

Carmel going postal

By **AMY ETTINGER**
Herald Staff Writer

Residents to get home mail delivery

While the rest of the world is embracing the immediacy of e-mail, the village of Carmel-by-the-Sea is moving at a slower pace.

Carmel is about to get home mail delivery for the first time in its history, postal officials announced at Tuesday's City Council meeting.

The trip to the post office has long been part of the daily routine for most Carmelites, who claim their letters and bills at rented P.O. boxes downtown.

Buildings in the city don't have street numbers, and some homeowners have given their residences colorful names to let visitors know where to find them.

Home delivery became an issue earlier this year during the City Council elections, when candidate Joe Steinfeld began demonstrating in front of the post office. Since then he's lobbied in Washington and pestered local officials for the privilege of getting his mail delivered to his door.

"I think the service has been unreasonably withheld here," Steinfeld said. "Why should we be discriminated against?"

Although the post office has long been a gathering place for people who want to chat with their neighbors, the lack of home delivery leaves the elderly and disabled at a disadvantage, Steinfeld said. Their only option has been to ask friends to pick up their correspondence or pay a private delivery service

\$30 a month.

Traditionalists in the village can still keep their P.O. boxes and the anonymity of their homes. Street numbers will only be provided by the city to people who ask for them. Residents and business owners who are tired of waiting in lines for their mail can fill out a form requesting home delivery. The ZIP code for street delivery will be 93923.

Post office operations manager Daryl Ishizaki said that the solution accommodated the needs and wants of the

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community. During the last five months he's held town meetings to hear citizens' concerns. Home delivery can begin about three months after the numbering system is in place, Ishizaki said. Details of creating the street addresses will be left up to the city.

The post office has about 5,084 P.O. boxes and a long waiting list of people willing to pay the annual rent,

which ranges between \$10 to \$42. Street delivery will be provided free of charge to both residents and businesses.

Resident Burt Kleinberg asked the council not to fight the decision by passing an ordinance banning street mailboxes. In March, the council directed staff to look into that option, but since then two new members have replaced more conservative incumbents.

The council members did not

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Joe Steinfeld
Carmel resident

comment on the post office's decision Tuesday, preferring to wait until a future meeting to voice their reactions.

Kleinberg said he's happy that residents finally have a choice, but he's going to keep his P.O. box.

"I don't want to risk the baseball-battering of mailboxes," Kleinberg said.

Questions about home delivery can be directed to Postmaster Cynthia Rivera at 625-4413.

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Reaction mixed to Carmel mail delivery

By AMY ETTINGER
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Residents of Carmel-by-the-Sea expressed mixed feelings Wednesday about the prospect of street addresses coming to the village, but businesses that deliver there say the change will make their jobs much easier.

Postal officials announced Tuesday that they would start the ball rolling on providing home mail delivery to those who want it, for the first time in Carmel's history. But the city still

City will need to create street numbering system

needs to come up with a numbering system for buildings so the mail carriers will know where to go.

Homeowners now name their houses or give guests and delivery people careful directions. But that can be confusing to drivers who aren't familiar with the city, said Earl Campbell, manager of Gourmet to Go.

"It's awful — sometimes it takes a driver 45 minutes to find a house,"

Campbell said. By that time the food is cold and the driver is frustrated.

"If they had street addresses it'd be a lot easier, believe me," Campbell said.

Getting the newspaper to customers in the morning is a complicated process under the current system, said Mike Anderson, the Herald's circulation director.

"When we have a couple of routes with new drivers it's a nightmare,"

Anderson said. Employees have created their own intricate mapping system, but having even some homes with addresses will be better than none, he added.

Local fire officials who are called out for emergencies in the city don't have any trouble finding their way around, said fire engineer August Beacham. Most people in the department have been raised in the village and are intimately familiar with

Carmel. But emergency crews brought in from outside the city often get lost, he said.

