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Interpretive center

Legislators to back proposal

by Breez Longwell Daniels
State representative Lorraine Quarberg will be co-sponsoring a legislative bill requesting \$15 million from the budget reserve account to build the Wyoming-Big Horn Basin Interpretive Center in Hot Springs State Park.

The total project is estimated to cost \$29 million, according to Greater Learning Foundation director Sue Blakey. Co-sponsoring the 2009 legislative bill with Quarberg are representative Hammons and senator Gerald Geis.

"The bill is moving forward," Quarberg said. "Debbie Hammons and I are reviewing the bill.

"In fact I just called in some changes this morning. It could be a week to ten days before it is finalized."

Quarberg said the trio will be looking for more support from fellow legislators over the coming weeks.

"I've been very excited all along about an interpretive center in the Hot Springs State Park," Hammons said. "It will be a wonderful addition to the entire Big Horn Basin and Fremont County too.

"My hope is to convince fellow legislators of its value in these economic times. It will be a challenge but that doesn't mean we won't be giving it a thousand percent.

"We have asked the foundation group to phase the project, and we will have a complete facility for the \$15 million."

Once the bill is formally in-

troduced the public can go online to follow the bill as it moves through the legislative process. The bill will be introduced in the House, will go to committee and public testimony will be heard.

Then it will be moved to the appropriations committee where it will be voted on. Three different readings of the bill will take place on the House floor.

If successful the bill will go through the same process all over again in the Senate.

Quarberg said at any given time the committee could vote not to move forward with the bill.

Blakey emphasized the interpretive center would be a regional center, not a community center.

"It will be a high tech interpretive center for the modern visitor," she added. "The center would be the center point of a cultural heritage corridor through the Big Horn Basin."

Hammons spoke highly of the Greater Learning Foundation and the effort that has been involved in bringing the interpretive center idea to fruition.

"They have worked so hard for so long," she said. "They have done all of their homework, answered every question and continued to prove they are ready for this project.

"I happen to believe we are the best part of this state," Hammons said, referring to the Big Horn Basin. "This is a wonderful opportunity for us to share what we have.

"It is important that we work together as a region."

Churches schedule Christmas services

The schedule of remaining Christmas church services in Hot Springs County includes:

Community Federated Church, 244 N. Sixth, Candlelight service Wednesday, 7 p.m.

First Baptist Church, 310 S. Sixth, Wednesday, candlelight service 6 p.m.

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 642 Arapahoe, Wednesday, Holy Eucharist 10 p.m.

Living Waters Assembly of God, 318 N. Eighth, Wednesday, Candlelight communion 7 p.m.

Risen Son Southern Baptist Church, 342 Amoretti,

Wednesday, candlelight service, 6 p.m.

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, 129 Mountain View, Wednesday, Christmas program and candlelight service 7 p.m. Dec. 25 worship 9:30 a.m.

St. Francis Catholic Church, Eighth and Arapahoe, Wednesday Christmas Eve mass 5 p.m. Midnight mass, Dec. 25, mass 9 a.m.; Dec. 31, New Year's Eve mass 5 p.m. Jan. 1, New Year's Day mass 9 a.m.

St. Paul Lutheran Church, 288 US Hwy. 20 S., Wednesday, candlelight service, 7 p.m.. Thursday, divine service, 9 a.m.



Kamry Bowman carefully places her letter to Santa Claus in the mailbox outside the Independent Record. For a peek at what a couple hundred Thermopolis-Hot Springs youngsters are wishing for this Christmas, turn to pages 1A-12A.

—Breez Longwell Daniels photo

School board signs contract with Kansas firm, discusses detention

by Jonathan Green

The Hot Springs County School Board voted to enter into a three-year contract with a Kansas firm Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI), approved an academic detention program and expelled a fourth student at their meeting Thursday.

According to the proposal submitted by CLI, the non-profit "works with school districts and other education agencies to provide leadership in initiating and implementing school improvement plans." The full proposal, which the board voted unanimously to accept, can be viewed on the Independent Record website, <http://www.thermopir.com>.

Superintendent Marty Kobza lobbied heavily for the agreement, which will cost the district \$76,500 over three years, plus transportation and per-diem costs for the CLI consultant, which he said should not exceed \$6,000.

