Housing plan hits roadblock

By Fraser Sherman Staff writer

By the time Destin's City Council approves the financing for its attainable housing program, it may be too late to buy the housing, City Manager Greg

Destin **Affordable** housing? call: \$\$\$\$\$

Kisela says.

Next month, the council will be asked to vote on signing a \$15 million contract with developer James Monsees for 66 units Sugarloaf

Apartments, which Monsees plans to buy and convert to condominiums.

On Monday, however, the council postponed its vote on taking out a loan to buy the units because of concerns the city's unofficial housing committee violated the law.

Kisela said in an interview that although the Nov. 7 vote on the contract has also been postponed, the contract could up for a vote before the council votes on the loan. In that case, he said, the deal would hinge on how long Monsees would be willing to wait.

If the deal goes through, the city would purchase the condos, then sell them to qualified

Please see HOUSE page A8

City of Destin wants feedback on airport noise study

By Fraser Sherman Staff writer

How loud should Destin Airport be, and what should be done to make it quieter?

If you have an opinion, October is the month when it could make a difference. The LPA Group, which recently completed a report on noise at the Okaloosa County-owned airport, is taking comments on its report through the end of the month, Community Development Director Jerry Mucci said in an

"I cannot stress how important it is for the community to provide their review comments," Mucci said in a news release. "We will be living with the results for years. It is in the neighborhoods' interest to provide very thorough comments.

Some Destin homeowners have many complaints about living next to the airport, but noise tops the bill: planes that sit on the tarmac revving their engines, dead-of-night flights, and the steady growth in airport activity and sound.

In 2004, the county contracted with LPA Group to perform a noise study and recommend ways to reduce noise around the air port. LPA finished measuring noise levels last year, using a computer model that calculates noise based on the make and number of planes using the airport, plus some real-world

Please see NOISE page A6

Tim Creehan: Future TV star?



A STAR IS BORN: Destin chef Tim Creehan, who owns Beach Walk Cafe, discusses plans to star in a reality television series. He came to Destin 19 years ago to open Marina Cafe. Creehan is collaborating with Destin entertainer David Seering to open a new restaurant, Harbor Grille. The restaurant is scheduled to open in December in a site overlooking the city's harbor.



KEEPING IT REAL: Tim Creehan is negotiating for a TV series that would take the Destin chef into celebrity kitchens.

Prominent chef in talks with Food Network

By Dusty Ricketts Staff writer

Tim Creehan is already one of Destin's most prominent chefs.

If plans for a reality television series come to fruition, he could become one of the most well-known chefs in America.

Creehan, the chef and owner of Beach Walk Cafe, is negotiating with the Food Network to air a weekly reality show he would star in. If picked up by the network it could air as soon as the summer 2006 television season, Creehan said.

"My goal is to provide a quality product," Creehan said. "Becoming a food celebrity would be a bonus, but it's not my ultimate goal."

The reality show is being financed by Fisher & Paykel, the parent company of Dynamic Cooking Systems, which supplies the cooking ranges, broilers, griddles and grills in Creehan's restaurants. Creehan is the spokesman for Dynamic Cooking Systems.

Fisher & Paykel, one of the biggest appliance manufacturers in Australia and Zealand, purchased Dynamic Cooking Systems last year to expand its presence in the United States.

Creehan said he approached Fisher & Paykel about his idea for a television

Please see **STAR** page **A6**



Log photo by KATHY HARRISON

WORRIED: Residents of the Jetty East condo worry about the integrity of the building following continued beach erosion in storms and hur-

On Holiday Isle, residents worry

■ Some say sea walls are the answer

By Liza Martin Staff writer

When Louisville native John Besore pinched money from his and his wife's retirement fund to buy a Jetty East condominium on Destin's Holiday Isle, he thought it would be a good investment.

That was a week before Hurricane Ivan slammed into Destin in September 2004. And before Hurricanes Dennis, Katrina and Rita hit

this summer. "Now I'm out \$30,000,"

Besore said. Now Besore and other condo owners, as well as Jetty East's property manager, Phil Lofé, desperately want to build a temporary seawall to protect the property. "Something has to be done.

We have no protection,' s a i d , a d d i n g that he and other Beach owners

Issues \$400,000 to build a Lofé 📮

attended several meetings on behalf of Jetty East, including a Walton County Tourist and Development Council meeting on Sept. 28, which focused on temporary beach armoring in

Walton County, and A Destin City Council meeting on Oct.

Besore said the Jetty East Homeowners Association received verbal permission from the state Department of Environmental Protection on Aug. 26 to build a temporary seawall, but that Destin had yet to approve it.

Destin's city engineer, Chuck Meister, said the city declared an emergency order after Rita hit on Sept. 24 and is accepting applications for temporary beach armor until Nov. 26.

East closed after Jetty July's Hurricane Dennis damaged tennis courts, pool house restrooms, the beach pavilion

Please see **EROSION** page **A7**



Log photo by DUSTY RICKETTS

UP CLOSE: Mattie Hord, who turned 2 last month, is entertained as her father, Rick Hord, shows her a large amberjack weighed in at the Destin Fishing Rodeo Monday evening. Hord is teaching his daughter the species of fish.

