

Out with the orange and black TMS switches to purple, gold and black; 'kittens' now 'cats'

by Cindy Glasson

The days of the Thermopolis Middle School Bobkitten are numbered after the Hot Springs County School Board approved a color and mascot change at the March 19 meeting.

Orange and black have been the Bobkitten colors, but a letter from the middle school student council asked the colors be changed to black, purple and gold, and their mascot from the Bobkitten to the grown-up Bobcat.

Changing the colors would have some benefits, such as sharing of athletic equipment between middle school and high school.

A particularly small freshman football player could now use a middle school helmet and still be in full uniform. The same holds true for a very tall basketball player in the middle school where part of a high school uniform could be used in place of a smaller middle school set.

Football uniforms will be the first to change.

Superintendent Marty Kobza said those uniforms would have been purchased new for the coming season anyway.

Volleyball and basketball uniforms will have to wait. Those uniforms should last about three more years before needing replacement.

The total cost to immediately change all of the uniforms from orange and black to purple, black and gold would be around \$25,000.

School board moves fifth grade, approves some bids, graduation

by Cindy Glasson

Moving the fifth grade, replacing the auditorium building locks, graduation dates, semester's end and demolition of the old Lucerne school building were considered during the Hot Springs County School Board meeting on March 19.

At the recommendation of superintendent Marty Kobza, the board voted unanimously to move the fifth grade from the elementary building to the middle school building.

Several options for the lack of space at the elementary school were discussed in public meetings, including modular classrooms.

A cost analysis showed an initial outlay for modular units of \$13,117, a \$925 monthly lease per unit and a total cost without utilities of \$78,637 per year.

Adding the modular units would not impact programming or personnel; however, teachers reported some students have problems learning in that environment.

The current estimate is the middle school usage is at 36% of capacity. Adding the fifth grade to the building will put it at 50-55% of capacity, leaving plenty of space for Kobza's school within a school scenario.

"I have children of my own this age," said Kobza. "I feel this move would be an advantage scholastically for the middle school students."

A BID OF \$168,525 was accepted from Overhead Door of Riverton for repair and replacement of locks and doors in the auditorium building.

The building has the original locks from when it was built.

This will bring it in line with the locks in the other district buildings.

FEEDBACK from staff, parents and students at the high school prompted the board to create a more consistent date for graduation.

Some parents indicated they would like to see the seniors graduate as soon as possible after their last day of formal classes. For example, if the student's last day of class is Friday, the parents would like to see graduation ceremonies on either Saturday or Sunday.

High school staff members are concerned about graduation conflicting with the state track meet. However, they agreed conflict with something is inevitable no matter when graduation is held.

The board voted unanimously to hold graduation on the fourth Sunday in May, which will usually fall the same weekend as Memorial Day, giving families more time to travel for graduation.

THE BOARD voted to move the end of first semester to before Christmas break.

In February there was discussion regarding when to end the first semester.

Teachers said having finals after Christmas break makes it hard for some students to get back in the swing of things.

THE BID for asbestos removal at the old Lucerne school was awarded to Safetech Inc. of Billings for \$36,364.

Nine bids were received for the project that will encompass removal and disposal of asbestos from the school prior to its demolition.

The high bid was \$151,986 from Environmental Contractors of Billings.

A \$52,481 INCREASE was approved in the Thermopolis portion of the 2009-10 Central Wyoming College-Board of Cooperative Higher Education Services budget.

That will result in a \$18,860 shortfall in the funds generated by the current 1/4 mill tax levy. The board is considering doubling the levy to 1/2 mill to make up the difference.

All participating school boards must approve cooperative budgets.

IN OTHER business the board:

- Scheduled a work session on April 8 to discuss career and technical education opportunities.
- Approved a \$1,000 stipend to be paid to each of the four members of the Curriculum Coordinating Council for the current school year.



Wyoming Game and Fish Department warden Benge Brown listens intently to proposals from local hunters during a meeting on hunting seasons here Monday. In the background is biologist Bart Kroger. —Pat Schmidt photo

Watch for high flow, B.H River

Expect high water in the Big Horn River starting Tuesday.

The Bureau of Reclamation in cooperation with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department will use a flushing flow to improve river habitat and trout reproduction. Releases from Boysen Dam will be increased to 3,000 cubic feet per second about 2 a.m. Tuesday, then to 5,000 cfs at 7:15 a.m.

After ten hours the flow will be gradually reduced back to 700 cfs, by approximately noon Wednesday.