The CLI proposal provides for long-term assistance to the district, "offered under the district goals of (1) reforming and restructuring academic program governance and (2) implementing methods for designing and delivering results-based curriculum."

Earlier board discussions indicated CLI's services will be utilized to standardize the district curriculum across all grades from a graduation down approach.

Graduation requirements will be used to identify what 11th graders should be taught, which will inform what tenth graders need to learn to be prepared, and so forth through the grades.

Academic detention program

The board also expressed strong support for a new academic detention program that will begin at all three schools in the spring semester. When a student fails to turn in an assignment or complete it to the satisfaction of the teacher, the student will be expected to stay after school either that day or the day after to complete the assignment.

The exact guidelines will vary from building to building. Elementary principal Matt Spring said students will be expected to serve what is being called an "academic opportunity" after turning two assignments in one day late or a single assignment two days late.

Middle school principal Jodie Cameron said the program will be administered similarly in her building, except "we've just kicked it up a notch." If an assignment is not completed "or given the excellence it deserves," then the student will be expected to serve an hour after school to complete the work.

At the high school level, principal Dustin Hunt said students will be expected to break the news to their parents the first time, before a teacher-parent contact is mandated. If there are continued issues with work not being completed, a conference might be called.

The administrators said the program is being instituted to support staff at the schools. Every piece of homework assigned is "essential," they said, and continued failure to complete work is a major issue.

Kobza acknowledged the program could

cause some grumbling.

"Do we potentially take some heat for awhile?" he asked rhetorically. "Absolutely. But is it worth it? We're here to make a difference. It's building a culture of success," Kobza said.

"It's exciting," board chairman Liz Mahoney said, and board member Breez Longwell Daniels agreed.

"It will come down to some tough choices for students," Hunt said.

Scheduled after-work employment and athletic events will not excuse students from serving the detention, the administrators said. Cameron said failure to appear would be recorded as a truancy.

The only option students will be given is whether to serve the detention the day they are informed of it or the next school day.

Enforcement of the program will not begin until Jan. 19. Prior to that, parents will be notified their child would otherwise need to serve the detention.

Student expelled

Other business included:

•The expulsion of a student, the fourth this academic year.

•Permission from the school board for Kobza to send a letter to district parents endorsing the "One before Two" initiative encouraging a developmental screening for children before age two.

•A lengthy discussion on technical and vocational programs available through the Fremont County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, including oil field and nursing certification options.

Theater sold to managers

The Ritz has been sold to Edie and Bob Rollings by Sonja Becker and Randy Morris.

The business includes a movie theater, video rentals and games area.

The Rollings have been managing The Ritz for the past year.

Becker and Morris purchased the business in February 1998. Their improvements included working with the community to install a digital theater sound system.

Early stories, ads sought

Early advertising and news copy is needed for the next edition of the Thermopolis Independent Record.

The deadline is 5 p.m. Friday for the New Year's edition, unless special arrangements are made in advance.

The New Year's edition will be available on the newsstands Tuesday night and in the mail Wednesday.

Our office will be closed on New Year's Day.



Linda and Kevin Kolar's home at 1028 Amoretti was judged the best decorated residence in the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Christmas Lighting Contest. The winner in the business division was A&W Lanes. Assisting with the judging on Thursday night were residents of

Thermopolis Rehabilitation and Care Center. Runners-up were Shawna and John Gibbel and Tammy and Glenn Witt. The Witts also decorated A&W Lanes at 942 Shoshoni, the winner of the business division.

—Jonathan Green photo

Kolars, A&W win contests

Kevin and Linda Kolar and A&W Lanes won the residential/business lighting contest sponsored by Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce.

There were ten residential entries and three businesses. First place winners received \$75 chamber bucks, second \$50 chamber bucks and third \$25 chamber bucks.

Results in order of finish:

Residential: Kevin and Linda Kolar, 1028 Amoretti; John and Shawna Gibbel, 734 Park; Glenn and Tammy Witt, 213 East Arapahoe.

Business: A&W Lanes, 942 Shoshoni; Needful Things, 517 Broadway; and Storyteller, 528 Broadway.