

# Appropriations trims funds

## State park nature center passes first two hurdles

The proposed Wyoming Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center in Hot Springs State Park has passed two hurdles.

On Friday, the Minerals, Business and Economic Development Committee in the state House of Representatives forwarded the bill to the House Appropriations Committee by an 8-1 vote. On Tuesday, the House Appropriations Committee gave a near unanimous nod but cut the total for this budget.

The proposal calls for the state to fund \$15 million of the anticipated \$29 million cost. The appropriations committee cut the amount to \$100,000 for further planning and engineering for now.

Contacted in Cheyenne on Tuesday night, Rep. Lorraine Quarberg of Thermopolis praised those who made the presentations to the Legislature.

"I think the minerals committee and appropriations committee were impressed by the dedication of the people of our community to this project," Quarberg said. "I was so proud of all of them."

"The bill came out of minerals intact but took quite a haircut in appropriations. Now it will be heard in Committee of the Whole, and I will bring an amendment to delete the \$1 million currently required as a matching pledge. That will give us \$100,000 for the project. I think we can come back next year and, if we have made reasonable progress, we will be well received."

Quarberg and Rep. Debbie Hammons of Wor-

land spoke in favor of the project at both meetings, and Sen. Gerald Geis of Worland attended the appropriations meeting. State officials participating included Milward Simpson of the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources and Travel and Tourism director Diane Shober.

Those making at least one of the two trips to Cheyenne included county commissioner Dr. Frank and Jackie Manning, Thermopolis town council member Toni Casciato, Hot Springs State Park superintendent Kevin Skates, Dr. Guy and Beth Drake, Sue Blakey, certified public accountant Jackie Michel, architect Kyle Gillette of Schutz-Foss Architects in Gillette and Mark and April Whitlock of Worland from the Big Horn Basin RC&D Council. Most are foundation members.

Contacted during the drive home on Tuesday, Blakey said the encouraging part has been no opposition to the project itself, only questions about whether the state has the money to afford its share.

"Rep. Pete Jorgensen of Teton County told us, 'Don't give up; don't be discouraged,'" she said.

"Another thing they stressed over and over was how important it was for them to see their constituents, that most of the time, they don't," Blakey said. "We still have a ways to go on this, and we will probably have to make several more trips."

"We really need people to contact their legislators."

# Joint power board members agree to take ownership of N.G. armory

by Breez Longwell Daniels

The gift of the armory building from the Wyoming Military Department is being accepted by local governing entities, with thanks.

"All entities are in agreement, take the gift," Thermopolis mayor Bill Malloy said at the conclusion of a work session Tuesday night.

It was attended by the representatives of the Thermopolis Town Council, the Hot Springs County Commission and the Hot Springs County Recreation District.

The participants agreed the armory building would become the property of the existing Ar-

mory Joint Powers Board, of which each entity is a stakeholder.

Discussion surrounded the \$5,000 contributed annually to the joint powers board by each entity.

"\$15,000 is covering the cost of maintenance right now," Malloy said.

Recreation district director Donnie Bjorhus, who manages most of the facility as a recreation center, agreed.

Commissioner Brad Basse reminded the group to plan for future maintenance expenses.

All agreed the annual cost may need to increase or a separate contribution could be cre-

ated for a reserve or depreciation account.

"If three entities contribute \$5,000 each, maybe each could also contribute \$2,500 to create a reserve fund," councilman Tom Linnan said.

It was agreed as a new Joint Powers Agreement is written, additional funding would be part of the negotiations.

"I think it will benefit the town and county," commissioner John Lumley said. "There will always be a use for a building like that."

All agreed the joint powers board members should become more active as the transition takes place.



A Ducks Unlimited logo adorns the yellow shooting glasses that Penny Herdt won at the annual banquet Saturday.

# Meetings set on two proposals

Two public meetings are planned on area projects.

Alternatives for Lane 3 on the south edge of Thermopolis will be discussed at Thursday at Thermopolis Town Hall at 7 p.m. The Hot Springs County project meeting involves possible upgrades.

Inberg-Miller Engineers and Owl Creek Engineering will give a presentation. Public input is welcome.

There will be a meeting to review the information gathered on the potential environmental impact for the proposed new airport locations Tuesday at 7 p.m. at Thermopolis Middle School.

