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# Independent Record

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## Approve three measures Commissioners halt subdivision

by Cindy Glasson  
Four hours of testimony led the Hot Springs County Commissioners to reject the proposed Riverside Bluffs subdivision, formerly known as the Nakamura subdivision.  
A majority of the public hearing for the subdivision at the north end of the Lucerne area revolved around the railroad crossing at Nakamura Lane and whether it is a public or private crossing. Utility easements and ingress/egress issues were also discussed.  
Additional details on the pub-

lic hearing will be published next week.  
The commissioners also:  
•Joined the Town of Thermopolis in signing the joint powers board agreement in support of the Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center.  
•Signed a letter of support for the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District to proceed with a grant search for Phase 3 of a system upgrade project.  
•Passed the 2009-10 county health office contract.  
•Tabled a review of the landfill agreement.

## VAST products coming from H.S. County plant

by Lara Love  
Hot Springs County residents can be proud to say there is a product produced here which plays a part in securing defense in the United States and abroad.  
VAST Manufacturing Inc. is an electronic contract manufacturer specializing in cable, harness and electro mechanical assemblies that was recruited by the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Economic Development Co. Their facility is located at 836 Black Mountain Road.  
According to Alex Kinane, president and CEO, the plant has been operational since January. They shipped the first product out in March via UPS.  
There are 11-13 people employed here at VAST. Plans are to eventually increase the staff.  
“We have been pleasantly surprised with the quality of employees here,” said Kinane. “They go

above and beyond and are able to quickly learn new tasks.”  
In September, VAST will begin producing cable assemblies for new international targets used in training simulations.  
The targets move at mach one speed and will be shot out of the air as though they are an enemy plane. When complete, the targets will be sold to Taiwan. Two employees from Thermopolis will be sent to California to climb around on a rocket and perform necessary measurements.  
Because of the nature of the business, security measures are in force at the facility. All visitors, customers, employees and prospective employees are required to obtain permission before entering the building.  
VAST is relocating from Oakdale, Calif. According to Kinane, they expect to cease operations there around the middle of next year.

## Property tax rates down, range from 67 to 80 mills

Overall property tax levies in Hot Springs County range from a low of 67.03 mills to a high of 80.03 mills, according to assessor Shelley Deromedi.  
Deromedi said all of the tax rates are down because the middle school bonds from 1996 have been retired, saving approximately three mills.  
People living in rural areas with no water and sewer districts pay the lowest property taxes, 67.03 mills.  
Those living in an area that was part of the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District before it was annexed into the Town

of Thermopolis are paying the highest mill levy, 80.03 mills.  
Towns can levy eight mills, so property owners in Thermopolis, East Thermopolis and Kirby pay 72.030.  
(The three mills levied for property in the Hot Springs County Rural Fire District are not levied in the towns, which instead make a direct pay equivalent to three mills to the district for fire protection.)  
Lucerne Water and Sewer District taxpayers will be levied 71.03 mills. The rate in the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District is 75.03 mills.



In preparation for the final heat, Ethan Love, left, takes a cutting torch to the fender well of Steve Flinn's Demolition Derby car on Saturday night. Next to him Blaine Baldes works on Aaron Munger's car. In the background, Mo King swings a sledge hammer at the trunk. Flinn finished second in the derby.  
—Sean Ryan photo

## Council waits on building decisions for Blair's, Nature's Corner projects

by Jonathan Green  
Right-of-way and proposed construction issues kept the Thermopolis Town Council busy Tuesday night.  
**Blair's Super Market**  
Kent Foulger, one of the Blair's Super Market owners, asked for progress on a request he made to the council in July to allow the grocer to build on town right-of-way as part of store expansion.  
“Time is of the essence for us at this point,” he said, adding he had expected to hear some decision at the meeting.  
“Our apologies if you're waiting on us,” councilwoman Toni Casciato told him.  
But town attorney Mike Messenger said the council could take no action Tuesday. As a special council meeting, the agenda could not be amended.  
At the second meeting in July, competitor Greg Kraske of Don's IGA asked the council to deny the request. The council had previously denied his request to use part of the town right-of-way for a liquor drive-up window.  
Foulger had since discussed easement rules with town engineer Heath Overfield, who told him it has generally been town policy to deny requests for permanent structures on rights-of-way.  
“We're sorry to hear that,” Foulger told the council. “We need to know what we can use that property for.”  
Messenger told the council permanent structures have never been allowed in his 26 years of experience with the town.  
**Nature's Corner**  
Nature's Corner owner Sarah Ferrell was also on hand with architect Stephen Heinen to inquire whether the council would be receptive to the construction of a veranda and wheelchair ramp in front of the building.  
The ground floor of the building is about

