

Basalt Report: Council considers transitional housing for Response

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A rendering of the plan for the proposed Response building in Basalt. Courtesy graphic

On Tuesday evening, Basalt Town Council held their regular meeting to discuss several ordinances and hold public hearings, among the topics: changes to parking laws, approving a PUD amendment for the development of a domestic abuse shelter on East Cody Lane, establishing a licensing system for short-term rental businesses and establishing regulations for the Basalt

Fairview cemetery.

The meeting opened with few remarks from council members and no public comment. Among the remarks, member Ryan Slack mentioned that of 6,330 boat inspections performed this year, there were 198 decontaminations, 13 of which due to the discovery of invasive zebra mussels. Zebra mussels, native to freshwater lakes in Eastern Europe, reproduce quickly and pose a significant threat to native plankton populations. Colorado Parks and Wildlife has recently confirmed that Highline Lake near Fruita is infested with these mussels, which commonly spread between bodies of water via boats.

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The first order of the meeting was for the amendment of various traffic and parking codes. The initial draft of these codes was made back in 2018, and since then various streets have opened up as a result of the Sopris Meadows Development. The new amendment is primarily to include these new roads in the regulations document, as well as to correct some minor errors.

The second action item which took up most of the meeting, concerned the approval of a PUD amendment for a domestic abuse shelter as a special review use. The prospective shelter would be operated by Response and located at the cul-de-sac at the end of East Cody Lane. The shelter would include both transitional residency for domestic abuse survivors and their children, as well as office space for Response employees. Representatives from Response as well as their consulting firm, BendonAdams, were present to provide background for their development and to answer any questions.



Response, founded in Aspen in 1983 and represented by executive director Shannon Meyer, seeks to provide “individual advocacy, crisis intervention, support groups, therapy, legal assistance, emergency financial aid and housing assistance” to victims of domestic and sexual abuse throughout Eagle and Pitkin counties. The nonprofit addresses a rising issue in the Valley: Meyer stated of last year, “[Response] served 175 survivors and answered over 300 calls to the crisis headline, and those numbers have been increasing by 20% each year since the start of the pandemic.”

In terms of housing, Response provides aid in three different ways: the first is emergency shelter provided at local hotels, the second is three-month transitional housing for survivors to readjust and find a new independence, the third is long-term rental housing. Transitional housing is one of the more difficult pieces of the puzzle and one of the most important. \

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Initially, transitional housing was established in rental apartments throughout the valley, but recent difficulty in finding available housing has meant that supply has not kept pace with survivors' needs. Without transitional housing, this means that victims of domestic abuse may remain in their households and abusive relationships for as long as it takes until new transitional housing becomes available.

The proposed building would have seven rooms for survivors and their families and feature a secure design and security on staff. There would also be a space for children to play, as Meyer stated that around 70% of survivors live with children. There was a unanimously approved motion for a second reading and public hearing of this proposal on Dec. 13.



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Afterward, there was a reading for an amendment to the Basalt Municipal Code to create a special class of business license for short-term rentals. Town Manager Ryan Mahoney, who introduced the amendment, stated that “staff believes that there are between 40 and 80 short-term rentals in Basalt, and currently only between seven and 10 are licensed.”

The licenses would serve to allow Town Hall to track the presence of these businesses and stay informed about their economic impact. The license would cost \$300 to fund labor and tracking software, in addition to a \$10 sales tax license fee. A second hearing was unanimously approved for Dec. 13, at wh. ▲Top

point penalties may be discussed and approved for operating without a license.



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Next was the adoption of rules and regulations for the usage of Basalt Fairview Cemetery. Notably, the town is not to be held responsible for disinterment, and families who wish to disinter a body must employ a funeral director. Additionally, animal burials shall not be permitted in Basalt Fairview and citizens wishing to memorialize gravestones may not use candles or any open flame to do so, nor glass containers for flowers. This was also approved unanimously, along with a final amendment to the fee schedule to incorporate fees regarding both the new cemetery regulations as well as the short-term rental business licenses.

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