

**Get home delivery
of The Desert Sun**



**SUBSCRIBE
NOW**

Coalition set to build low-income housing unit in Desert Hot Springs

City Council rejected plan initially on issue of prevailing wage

Kate McGinty • The Desert Sun • October 18, 2010

A \$7.9 million plan to build a low-income housing unit in Desert Hot Springs will move ahead despite a City Council vote that appeared to halt the plan.

The project was stalled earlier this month after the council rejected a request to waive the city's prevailing wage requirement. The Coachella Valley Housing Coalition has since announced plans to comply with that city requirement.

The proposed Brisas de Paz Project is slated to be a 62-unit building at Flora Avenue and West Drive. It was approved by the city early last year.

The project is expected to create more than 400 construction jobs and generate about \$750,000 in development impact and permit fees for the city, according to developers and the staff.

"We look forward to working with the city on the development of this much-needed quality affordable family apartment complex," coalition Executive Director John Mealey said in a letter to the city.

The nonprofit coalition had said it could not afford the additional \$1.6 million it would take to build the facility and pay prevailing wage, a requirement that was implemented by the city after the initial approval of the project.

It will go ahead by using money that would have otherwise gone to after-school programs, foreclosure counseling and other service programs, Mealey's letter continued.

"That doesn't mean our community service programs are going to suffer. It just means we will intensify our (fundraising)," John Aguilar, director of the Multi-family Housing Division of the Coachella Valley Housing Coalition, said Friday.

The final cost of the project, including the prevailing wage, has yet to be finalized, Mealey said.

The project prompted a heated, two-hour public debate last week at a City Council meeting. Residents voiced frustrations over adding low-income housing to the city.

Russell Betts was the most vocal councilman against overturning the prevailing wage requirement.

"The difference between minimum wage and prevailing wage on this project means mortgages paid, families able to go out to eat and maybe even a new computer for their kids this Christmas," he said.