ten inches higher than the sidewalk. Ferrell said the step up into the business is not compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.  
A preliminary plan presented by Heinen includes a concrete ramp extending four feet into the 15-ft. wide sidewalk along Broadway.  
Citing the same concern raised to the Blair's' project, Malloy suggested the design be changed so the ramp would not be a permanent structure that “would need a jackhammer” to be removed.  
The more contentious point of discussion was the veranda. Heinen's plan includes a perforated roof with business signing protruding ten feet over the sidewalk, supported by four pylons bolted to the concrete.  
The plan is explicitly designed to spur “additional construction at other storefronts and produce positive enhancements and beautification” in Thermopolis, according to Heinen's abstract.  
Metal posts bolted into the concrete, supporting a metal structure, would not be easily removable, Malloy observed.  
Councilman Dick Hall also wondered about the implications of renovations downtown because the area is listed as a National Historic District. Heinen said Ferrell and he are more than happy to tailor the design to comply with any historic context in the downtown area.  
**Special meeting**  
After a protracted discussion the council voted to table the issue, along with Foulger's request until the next council meeting Sept. 1.  
The council also scheduled a work session next Tuesday at 5 p.m. The work session will deal with three issues touched by Foulger's and Ferrell's requests, revocable license agreements, canopy requirements

and right-of-way use allowances.  
**Mobile home water**  
The council also agreed to charge Gary Lee, of the Grandview Mobile Home Community, \$16,000 for water availability. A single four-inch water line services the area on the south edge of Thermopolis, which is then divided into two one-inch lines and one two-inch line.  
Lee will install two six-inch feeds, which will support up to 64 residential taps, Overfield said.  
The town charges the cost of the difference for an upgrade but the original records of the area are not available, Overfield said. The difference between the town originally charging for two one-inch and one two-inch feeds versus charging for a single four-inch feed is a total of \$8,000.  
Lee has already paid \$16,000. He was addressing the council to ensure he didn't need to pay a total of \$24,000.  
“To have clean water takes money, I understand that,” Lee said.  
The calculated water fee is also charged for sewer availability, so Lee's total savings are \$16,000.  
“I motion we take the money and run,” Hall said.

## Sex charges wait

by Jonathan Green  
The Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office has turned two cases over to county attorney Jerry Williams.  
Sheriff Lou Falgoust declined to comment on either case, one classified as rape and the other as pornography, referring questions to Williams' office.  
Williams, who was in court, did not return phone messages Tuesday.



Hot Springs State Park employees, l-r, Brett St. Pierre, John Fish, Kevin Skates, Jody Lange and Jeff Dittmer clean the patio around the Big Spring on Monday. A thunderstorm with hail and heavy rain hit Thermopolis Friday afternoon, and water rushing from the hills left red mud several inches deep in some areas.  
—Cindy Glasson photo

## Trio saves four vehicles from fire at school shop

by Jonathan Green  
Three good Samaritans saved four Hot Springs County School vehicles from fire late Saturday after an attempted arson.  
Thermopolis police sergeant Pat Cornwell said he had been stuck in traffic while spectators and participants left the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds Saturday night after the demolition derby. Many cars were also parked in the school lot between the auditorium and high school.  
The derby ended at about 11:20 p.m. At 11:40 John and Janet Knapp and Brad Becerra reported a fire in the walled courtyard near the auto shop on the back of the vocational building.  
They said they thought they had the fire under control but a gas tank was nearby.  
When Cornwell arrived on scene two minutes later, the fire was out. There was no damage except for some charring of concrete immediately observable, he said.

The fire had been set with gasoline and had burned for a distance of about 50 feet. The three who reported the incident had managed to put it out about five feet before it reached the first vehicle, a white Ford Tempo sedan.  
Cornwell said the Tempo and three other cars in the courtyard had been doused with gasoline and the fire the Knapps and Becerra put out was acting as a liquid fuse.  
All of the vehicles belong to the school district and are for shop class. Cornwell said he does not think the gasoline damaged them.  
Superintendent Marty Kobza praised the police and the trio for their work.  
The person or persons responsible for the fire could be prosecuted for attempted arson and destruction of property, Cornwell said.  
Anyone with information on the fire should contact the Thermopolis Police Department, 864-3114.