payroll deductions, with participants charged loan administration and annual service fees. Workers who leave their em-

ployment with the county prior to repaying the loan must repay the loan immediately upon their employment with the county ending. Failure to do so will result in Internal Revenue Service penalties.

In formulating its own program, Conley said Mesa County took pointers from Jefferson County, which placed no conditions on employees taking out a loan.

"They just opened the floodgates," she said, noting that as a result, "They've got some employees upside-down in their retirement accounts."

Conley emphasized that employees should consider borrowing money from their retirement fund a last resort.

"This is not something you would use to buy a snowmobile or take a trip to Hawaii," she said.

Acquafresca noted there are risks to employees who don't manage their loans and retirement funds well and asked county staff to provide quarterly updates on the program.

Rowland said she's more interested in seeing how the program affects the county. She said since it's employees' money, they can spend it any way they want.

"I'm not their mother, and you're not their father," Rowland told Acquafresca.

# Man accused of sexually assaulting three girls

By PAUL SHOCKLEY  
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A Fruita man was arrested Sunday on suspicion he sexually assaulted three young girls over nearly six years.

Jose Elizario Gallegos, 58, 816 E. Ottley Ave., surrendered at Mesa County Jail on a warrant alleging five counts of sexual assault on a child and two counts alleging sexual abuse on a child in a pattern of sexual abuse.

Gallegos is being held without bond on the allegations and is expected to make his first court appearance today.

According to an arrest warrant affidavit, the alleged

*According to an arrest warrant affidavit, the alleged victims, now ages 11, 9, and 12, told a Grand Junction police detective they were assaulted at two of Jose Gallegos' former Grand Junction homes.*

victims, now ages 11, 9, and 12, told a Grand Junction police detective they were assaulted at two of Gallegos' former Grand Junction homes.

Gallegos became the focus of an investigation after the mother of one of the girls told police her daughter confided she'd been inappropriately touched on several occasions. The girl's

mother confronted Gallegos within hours of hearing the claims.

"(Woman) said Gallegos acted surprised but didn't say anything," the affidavit said.

The girl said she didn't come forward earlier with the information because she was "scared maybe she had done something wrong," the affidavit said.

The girl said the assaults started when she was between ages 5 and 7, and outlined for a detective several incidents when Gallegos allegedly touched her in private areas. She initially started going to Gallegos' home after school, where she was paid to clean, the affidavit said.

She told a detective that Gallegos explained it was "OK" for the girl and her young cousin to inappropriately touch one another, the affidavit said. The girl said this happened five to 10 times at one home.

"He told them ... there was nothing wrong with it," the affidavit said. "He also told them if they told they would get in trouble."

# Help with jobless benefits available this week

By AMY HAMILTON  
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Having trouble receiving unemployment benefits?

If you're a Mesa County resident and have hit a snag receiving a jobless claim, make plans to speak with a counselor during meetings Thursday through Saturday at the Mesa County Workforce Center, 2897 North Ave.

State counselors will be available at those times and are authorized to handle issues surrounding claims, said Suzie

Miller, an employment specialist at the workforce center.

"This is going to be going to be very helpful for people," she said. "We don't have the access or authorization to handle claims. That's why this is so important. This is maybe a way they can get their case cleaned out."

About 7,000 Mesa County residents received unemployment benefits in December. Handling claims can be difficult for people unaccustomed to the process or unable to figure out how to file

claims on the Internet. Getting questions answered via phone can reportedly take three to four hours. And representatives at the local work force center largely are unable to help clear up issues in the benefits program.

Counselors who visited in February were able to help most of about 400 people who showed to resolve issues with their benefits, Miller said.

The counselors are heading back to Grand Junction after learning there is additional need for their assistance, she

said.

Counselors will visit with residents in alphabetized order according to the first letter of last names.

- The schedule is as follows:
- Thursday, 9 a.m.- noon: Last names A-C
  - Thursday, 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.: Last names D-G
  - Friday, 9 a.m.- noon: Last names H-L
  - Friday, 1 p.m.- 5 p.m.: Last names M-Q
  - Saturday, 8 a.m.- 1p.m.: Last names R-Z

## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Pit bull attack reported

The owner of some alpacas took matters into her own hands when pit bulls began attacking her animals on Sunday, according to the Mesa County Sheriff's Department. A woman in the 3100 block of F 3/4 Road shot the dogs with a BB gun as they were attacking her animals and chased the

dogs to a neighbor's house. The dogs were taken away by Mesa County Animal Control officers and neither party wanted to press charges, the sheriff's department said.

### According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Denise Johann, 38, on Sunday, was arrested on suspicion of taking items valued at less than \$100 from another person at 2809

North Ave.

### According to the Mesa County Sheriff's Department:

- A vandal on Sunday shot a BB through a window of a vehicle parked in the 600 block of 33 Road. Damages are estimated at \$200
- A vandal on Sunday damaged a tire on a vehicle parked in the 500 block of Campbell Way. Damages are estimated at \$125.

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## Amazon cuts off Colo. affiliates because of tax

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER — Amazon is cutting off affiliates that help it sell products in Colorado because of a new online sales tax law.

Affiliates earn money by using their Web sites to link customers to online sellers.

Amazon told affiliates on Monday it would no longer pay them advertising fees because of the new state law.

The law says online retail-

ers either have to start collecting state sales tax themselves or send annual notices to customers telling them to pay the tax.

Amazon says the law is cumbersome and no other state has similar rules.

Affiliates feared the tax would hurt them, and lawmakers changed the bill to try to prevent them from being harmed.

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