

## 'Frontier' acceleration

### MainStreet group seeks path to greater successes



Adria Malcolm / The Communicator

Christina Campos speaks at the Guadalupe Community Development Corporation's meeting to review applications being submitted for the Main Street Accelerator and the Frontier Communities Initiative Program on Tuesday night.

By Tom McDonald  
The Communicator

Murals and facades.

Those are a couple of the new projects being planned now as part of Santa Rosa's economic revitalization efforts. They came to light at a public meeting held Tuesday evening as part of the city's participation in the state's MainStreet Program.

About 20 people attended the meeting hosted by Santa Rosa Consolidated Schools. The meeting was part informational, part solicitation, as established business leaders appealed to younger entrepreneurs at the meeting to step forward to help make downtown Santa Rosa's future.

The meeting was held to advance MainStreet and its programs as a means of growing Santa Rosa's downtown business climate. Trademarked as The MainStreet Four-Point Approach, Santa Rosa is using a step-by-step strategy for economic development — with the first step already in place.

The four "transformation strategies," as MainStreet calls them, are: organization, promotion, design and economic vitality. Since the city, county and school district incorporated the Guadalupe Community Development Corporation (GCDC) about two years ago, the community has met the big first requirement — a public-private nonprofit organization in place to implement an expanding economic revitalization strategy.

Now the focus is turning to promotion and design, the city needs to find ways to fund initiatives to make downtown a hub of community and eco-

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## City goes after 7 nuisance properties

By Steve Hansen  
The Communicator

The Santa Rosa City Council on Tuesday heard about progress on seven properties targeted for cleanup or building demolition under its new "clean and lien" program and authorized a new bank account to accumulate funds for the work.

Under the nuisance ordinance, the city will clean up properties or demolish buildings in the face of inaction

from owners, then put liens on the properties until owners compensate the city for action taken.

Owners are given 15 days to take action toward cleanup or demolition after receiving notification of violations before the city begins correcting violations on its own, City Manager Tim Dodge said.

Danica Garcia, the city's community development director, presented a progress report to the council on the seven properties, as follows:

- A house at Second Street and Capitan Streets: Owner Joseph Garcia said he sold the property, but the Guadalupe County Assessor's office does not show a new owner. The city is investigating to find the new owner.

- Western Motel: New owners Alex and Marcella Gazolas of Vaughn said they had just bought this property from Nitin Bhakta of Tucumcari and said they would start cleanup before the Tuesday deadline to begin the

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## Candidates step up to the challenge

By Tom McDonald and Steve Hansen  
The Communicator

Three of four municipal positions will be contested in Santa Rosa while, in Vaughn, there will be only one. But it's a big one.

The municipal candidates filed their candidacies Tuesday, and were certified by Santa Rosa City Clerk Yolanda Garcia and Vaughn Municipal Clerk Shaline Lopez the next day. The municipal elections will be held March 6.

In Santa Rosa, Mayor Jose Campos is facing competition in his re-election bid from Nelson Kotiar. And for the city's two open council positions, incumbents Delbert Marquez and Ricky Muniz are facing challengers Anastacia Baca and Joseph Romero.

Alfredo "Sonny" Chavez Jr., who was appointed municipal judge last year,



was the only one to file for the position, giving him an easy walk into his first election to the office on March 6.

In Vaughn, because of a previous resignation and a death, which vacated two council seats, all four council positions are up for election — but none will be contested, as Jack Props, Rudy Martinez, Antonio Castillo and Billy Lucero were the only ones to file.

For mayor, however, incumbent Roman Garcia faces a challenge from Thomas Owens, who was fired as the

longstanding fire chief last year.

In the race for mayor of Santa Rosa, Kotiar, a self-employed trucking company owner, is sticking to his previous declaration that he has nothing against his opponent, he just decided he wants the power to do good things through the mayor's office.

"I am running against nobody," Kotiar said Wednesday. "I have nothing against Mr. Campos or anybody else. I just want to wish everybody good luck and do the best things for our town. I just want to move forward and do something for our teenagers, something for our people in town."

Asked to go into the issues important to his candidacy, he said he has written out he positions and would deliver it to The Communicator in the next day or two. His comments did not make it in

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Adria Malcolm / The Communicator

Jacob Salazar peruses books in the library as he looks for one to check out at the Santa Rosa Elementary School on Tuesday. Classes for all Santa Rosa schools resumed Monday after a two-week winter break.

## Fired fire chief gets a 'diversion' deal

■ Owens admits to improperly taking iPad, all felony charges to be dropped.

By Steve Hansen  
The Communicator

Former Vaughn Fire Chief Thomas Owens has agreed to a "pre-prosecution diversion (PPD)" contract, an agreement with the Fourth Judicial District Attorney's office that bypasses criminal charges, court records show.

Owens had been facing felony charge of receiving stolen property and embezzlement stemming from his removal of an Apple iPad from a

crashed vehicle in May 2016 while he was working with TNT Towing in Vaughn, his current employer, court documents show.

Owens admitted to taking the device out of the vehicle after towing the vehicle to his secured wrecking yard, he admitted in a statement to the court, but said he kept it in the wrecking yard office for safekeeping.

Prosecution of the case continued, however, and the case was headed for a jury trial, court records show.

On Dec. 20, 2017, Owens agreed to the probation contract.

Under terms of the two-year PPD contract, Owens agreed, among

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