Weighin' 'em in

Almost 600 fish hit the scales

By Dusty Ricketts Staff writer

While the "big one" has yet to be brought to the scales this year, there has been no shortage of fish weighed in at

the 57th annual Destin Fishing Rodeo.

The 599th fish was weighed in at the Rodeo Monday, the 17th day of month. At that time last year, 487 fish had been weighed in, said Helen Donaldson, executive director of the Rodeo.

"We've been pretty darn busy. There are a lot of people out there weighing in their fish." Donaldson said.

Please see RODEO page A8

20th annual Christmas parade set for Dec. 10

around the corner. But organizers in Destin are thinking about the city's 20th annual Christmas Parade. It's scheduled for 10 a.m. on

Saturday, Dec. 10. The theme of this year's event is "Peace on Earth."

Anyone wishing to participate, either by building a float or marching or in some other fashion, may pick up an appli-cation at the Destin Community Center, at Morgan Sports Center and at slowly along.

Christmas isn't exactly City Hall. For questions, or to have an application faxed to you, call the center, 654-5184.

Entering the parade is free, except for entries with live animals, and the deadline to enter is Dec. 5.

The parade will begin in the parking lot near the Old Time Pottery store and will move west along U.S. 98 to the Nighttown parking lot, where it winds up. Thousands of people traditionally line the highway as the parade moves

CROSSWORD B4

EVENTS..... B2 SPORTS......C1



Storms, sharks, gas, red tide impact summer tourist season

■ T-shirt sales at Fudpucker s decline by thousands

By Liza Martin Staff writer

Two things in life are certain. Taxes are one of them. Tourism is not the other.

Recent bed tax collections in Okaloosa and Walton counties indicate that tourists did not flock to Destin this summer as they have in the past.

Created in the early 1990s, the tourist development tax, commonly referred to as a bed tax, collects 4 cents on the dollar from guests at short-term lodging establishments. The taxes fund the Okaloosa County and Walton County tourist

development councils and their projects.

Due largely to Hurricane

Dennis, gasoline shortages, a shark attack and red tide, fewer hotel rooms and condominiums were filled during July, August and September.

Kriss Titus, executive director of the Walton County TDC, said Walton County experienced declining revenue in August but not July. She added that the county's bed tax collections were up 3.6 percent for the year.

In July, Walton County collected \$1.9 million in bed tax revenue, a 13 percent increase from \$1.65 million in July 2004.

According to a report from Okaloosa County tax auditor Patsy Willbanks, the Okaloosa County TDC bed tax revenue totaled \$1.12 million in July 2005, a 36.2 percent decline from July 2004, when the TDC collected \$1.75 million in rev-

Figures from both counties for August and September were not available.

During a TDC meeting on Sept. 28, Darrel Jones, executive director of the Okaloosa TDC, predicted TDC revenues would be down 3.1 percent this year.

And fewer tourists translates to decline in business.

Tim Edwards, co-owner of Fudpucker's, said he noticed a drop in business after Dennis.

"Our numbers for the vear were gravely affected. There was at least one full week where there was no one (in Destin)," he said.

Edwards said he had to cut back on his 300 seasonal workers' hours but that he didn't consider raising

menu prices. He added that his merchandise

department took the hardest hit.
"We probably sell about 100,000 T-shirts a year, and this year we'll be short about 12,000 shirts," he

Yet Edwards said the restaurant's bar area and family-related activities did fairly well, despite a decline in July's business.

"We're constantly modifying to

meet the market, so we were able to weather it. We're still very profitable," he said.

Wanda Green, owner of the Boathouse Oyster Bar on Destin's harbor, said she noticed a decline in business after Dennis, but it picked back up. "Business has been about like

last year, so we're not down too much. I'm actually surprised," she Green said her restaurant

served less food but she didn't see a need to cut employee's hours.

"Things have seemed slower but not that much," she said, adding that the restaurant still continues to stay open at night until all the customers have departed.

At Big Kahuna's, general manager Tom McEvov said the day before the park closed for Dennis, it recorded its highest attendance and most revenue ever.

But for the rest of July, McEvoy said Big Kahuna's was running 30 percent below its typical seasonal peak.
"We didn't have to cut employee

or park hours. We try to maintain an image in the community that we bounce back and that we'll be here no matter what," he said.

He added that Big Kahuna's finished the year 11 percent below last year's revenue, but that he has hopes for next season.

STAR

Continued from page A1

series that would highlight their products, and the company was enthusiastic about the idea.

News of Creehan's show, which he said could be called Tim Creehan's Ultimate Challenge" or "Tim Creehan's Ultimate Chef Challenge," was reported earlier this month in the Hollywood trade magazine The Hollywood Reporter.

Creehan has also approached the Discovery Channel about airing his show, but he believes the Food Network is a better fit.

Creehan already has the format for the show devel-

He wants it to be a combination of several popular reality shows already on the

Part of his show would be about going into a celebrity's home and preparing a meal using only what he finds in

the kitchen when he arrives. If some spice or ingredient were lacking, the celebrity would have to go to a neighbor's home for it.

