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Annexation hearing lasts into night

Karmin Line project draws three hours of public comment and counting

BY SAVANNAH ELLER
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As of 9 p.m. Tuesday, the public hearing to decide the fate of an annexation request for a large housing development southeast of Colorado

Springs city limits was set to last longer into the night in City Council chambers. The meeting is the latest in hearings on the Karman Line project, which would connect roughly 1,900 acres via a thin line of land to the rest of the

city. Last year, the Colorado Springs Planning Commission recommended the project to the council by a vote of 4 to 3. Developers have said they plan to build a variety of housing and mixed-use devel-

opment on the land between the Banning Lewis Ranch subdivision and Schriever Space Force Base, amounting to more than 6,500 homes. The meeting Tuesday had a series of items for council members to approve or reject

for the annexation. Members of the public spoke for more than three hours, with the majority coming out against the project. Many of the dozens of speakers said they felt the development would put strain on

More City Council news inside:

- Council passes retail marijuana rules as public pushes back on possible vote in April
- E-bike debate in Springs could be decided by voters

Read these stories on **A3**

SEE KARMIN LINE • PAGE 4



PHOTOS BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS
Pete Hegseth, center, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to be Defense secretary, arrives Tuesday to appear before the Senate Armed Services Committee for his confirmation hearing at the Capitol in Washington.

Hegseth fights back against 'smear campaign'

GOP heaps praise on secretary of Defense nominee as Dems charge he is unqualified

News services

WASHINGTON • Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the Defense Department, fought back against allegations of personal misconduct, sexual assault, and excessive drinking, as well as overall questions over his lack of qualifications to lead the Pentagon on Tuesday.

For more than four hours, Hegseth was grilled by Democrats on the Senate Armed Services Committee while Republicans came to his defense and praised his "warrior mentality" as they look to shepherd him over the finish line as Trump's secretary of defense.

During the hearing, the first for Trump's Cabinet picks, Hegseth fought back against what he classed as a media "smear



Pete Hegseth, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to be Defense secretary, embraces his wife, Jennifer Rauche, at the completion of a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Tuesday for his confirmation at the Capitol in Washington.

SEE HEGSETH • PAGE 4

'Sick building getting sicker'

Jenkins Middle School to close, students move to nearby schools next week

BY ERIC YOUNG
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Jenkins Middle School will close its doors Friday for the rest of the school year after it was found to be structurally unsafe. Colorado Springs District 11 announced via an email sent Tuesday to families attending the school that it will close by the end of the day Friday after assessments by the Colorado Springs Fire Department and Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control determined it had reached a "critical point" and was in need of fire safety repairs.

Gazette news partner KOAA obtained a letter from the state division Monday that detailed unsafe conditions at the building, including cracked walls and structural settlement and shifting among the deficiencies found in December during a fire inspection. As a

SEE JENKINS • PAGE 4

Over one-third of state households enduring financial hardship, according to report

BY DEBBIE KELLEY
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A report being released Wednesday from United Way Colorado and Ent Credit Union shows 37% of residents statewide and 34% in El Paso County are not earning enough to cover basic expenses such as housing, health care, transportation, food, child care and a rudimentary smartphone plan.

Nearly 870,000 households out of about 2.4 million statewide were studied, more than two-thirds of which contain wage earners working in retail, food service, grocery, education, health care, law enforcement, firefighting, lodging, cleaning and other sectors.

A national research organization and grassroots movement that United Way of Northern New Jersey

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WEATHER B6
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