

Previous owner could get hotel back

TOM MORTON Casper Star-Tribune | Posted: Wednesday, June 30, 2010

CASPER — The Parkway Plaza Hotel and Convention Centre will probably revert to local control by the end of the year, if not sooner, said its former owner, who still has a financial stake in the facility.

“We’re optimistic it will all work out,” Pat Sweeney said. “The timing, we don’t know.”

Since it was sold in December 2008, central Wyoming’s largest hotel has racked up hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of liens and some lawsuits filed against it by businesses that weren’t paid, and liens from the state, which did not receive sales and unemployment insurance taxes.

On top of that, dozens of people who bought more than \$3.8 million worth of bonds sold by the new primary owner, Houston-based Amidee Hotels and Resorts Inc., and its subsidiary, Amidee Wyoming LLC, have filed liens against the property at Interstate 25 and Center Street to secure their debt.

In anticipation of the probable change of ownership, Sweeney will ask the Casper City Council to conduct a public hearing on July 6 to transfer a retail liquor license from his business, Hospitality Development Corp. at 141 S. Center St., to the Parkway at 123 W. E St.

“If the transfer of Retail Liquor License 13 is approved, the transfer will become effective upon the change of ownership of the hotel property,” according to the June 17 memo from the city’s administrative services director, V.H. McDonald, to City Manager Tom Forslund.

Sweeney asked for the hearing in January, and then asked for it to be continued indefinitely.

At that time, the public learned that Sweeney’s Hospitality Development Corp. sold the Parkway on a contract for deed, meaning he could regain ownership if Amidee Hotels and Resorts doesn’t meet its obligations.

The liquor license transfer is a procedural move, Sweeney said. “By having that available, there won’t be any interrupted service to the guests.”

Since January, he has been working with Amidee Hotels and Resorts Inc. and a company specializing in business recovery, he said.

He doesn’t want the Parkway to go the way of the legendary Hitching Post Inn in Cheyenne, which had filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in February 2009 and was closed in September by the city because of safety and code violations.

Unlike Cheyenne, which had Little America and the Holiday Inn to absorb convention crowds, Casper has only the Parkway Plaza, he said.

The Parkway’s general manager, Renee Penton-Jones, said business has been good with the College National Finals Rodeo and recent conventions.

The Parkway has been paying its creditors, but the problems with Amidee Hotels and Resorts Inc. have been hard on the employees, Penton-Jones said.

Amidee Hotels & Resorts Inc. is a subsidiary of the Houston Amidee Capital Group, which — along with 10 related companies — filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in early January.

The hotel subsidiary, which owns the Parkway and the shuttered Hotel Niagara in Niagara Falls, N.Y., shares similar financial problems with Amidee Capital Group, but it has not filed for bankruptcy.