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Fort Collins Public Access may get new home

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The Fort Collins Public Access Network may soon have a new home.

Following a three-year quest to find office and equipment space, the station has staked out a location at 200 W. Mountain that includes three offices and its own lobby. And if the deal goes through, which those involved are sure it will, FCPAN could move in within the next month.

"It's wonderful to be able to have a space for offices and storage for our equipment," said Pete Seel, FCPAN volunteer and associate journalism professor at Colorado State University. "We have a lot of nice gear and no place to store it."

The channel has searched for a home since leaving the Comcast building on University Avenue in 2006 when Comcast opted out of the public access broadcasting business.

Carson Hamlin, video production director for government access channel 14, helped find the Old Town location and is almost certain FCPAN could move into the space in the next month once the previous tenants move out, the space is cleaned and all electrical needs for the equipment are addressed.

After the move from Comcast, FCPAN stored equipment in the basement of City Hall, said FCPAN president Blue Hovatter, which created access issues for Fort Collins residents who might want to make a show.

"How do you run a station like that?" he said. "It's the chicken-and-the-egg style of deals. You can't get the funding until you get the studio, but you can't get the studio until you can prove you can make programming, which requires funding."

In addition to the strong possibility of a new home, FCPAN got new equipment last year, enabling the station to continually loop content, such as local artwork and poetry, surpassing the six hours they were able to run before.

That equipment comes thanks to Public Educational and Governmental funds. PEG funds are collected from all Comcast subscribers as part of their bill. The 50 cents on each bill each month adds up to almost \$90,000 annually to be distributed between four public access networks in Fort Collins: Poudre School District programming on channel 10, CSU student-run television on Channel 11, government coverage on dial 14 and FCPAN on channel 22.

PEG funds, however, can only be used for equipment, leaving FCPAN to figure out a way to pay its rent.

Seel recently wrote a grant to the Bohemian Foundation to try to secure funding for programming, which would provide money for rent.

But the network will likely not stay long at the Mountain Avenue location as it will be forced out when that space is transformed into the Beet Street Amphitheater.

"Then we have to wander farther," Seel said. "We have faith we'll at some point have a permanent home."

In that case, Seel hopes to have a location in Old Town, one where people walking by can peer through the windows and see live TV. He even has aspirations of a "Today" show-style setup, where filming can be done outside with a crowd watching.

But even if the home is just temporary, it's a big step for the network.

"It's truly a Fort Collins channel," Seel said. "The goal is to empower people to produce their own TV shows."
