

Closed session debated

School sells TMS land to county for S&R structure

by Jonathan Green

Hot Springs County School Board members approved the sale of .8 acre of land to Hot Springs County on Thursday.

The county commissioners offered \$75,000 for the land, which is adjacent to Thermopolis Middle School and the new fire hall on 14th Street.

Earlier the commissioners decided to use state grant funds to add a search and rescue building there.

The property is part of the land purchased in the 1990s for construction of the middle school building.

School board members voted unanimously to accept the offer after Hub Whitt told the other board members the building committee consensus was to sell the land.

The funds will be added to the fiscal year 2008-09 general fund barring any unexpected issues, district business manager Lisa Pierce said. Because the property had been under district ownership since prior to a 1997 accounting change, the district will not have to adjust its reserve accounting.

(The district cannot carry more than 15% of its budget forward from year to year unless it involves money or assets held prior to 1997. Pre-1997 reserves have remained stable at \$930,386 since at least FY 2005-06, the earliest year the figure was available.)

Board member Belenda Willson said, "It's a piece of property that doesn't really have another use."

**Tax recommended**

Superintendent Marty Kobza and Pierce also recommended the board consider levying an additional 1/8 or 1/4 mill tax to help pay for career and technical education (formerly technical-vocational education).

The district will be contracting with the Fremont County Board of Cooperative Education

Services (BOCES).

A decision on the tax issue is expected in June or July. A survey of students in high school indicated interest in wildland firefighting and certified nursing assistant programs with a food service option a close third. Ten students were also interested in an energy exploration program.

**Closed meeting protested**

Prior to the regular meeting, board members met in closed session to "discuss possible litigation and seek legal advice."

Board member Clay Van Antwerp asked chairman Liz Mahoney to hold the discussion in the open, citing a statute that allows the subject of a closed session to waive his right to a private meeting.

Mahoney said the topic of the meeting was not about him and denied his request.

During the April board meeting Van Antwerp participated in a board vote about the district food service program. His mother had worked in the food service program until she resigned Thursday. (See separate story for full staff details.)

Before Van Antwerp voted, there was strenuous discussion between the board members about whether he should participate. The district lawyer had advised against doing so.

**Food program changes**

Board members also discussed cost saving measures the food service program will implement next school year. Pierce said state cuts and staffing changes brought the program savings to an anticipated \$10,000 in FY 2009-10.

Meal prices will increase 25¢ for students, including breakfast. Second entrees during meals will now cost \$1.75, except for items from the "health bar." Adult meal prices will increase from \$2.95 to \$4.

All board members attended the meeting, except for Mahoney, who left during the executive session prior to the regular meeting.



Co-valedictorians Cady Spraul, left, and Hilary Welborn address other members of the Class of 2009 during commencement ceremonies on Sunday. —Pat Schmidt photo

A fourth bank on the way to town?

A Montana bank has applied to the Comptroller of the Currency to open a branch bank in Thermopolis.

According to a public notice in this edition, Bank of Bridger plans to open a full service, staffed branch at 701 South Shoshoni, the former Stump's Outpost location.

Bank of Red Lodge president Bart Lange-meir was in a board meeting Tuesday and could not be reached for comment. The Red Lodge bank is a branch of the Bridger bank.

Grads told attitude a key to inspiration

"Always remember to look forward, not back," graduation speaker Lyle Grossman told the 41 members of the Hot Springs County High School Class of 2009 at graduation on Sunday afternoon.

Grossman was asked by class member Kelsey Redland to speak because the students considered his presence at almost all school games and activities inspirational. He usually can be found near the entrance in his wheelchair, rooting on the students and acknowledging them by name.

Grossman recalled crashing into a bridge rail in 1971. He was paralyzed, but his 2-year-old daughter was unhurt.

The daughter inspired him to overcome obstacles and operate a lawn and yard care business for 34 years. He also worked in heating and air conditioning.

Grossman recalled Hall of Fame football coach Vince Lombardi saying it isn't how many times you are knocked down, it is how many times you get back up.

Grossman urged the graduates to strive for higher achievements to inspire everyone around them.

"Attitude determines how well you do it," he said.

Cady Spraul and Hilary Welborn gave the valedictory addresses. One of the salutatorians, Josie Pettipiece, had just had her tonsils removed, so she stood by as co-salutatorian Katie Olsen gave the speech.

Pettipiece is also president of the Class of 2009, so vice president Kelsey Redland handled those speaking duties.

Other participants were principal Dustin Hunt, superintendent Marty Kobza and school board members Elizabeth Mahoney, Karen Leyba, Clay VanAntwerp, Belenda Willson, Travis Bomengen, Hub Whitt and Joe Martinez.

The combined middle and high school bands played the processional and recessional. The high school choir sang the national anthem and "Time To Say Goodbye."