Resident Jewel DuBois, who came to the post office Wednesday to pick up the mail from her box as always, said she's sad about the prospect of home mail delivery and thinks the character of the village is changing for the worse.

"It's become so much more commercialized," she said.

DuBois likes the fact that Carmel

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is a place where every home is different and people come to the post office every day.

"I love it just the way it is," DuBois said. "It's very good for a small community feeling here."

But the optional delivery system will benefit the shut-ins in the city, said Ashley Anderson, who has worked as a caregiver to the elderly. The elderly and the disabled have had to pay for private delivery service or rely on friends to pick up their mail.

Before home mail delivery becomes a reality in Carmel there are still a few hurdles to overcome, said Mayor Sue McCloud. A street numbering system needs to be created, along with a plan for adding unobtrusive mailboxes to buildings in the commercial district. The City Council will discuss the issue at a future meeting, when everyone will get a chance to voice opinions.

Although home delivery has been proposed in the past, Carmelites have always vehemently opposed it. In the 1950s the city threatened to secede from the state if the post

office began delivering in the city.

But those days are passed, and McCloud said there aren't many ways the city could fight the post office's decision. "I think the genie is out of the bottle," she said.

McCloud said she'll keep her P.O. box and hopes people will continue taking their daily jaunts to the post office.

"It's one of the quirks that makes Carmel, Carmel," said McCloud.

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About a dozen wooden mailboxes have made an appearance in Carmel.

9-20-00

Carmel residents hoping for mail service

By **AMY ETTINGER**
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About a dozen new wooden mailboxes are poking out near curbs in Carmel-by-the-Sea, but so far their flags are down and their contents are empty.

Some residents who want the Postal Service to begin delivering mail to their homes in the village have taken matters into their own hands. Although they haven't been given addresses by the city or a date for when service could begin, they're ready if the post office decides to deliver.

Bobbie Eliot, 88, decided to have a box put up near her home last weekend. Eliot has lived in Carmel for more than 30 years and used to love

the ritual of going to the post office every day to get her mail. But she stopped driving 12 years ago and has to rely on neighbors to pick up her correspondence for her. She put up the mailbox, still unsure about whether home mail delivery will become a reality.

"I don't know what I'm suppose to do now," said Eliot. "I'm just kind of waiting around."

In August, postal officials announced that Carmel qualified for optional mail delivery, and set out a list of criteria that needed to be met first, including a numbering system and curbside mailboxes.

"We're following the instructions of the U.S. Postal Service," said Joe Steinfeld, who pushed for

the change and has been helping to coordinate the mailbox installations.

City attorney Don Freeman said at the Sept. 7 council meeting that residents who want to put up mailboxes would have to get an encroachment permit from the city Planning Department. Permits cost \$250 with a \$20 annual fee. So far, Steinfeld and supporters have not applied for the permits, saying that mail delivery should be free.

The city hasn't decided yet what to do about the rogue boxes, said City Administrator Jere Kersnar. Carmel officials are still waiting to hear from

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the Postal Service about what it plans to do next.

Steinfeld and Carolina Bayne staged a mini-demonstration at the Carmel post office on Tuesday. They held signs that read: "Stop Carmel air pollution. Install a pretty mailbox instead." Steinfeld contends that the current system of driving every day to the post office is harmful to the environment.

Bayne said that she thinks the postal issue is all about choice and that those who want the option should have it. She resents having to put aside her gardening to make the daily trek downtown.

"It's just a bother to interrupt my work to come for my mail," said Bayne.

About a handful of Carmelites who went to pick up their mail Tuesday agreed with her, and have asked for mailboxes in front of their homes, said Steinfeld.

Mailboxes have been grouped in twos and fours near homes on Carpenter Street and Santa Rita Street. Residents have put masking tape with self-assigned addresses on their box. So far, nothing has been delivered.

The redwood mailboxes cost \$60, with an additional \$10 fee for installation.

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