4-H bingo night here

The Hot Springs County 4-H annual bingo family fun night is Saturday at the fair building.

Dinner starts at 6 p.m. with bingo to follow.

Storm closes schools, relieves drought fears

by Jonathan Green

An early spring-season snowstorm socked the Thermopolis area with 6-7 inches of snow Monday, but little damage was reported.

The deepest snow was apparently on the east end of the Buffalo Creek Road near the John Baird home, about a foot and a half, according to reports received by Hot Springs County road and bridge foreman Jim Skelton.

The storm arrived the day after unseasonably high temperatures were recorded. The weather station at the Thermopolis Fire Hall recorded a temperature of 65 degrees nine hours before rain began early Monday morning.

Temperatures began a slide to freezing, where the mercury lingered all Monday.

Local schools closed in anticipation of the storm, as did the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center. At least one meeting was postponed Monday evening, the session on the possible community recreation center. It has been rescheduled for Monday at 6:30 p.m. at the middle school.

The Wyoming Department of Transportation closed two highways in the area. Wyo. Hwy. 120 was closed from Grass Creek Rd. (Wyo. Hwy. 171) to the Burlington Road north of Meeteetse part of Monday afternoon.

U.S. Hwy. 20 through Wind River Canyon was also closed early Monday afternoon at the request of a Wyoming Highway Patrol trooper investigating a traffic accident near Badwater Creek, according to radio traffic. The road was reopened shortly before dark Monday.

No weather-related accidents were reported in Hot Springs County.

The National Weather Service reported five to six inches of snow in Thermopolis, seven inches just south-southwest of town and a little over seven inches in the Black Mountain area. An automated sensor in the foothills of the Owl Creek Mountains in the far west of the county reported five inches.

Total moisture in the storm was measured at .84 of an inch on the official National Weather Service instruments at the Thermopolis wastewater pumping station, with six inches of snow.

Area officials said the storm caused little or no damage.

Assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill said the biggest problems in Thermopolis were muddy alleys after the heavy, wet snow began to melt quickly. Roads in Thermopolis were wet to clear by midday Tuesday.

Superintendent Kevin Skates said the storm caused no problems in Hot Springs State Park, in large part because of the similar storm that struck in October. That storm culled the weak and damaged tree limbs that otherwise would have been felled in the Monday snow, he said.

Tree trimmers, working throughout the mild days in winter, had already cleared away the debris.

"We appreciated the moisture," Skates said. "It's always a good thing. We're doing fine."

Archaeological Society plans to tour Legend Rock rock art

The Legend Rock State Petroglyph Site will be the focus of a symposium at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center April 1-5.

Held in conjunction with the spring meeting of the Wyoming Archaeological Society in Cody, "The Legend Rock Petroglyph Site in Time and Space" will feature assistant state archaeologist Danny Walker, Bureau of Land Management archaeologist Mike Bies of Worland and retired archaeologist and rock art expert Larry Loendorf.

The speakers will cover a diversity of topics such as the archaeological work done at Legend Rock, its place in rock art research and petroglyph line style, photographic documentation, prehistoric use, graffiti removal and administrative history.

Other hosts are the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources and the Wyoming Association of Professional Archaeologists.

The Legend Rock Petroglyph Site is administered through Hot Springs State Park in Thermopolis. According to a news release, it is one of the finest and most significant rock art sites in North America, with hundreds of petroglyphs incised into the stone cliffs. Some of these etchings date as far back as 2,000 years ago.

For details, contact Walker at 766-5565. Those wishing to visit Legend Rock should pick up a key at Hot Springs State Park headquarters.

Principals switch set next year

by Cindy Glasson

Matt Spring, principal at Ralph Witters Elementary School will become the Middle School principal.

Debbie Brown will be the new principal at the elementary school. This will be her second year in the Hot Springs County school system. She is currently the reading coordinator for the elementary grades. The changes were approved by the school board Thursday. No outside interviews were conducted.

Superintendent Marty Kobza said, "It is our goal to provide students with the finest education possible, and both of these individuals bring the skills and personal attributes to help us reach that goal."

For more on teacher and other personnel changes, turn to page 16.



Wyoming Department of Transportation snow plow operator Barry Armstrong lowers the barricade arm across the north entrance to Wind River Canyon on Monday afternoon. Although the Thermopolis crew was able to keep the canyon highway clear, U.S. Hwy. 20 to Shoshoni was closed after an accident in Fremont County. —Jonathan Green photo