Cady Allison Spraul, Hillary Morgan Welborn, Valedictorians. Katie Valynn Olsen, Josie Lynn Pettipiece, Salutatorians.

Members of the class with a 3.5 or higher grade point average include Isabel Valle' Belden, Brandon Boyce Galovich, Baleigh Katherine Green, Cody Wayne Hoffman, Natasha Morgan Kozlowski, Porshia Lynn Ramsey, Kelsey Ann Redland, Celina Jean Stewart, Kolton Michal Stoner.

Other graduates are Anthony Lee Apland, Matthew Thomas Bird, Stanton LeRoy Burchett, Kylee Jo Casciato, Jaylene Phyllis Cavalli, Alexis Rae Demas, Carson Latham Dickinson, Haeley Rhae Dorman,

Ashley Marie Engelbrecht, Michelle Lorayne Fields, Alberto Bucio Godinez, Christopher David Hart, Santana Grace Keener, KC Vaughn Lahoe, Derek Andrew McGahan, Melissa Lynne McKinstray, Heather Rene Morningstar, Jacob Clifford Music, Daniel Martin Norskog, Tyler Daniel O'Brien, Joshua Lake Pounds, MaKensi Rae Price, Christopher Benjamin Prosser, Michelle Mae Roberts, Leslie Marie Rosenfeld, Stormy Rae Sharp, Jacob Thomas Tonn, Kellie Dawn Turner, Michael Robert Vassar.

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Fiddling showdown in town

Competitors from around the region will be competing in the 36th Annual Wyoming Oldtime Fiddlers Contest Saturday and Sunday in Thermopolis.

Competition starts in the auditorium at 9:30 a.m. both days and runs through the afternoon. Spectators are welcome to attend all of the sessions, and there are admission fees for adults, children and families.

Other Saturday events open to the public at the adjacent Ralph Witters Elementary School include a fund-raising Pickin' Pig Roast from 6-7:30 p.m. for \$10 with live music by Ana and Friends and a free-for-all jam session.

Special fiddle and guitar workshops are offered from 7:30-8:30 p.m. Teachers will be the state contest judges and two instructors from the University of Wyoming, Dr. David Brinkman and Dr. Warrie Means.

The state champions will be crowned about mid-afternoon on Sunday. A State Fiddlers Contest Special Edition is included in this Independent Record.

The contest is sanctioned by the National Oldtime Fiddle Association, Weiser, Idaho. Winners in Thermopolis qualify to compete in the national contest June 22-27.

Judges will be Nancy Padilla, Bozeman, Mont.; Natalie Padilla, Greeley, Colo.; and Tyler Enders, Casper.

The weekend opens with an appearance by Lauri Vigyikan, "V, the Gypsy Cowbelle," at the Days Inn Safari Lounge from 8-11 p.m. She plays acoustic guitar and sings traditional and original "Cowbilly" music.

Old-time fiddle style is based

on fiddle playing of the late 19th and 20th century. Different rhythms were developed to accompany dance steps of different countries. Early string bands modified the traditional styles, and these formed the development of both country and bluegrass music.

Contestants must play at least two traditional styles, including a hoedown and a waltz. There are also twin fiddle teams as well as a no-holds barred category.

This is the third year that the contest has been held in Thermopolis after being held in Shoshoni for 33 years. Among the sponsors are the Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation and the Wyoming Arts Council.

For more information, call 921-8120.



Elementary teacher John Gores, right, supervises fifth grade students including Eric Herold, Zoe Stehlin, Louie Castle-Hinojos and Kameron Olsen throwing spears Thursday.

Stehlin and Castle-Hinojos are throwing bare handed, while the devices Herold and Olsen are using are called atlathles. —Jonathan Green photo

Counties file suit against agencies

by Jonathan Green

The commissioners of Hot Springs, Washakie and Johnson counties are asking Fifth Judicial District judge Robert Skar to review the "administrative inaction" by two state agencies on a water discharge rule.

The lawsuit argues the Wyoming Environmental Quality Council and Department of Environmental Quality failed to follow balancing criteria as required by statute while evaluating a surface discharge rule change.

The rule changes how the state will regulate water discharges from oil and gas production. In part, the rule states water with the potential for agricultural use "shall be maintained at a quality which allows continued use (of the water for ag uses.)"

"Degradation of such waters shall not be of such an extent to cause a measurable decrease in crop or livestock production."

The suit argues the county commissions requested a socioeconomic study of the impacts the rule would have throughout the state and that such a study is required by the balancing criteria.

"In consideration of the rule and implementation of the policy, EQC and DEQ have consistently failed and refused to consider the balancing criteria as required by statute," the commissioners allege.

"The counties seek judicial review of EQC and DEQ's inaction and ask this court to order the agencies to fully analyze the balancing criteria before further implementation of the rule..."

No court date is set.