

County commission Ponders entrance, bus, building uses

by Cindy Glasson
During their meeting Tuesday afternoon, the Hot Springs County commission learned Wyoming Department of Transportation officials will be informing Pamida officials they will need to correct the grade of their store entrance to meet state requirements.

The request is a result of a speed study requested by the commissioners for the stretch of U.S. Hwy. 20 between Pamida and the new WYDOT facility. The results indicate there was no need for a reduction of the posted speed limit as 85% of the speeds recorded for the study were within 5 mph of the posted speed limit.

Local bus subsidy?
The Wyoming Department of Transportation is requesting all four counties and each municipality in the Big Horn Basin to provide 25% of the cost of maintaining Arrow Bus Lines passenger service to Billings, Denver and points in between.

On behalf of the Big Horn Basin group, Thermopolis town council member Toni Casciato told the county commissioners Tuesday that WYDOT already subsidizes bus service here.

Casciato presented statistics showing an average of 140 riders or freight drop-offs in Thermopolis during a 12-month period, the same number as Cody. One of the problems here is the lack of a ticket seller. To purchase tickets, riders must buy them when they arrive in either Worland or Casper. Commission chairman Brad Basse said, "We need a fair and equitable split."

He feels the funding should be divided based on population. The commissioners took no ac-

tion on the request at this time. There will be further discussion during a meeting March 31 at 10 a.m. at Cody City Hall.

How to use building
Barton Stam, UW Extension educator, range management, requested permission from the commissioners to use the entire extension service/public health building when public health moves into its proposed new building.

Being able to use the entire building would allow the extension service to hold more meetings there rather than having to outsource them, Stam said.

The commissioners told Stam there are two other entities that have asked to use the building for storage, Friends of the Library and the school district. The commissioners would like to meet with all the entities before determining the best use of the building.

Other business
The commissioners reviewed proposals from seven engineering companies to begin the engineering needed for the seal coating at the airport.

GDA Engineering from Cody was unanimously selected.

In other business the commissioners:

- Accepted the resignation of Ross Rhodes from the county museum board. He will serve as interim administrator while a replacement is selected for Gregg Voigt.

- Signed the Wagonhound Free Use Gravel Permit.

- Approved repair of the airport snowplow by P & S Machine of Worland for \$4,860.

- Approved the Scenic View Subdivision, a minor portion of the Morgan Ridge Subdivision.



Sean Pearch of Diamond-T Welding attaches a shield to a conveyor at Wyo-Ben's Lucerne plant on Friday afternoon. After being closed several years, the bentonite processing

facility is being refurbished. The opening date has been moved back from April 1 to June or July.

—Jonathan Green photo

Wyo-Ben officials still planning to open Lucerne plant, June or July

by Jonathan Green
The Wyo-Ben facility at Lucerne has been set back to mid-June or July, according to two company representatives.

Rick Magstadt, vice president of manufacturing in Greybull, said the softening economy has slowed demand for the company's bentonite products. Other Wyo-Ben plants in Greybull and Lovell are cutting back on production.

Magstadt said the company would be "kidding ourselves" to expect the economy to re-

bound tomorrow. Nonetheless, he is hoping for some "bounce."

Magstadt had hoped the facility would reopen in April. The rehabilitative efforts have not run into any problems; rather the pace of work has been slowed to minimize idle capacity and overtime costs.

In the event of an unforeseen spike in demand the plant could be online faster, he said.

Brandon Hetland, Lucerne plant manager, also said the work is going well. New

paint had been applied to a number of exterior surfaces and welding contractors were installing shields on a conveyor last week.

Hetland said most of the bentonite processed at the Lucerne facility would not be destined for the energy production sector so recent softening on the oil patch should not impact the facility. Magstadt agreed and said energy production is "not the primary emphasis" of the Lucerne plant.

"I'm hopeful that we'll see a little (economic) relief," Magstadt said.

Turnout matches last year

The total number of people whose blood had been drawn in anticipation of the Kiwanis Health Fair by noon Tuesday was 589, identical to the total last year.

The blood draws continue through Saturday from 7-10 a.m. in the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital lobby.

Appointments are not accepted.

Tests offered as part of the health fair include:

- Chemistry panel
- Hemogram (CBC)
- PSA (prostate screening for men)
- Hemoglobin A1c
- C-Reactive protein
- Ferritin (high iron)
- ColoKit (colon cancer test)
- Vitamin D
- Blood type

For more information contact T.J. Schoenewald at 864-5041.

The health fair will be April 4.



Phlebotomist Adrian Treese draws blood from Michael Wright Tuesday morning for the Kiwanis Health Fair. Blood draws continue through Saturday from 7-10 a.m. at Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

—Jonathan Green photo

Stimulus funds may help with sewer line

by Pat Schmidt
Thermopolis officials decided Tuesday night to aim toward federal stimulus funding for a sewer replacement project estimated to cost \$500,000.

Assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill and town engineer Heath Overfield of Engineering Associates explained projects have to be "shovel ready" to qualify for the federal funding. The project is ready to go and is on the unofficial stimulus list of Wyoming projects.

Stansill said the project is among four included in the town's request for funds from the county block funds provided by the state in 2009.

He recommended if the federal funding is approved to make the change and then get the engineering and other work down on another ten blocks or so of the many other sewer lines the town has identified as in need of replacement.

Cost overrun
In other business, the council:

- Approved an additional \$19,000 to cover cost overruns on the remodeling of the entrance to the joint law enforcement center. It is on a matching basis with the county.

- Agreed to sign a draft solid waste program to be submitted to state Department of Environmental Quality officials by a deadline this month.

The explanation of how the town landfill is operated was prepared by Howard Johnson of Inberg-Miller Engineers in Riverton.

Council member Dick Hall voted against the motion because he had just received it and had not had time to read it.

A public hearing is scheduled before the plan is finalized and presented to the state in July.

Street closings

- Approved street closing requests from Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce executive director Kathy Wallingford for the 3-on-3 basketball tournament downtown May 1-3, the Car Rally on June 20-21, Pageant Saturday on Aug. 1 and a date not yet set for the Christmas parade.

- Learned three damaged Russian olive trees in Candy Jack Park will have to be removed. Stansill said they may be replaced with blue spruce trees.

- Announced a meeting of the Big Horn Basin group struggling to keep a bus serving passengers traveling to Billings and Denver would be held at Cody Town Hall on March 31 at 10 a.m.

Support for hospice

- Hall said he has been working to provide a hospice facility in Thermopolis and was pleased to learn Dr. Jason Weyer is holding a fund-raising dinner on Friday at the VFW to start work toward a hospice.

Hall said the proposal to have a dwelling in which people can stay while they are being treated at Thermopolis medical facilities drew cheers when it was announced at the senior citizens center, and he urged town officials to be ready to help in any way.

Drive starts for hospice facility

by Cindy Glasson
Although a physical building may come a year into the future, Dr. Jason Weyer is laying the groundwork for hospice care in Hot Springs County.

The starting point will be a traditional Irish dinner of corned beef and cabbage Friday at the VFW, at 6:30 p.m. Proceeds will

benefit future hospice care in the county.

Weyer said there is a particular need for hospice care here. Hospice care is given to those with life-limiting illnesses. It is not a new concept but does require a good deal of planning to be successful.

Clergy, nurses, respite care volunteers and others are all involved in hospice. Weyer

started as a volunteer with hospice while in college.

While he has had great support for the program already, he will start an account next week at a bank so people may make donations. He will also be forming a 501(c)(3) charity in the next few months that will allow donations to be tax deductible.