

The Battlement Mesa Service Association

What's all of this Incorporation talk?

By Keith Lammey, President, Battlement Mesa Service Association

If you live in Battlement Mesa and you've lived here more than a week or so, you know that we aren't really a formal town or a city. In short, we are not incorporated. Instead, we are an HOA.

Over the many years that Battlement Mesa has existed, residents, visitors and others have asked why isn't Battlement Mesa a town rather than "just a Homeowners Association?" The easy answer to that question is, "Well, just because." The truth is there are both advantages and disadvantages to being incorporated vs. being an HOA. I am not an expert on the subject but I know enough about it to know that it is a very complex issue.

In order to understand the pros and cons of incorporation, an incorporation study is being conducted.

Long time residents may remember that an Incorporation Feasibility Study was completed in March 1995. Several local residents including Bill Wilde and even the current Battlement Mesa Metro District and BMSA Association Manager, Steve Rippey (he was the Garfield County Assessor back then) contributed to this approximately eighty page study.

Officially the study concluded that, "The Incorporation Feasibility Study Committee sees no services justification and no desirable financial reasons to pursue incorporation of a City of Battlement Mesa at this time, but suggests that population and potential tax base volumes be monitored to evaluate when a favorable financial feasibility determination can be achieved."

This two year study concluded that it didn't make economic sense to incorporate, so Battlement Mesa has continued as an HOA community in unincorporated Garfield County.

So who's behind this effort? Some members of our community have frequently suggested that "if we were a real city then (insert your favorite thing that you hate about being governed by an HOA)." Other members, like me, just think that after fifteen years it is time to take another look at incorporation.

And then there is the County. Why the county? It is simple, really. Battlement Mesa is a very large financial drain on Garfield County. We're sort of like their thirty-five year old son that is still living at home and not contributing to the household expenses.

An example of the financial impact that Battlement Mesa has on the county are our streets. Battlement Parkway, Stone Quarry Road, Spencer, Sippelle and all of the streets in the Tamarisk Village, Tamarisk Meadows, Willow Creek, Monument Creek, Battlement Creek and The Reserve are county roads. The county is responsible for maintaining them and for plowing them. If we were a city, the city of Battlement Mesa would have to maintain the roads.

Several months back a few of us approached the county about "helping" fund another incorporation study. Much to my surprise, the county has agreed to not only help but to bear the entire cost of the present study. The new study is being done by Winston Associates/BBC Research & Consulting and is underway and should be completed in a few months.

It is far too early to know what the study will conclude. Some residents are convinced that the study will show that nothing has really changed and it doesn't make economic sense to incorporate. They may well be correct. And, even if the study shows that it is economically feasible to incorporate, there are many other factors that would have to be considered before moving forward to becoming an incorporated community.

There is little doubt in my mind that if we didn't care what it cost and if we had the political will we could incorporate, but I am equally convinced that the study will show that, like it or not, our HOA style of government is far more affordable than the alternative.

(Originally published in the Grand Valley Echo).