Representatives for the county, the airport study input committee and the consultant team will be available to answer questions and provide information.

# Leaking water main, not a spring, closed 14th St.

by Pat Schmidt

Town officials learned Monday a leaking water main led to the closure of 14th Street in Thermopolis between Wyo. Highway 120 and Fremont Street, not water from a spring.

Last weekend, town public works supervisor Ernie Slagle took another look at the area and decided to dig it out on Monday, according to assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill. A large area around the leak was excavated, and the leak at the connection between two sections of the 12-inch iron water main was repaired.

After the line was sealed and the hole filled, gravel was used to repair the street surface, and 14th Street was reopened Tuesday night.

About three weeks ago, the center of 14th Street started rising. A bump approximately two feet high and half the width of the street forced drivers to go around.

At first town officials believed the problem was related to bentonite below the street that had caused problems in past winters. Then surface water started building up around the bulge.

Tests indicating an absence of chlorine and the presence of hard water minerals pointed to spring water as the source, not treated water. Town officials now believe the minerals came from the heavy clay soil in the area, while the chlorine was filtered out as it rose or evaporated after surfacing.

The situation was complicated by the possibility that water from a spring could rise to the surface elsewhere if it was plugged off, risking damage to nearby basements. That is no longer a concern.

The asphalt will be replaced in the spring or summer. The new sidewalks in the area were not damaged as part of the repairs.

# Post office mail load high here; several cuts made

by Pat Schmidt

Reports that the U.S. Postal Service nationally is losing money and considering cutbacks prompt a look at the situation in Hot Springs County.

While post offices at Grass Creek and Kirby have closed in the last two decades, the Thermopolis post office continues to handle a lot of business in a wide area.

Fred Crosby, who has been postmaster here for around eight years, said volume was down approximately 5% last year here, nothing like the dropoff nationally. He believes some of the continued demand for mail service here is due to the importance of the postal service in smaller communities that rely on catalogs and other services that are not needed in metropolitan areas.

One possibility mentioned on national news broadcasts last week was eliminating delivery service on one day, with Tuesday mentioned as the day with the least mail. Crosby said Monday and Tuesday are the busier days here due to mail arriving from metropolitan areas over the weekend.

During his tenure in Thermopolis, he and the postal service have made some cuts amounting to at least one full-time job, shorter hours and no Sunday mail service.

The Thermopolis post office delivers mail to about 1,400 addresses in town and 700 boxes in the post office. It takes four carriers, two full-time and two part-time, to handle the delivery routes inside Thermopolis.

Carriers on the three daily routes inside the town walk and drive 13, almost 13 and 12 miles, a total approaching 40 miles daily. He said the delivery vehicles purchased in 1988 now have around 75,000 miles on them despite never leaving town.

The three rural delivery routes of approximately 250 miles daily are handled by people who contract with the postal service. They service approximately 500 addresses.

The post office is staffed by two full-time and two part-time employees and Crosby.

There used to be a full-time custodian for the building and grounds, but a contract cleaner is now used.

Workers are at the post office from 5 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays.

Window hours used to be 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday but that was cut to 8 a.m.-5 p.m. some time ago. On Saturday the post office windows are open 9 a.m.-noon.

A postal employee used to come in on Sunday to sort mail and put it in the boxes, but that service has been discontinued.

Mail comes into the Thermopolis post office at 5 a.m. Monday through Saturday. It leaves the post office for Worland at 5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and at 3:30 p.m. Saturday.

# Deputy county attorney resigns

by Jonathan Green

Sandy Baker has resigned as assistant Hot Springs County attorney, county attorney Jerry Williams said Tuesday.

Baker had been on leave since November due to surgery, Williams said.

It could be as late as July before a replacement is found, he said. It will likely be July before recent law school graduates, the most likely to be interested in the position, know whether they have passed the bar exam.

# School candidate sessions closed

The Hot Springs County School board will meet in a closed executive session Monday to review letters of interest for the open school board seat.

The properspective board members will be interviewed in closed sessions Tuesday and Wednesday at 6 p.m.



Postmaster Fred Crosby handles a transaction for Annette Juvan at one of the main windows in the Thermopolis post office. —Pat Schmidt photo