Creehan plans to film a pilot episode of the series later this year to entice the network. He said he already has a commitment from his first celebrity, a professional sports team owner he declined to name.

If the show is picked up, he wants part of its appeal to be the mystery of which celebrity's home will he visit each week.

One guest Creehan wants to appear early in the show's run is celebrity chef Emeril Lagasse, who has his own show, "Emeril Live," on the Food Network.

While Lagasse's show has been a success, it has also taken him away from having a personal touch at his restaurants. Creehan doesn't want that to happen to

"I don't want this to replace what I do," he said.

Another aspect of the show would be similar to the home remodeling reality shows on television, such as "Extreme Makeover: Home Edition.

celebrity who Each appears on the show would have their kitchen redone with Dynamic Cooking Systems' appliances, Creehan said.

He said he hopes to use the show to highlight Destin's cuisine of fresh Gulf seafood. He wants the Gulf Coast cuisine to be as recognizable to mainstream

recommended solutions:

decibels

homes.

sell.

noise

14 Crest

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Owners won't

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America as New Orleans

He also wants to show off Destin. He said he's not sure if television producers would have come to Destin 10 years ago, but its growth and reputation have cemented the area as a have tourist destination with

Hollvwood. "Now they're looking at Destin as a nationwide mar-ket," Creehan said. "(The producer) sees Destin as being part of the value of the

NOISE

Continued from page A1

noise monitoring.

Several residents objected to LPA relying on the soft-ware model, but LPA staffers said the Federal Aviation Agency won't

accept the study — a prerequisite for the FAA paying for any noise-control projects — if LPA doesn't use the model.

The study found that the decibel levels measured onsite in July 2004 came in at or below the levels predicted by the model.

LPA Group finished its report last month. After the

public comment wraps up Oct. 31, LPA will submit the report to the FAA for approval. If the FAA signs off on the study, the county can apply for federal grants for the \$7.2 million in noisecontrol measures LPA has

By 2009, according to projections in the study:

recommended.

•Destin Airport will see 70,798 takeoffs and landings a year, compared to 63,819 last vear

•The area of Destin subject to average noise levels of 65 decibels or more will grow from 562 to 657 acres. Freeway traffic exposes drivers to 70 decibels.

Among the LPA Group's

age noise lev-**AIRPORT STUDY** els of over 70 •Where to find the 2009, as well

study: www.cityofdestin.com.
•Where to direct comments: LPA Group at 3595 Engineering Drive, Norcross, GA 30092, or e-mail pstultz@lpagroup.com. You can also contact the FAA district office at 5950 Hazeltine National Drive, Suite

along the east 400, Orlando, FL 32822, or e-mail bart.vernace@faa.gov. and west edge of the airport. soundproof

homes in some high-noise areas. The study points out this won't help prevent noise during outdoor activities at those

•Build a runup pad in the middle of the airfield so that planes revving their engines or idling them to power up cabin electronics will be fur-

ther from homes. •Continue pushing for a Destin Airport control tower, which could direct air traffic more efficiently.

discourage growth in the

high-noise areas.

recommended solutions.

• Buy six single-family homes on Mesa Road that homes on Mesa Road that homes on Mesa Road that homes have strongly supported a ban on latering models.

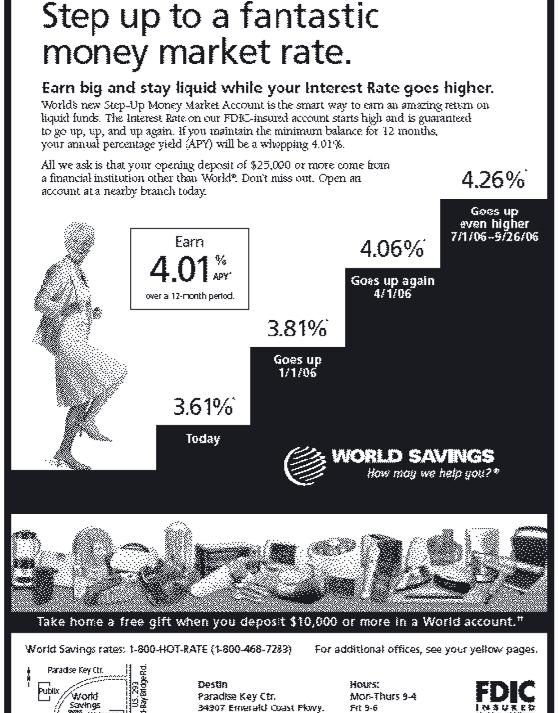
on loud models of aircraft, but LPA recommends against that: Such bans require FAA approval, and the FAA would probably put the other noisecontrol steps on hold until the long approval

wrapped up.
The report does, however, recommend encouraging pilots to show consideration

for homeowners by avoiding night flights and other steps. LPA said the projects

would qualify for 95 percent federal grant funding, with the rest coming from the county and the state. If the airport wins the needed grants, the report concludes, the proposed steps could be finished within five years of the FAA approving the study.

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