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Thermopolis  
Hot Springs

# Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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## Fame Hall: Smith, Voigt, Freudenthal, McCoy, Allen first

The first Hot Springs County Hall of Fame class has been selected.

It includes Col. Tim McCoy, Gov. Dave Freudenthal, Supreme Court Chief Justice Barton Voigt, former State Treasurer the late Stan Smith and long-time educator, Thermopolis mayor and county commission chairman Karl Allen.

The hall of fame should be-

come a reality on Jan. 16, according to coordinator Dick Hall.

"We've had a hard time finding a date that wasn't taken up with another event in the county," he said.

It will be sponsored by the county commissioners but operated through the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce in order to have tax free status for donations.

## Wildfires increase

by Jonathan Green

After a quiet 2008, the Thermopolis Fire Department has stayed busy on the wildland fire line this year.

Chief Mark Collins said 560 acres have burned in the county so far, compared with only 23 acres in all of 2008.

"It was not a slow year," he said.

Despite the wet spring and plentiful fuels, it could have been worse. Over 4,300 acres were blackened in 2007.

Of the 560 acres burned this year, 430 were consumed by the Duncan fire, which was in a remote canyon of the Owl Creek Mountains.

The volunteer hours for the firefighters also increased this year. They spent 3,310 hours on the wildland fire line this year, up from 2,260 in 2008.

Other calls required 2,444 man-hours (up from 1,040) and training time increased from 1,720 to 2,166.

After purchasing a new ladder truck in 2008, the department will replace Engine One, the first-response vehicle to lo-

cal structure fires, late this year. Collins said the department is also building two "deuce-and-a-half" trucks.

The trucks, so called because of their 2.5-ton weight rating, will be similar to the two six-by-six wildland trucks the department currently uses. While the military vehicles are old, they are also capable.

Collins said one of the fast-attack vehicles suffered a failed transmission while on the Duncan fire. The Ford F-550 chassis-cab trucks have had repeated problems with the four-wheel drive transfer case issues.

This is National Fire Prevention Week, and firefighters continue inviting children to the fire hall to learn fire safety and prevention.

On Thursday, firefighters will visit Storytime at 10:30 a.m. and meet with kindergarten students from 2-3 p.m. On Friday, fourth grade students will get a lesson on flammable materials. Collins said the firemen try to match the level of each presentation to the maturity of the students involved.



Falling snow and spraying water delight Jayci Nettles and Thermopolis volunteer fireman Rodney McQueen. Assisting

in the background are Michelle Herring and her fireman husband, Justin. --Lara Love photo

## Funding requests dominate county commission meeting

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners dealt with money matters from several different fronts during a meeting Tuesday.

### Sheriff's vehicle

Sheriff Lou Falgoust discussed purchasing a vehicle for the school resource officer. A 4-door Dodge Charger has been located in Illinois that is partially equipped, which would lower the cost of purchase to the \$25-30,000 range.

The commissioners indicated there are no funds available to cover the expense, but a budget amendment could be made later in the fiscal year. They reiterated the school needs to provide some kind of compensation, and chairman Brad Basse and Falgoust will set up a meeting with school officials.

Falgoust will continue to look for a vehicle from local sources.

### Water district grant

South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District officials were given permission to apply for a \$200,000 Community Development Block Grant to upgrade their water system. The district has applied for other grants in an attempt to keep costs down.

"The more money we can find the lower we can keep our water rates," district board chairman Dave Denton said.

The commissioners were concerned there is a limit on community development grants for a single county. Denton said this request

would be processed during the next round of grants in February or March.

"If this is for the next cycle, then I'm all for it," vice-chairman John Lumley said.

### Lodging tax dilemma

Three members of the Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board presented a letter requesting help with funding for the remainder of the year.

The lodging tax has not been collected this summer after being inadvertently left off the ballot last November. A special election in May approved restarting the tax on Oct. 1.

Lodging tax board member Carl Leyba said the board has just \$35,000 to cover expenses.

"What will you be leaving out?" commissioner Frank Manning asked.

"Special event funding, three-on-three basketball, the demo derby," Leyba replied. "We're just not going to be able to help out the chamber."

Basse reminded the board the commissioners had given them several ideas to supplement their income when the loss of the tax was first discovered.

"We suggested a self-imposed tax," he said. "Whatever happened with that?"

"We discussed it and concluded it wouldn't work," Leyba said. "Without all the businesses agreeing to it it wasn't going to happen."

County clerk Hans Odde said, "Keep in mind the commissioners have been hit up for \$250,000 today. That's \$250,000 that we don't have budgeted either."

Board member Jim Mills said the lodging tax brings revenue to the county, suggesting roads do not. Basse said the roads not only bring the tourists to the county, they also provide a way for the farmers and ranchers to get their goods to market, thereby bringing revenue into the county.

Leyba indicated the state is generally a month or two behind when it comes to forwarding the taxes collected so it may be almost December before the board receives a check for October's revenue.

The commissioners decided to look into the legality of a loan to the lodging tax board with county attorney Jerry Williams. Until then, they urged the board to look into other options.

### Health grants

Public health director Bree Gerber said the county will be receiving three grants totaling nearly \$170,000.

The first comes from the Department of Family Services for \$41,500 to provide services to families through public health. The other two come from the Wyoming Department of Health for supplies, staff and preparation for H1N1 flu.

Gerber said public health will have two years in which to disburse the funds.

## Airport draft study released; meeting Nov. 16

The Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on the relocation of Hot Springs County Airport is ready for public review and comment through Nov. 16.

An informational open house and public hearing will be held Nov. 4 at the school auditorium at 6 p.m. Verbal and written comments on the EA will be accepted at the hearing.

The EA lists potential environmental impacts that could result from the relocation of the airport to one of two potential sites, the Highway 120 Site (Site 2) and the Buchanan Flat Site (Site 3).

The primary objective of the EA is to accurately assess and document the foreseeable direct, indirect and cumulative impacts (both positive and negative) resulting from the proposed airport

relocation and operation of the proposed replacement airport.

Copies are available for public review at the courthouse, county library and Thermopolis Town Hall.

The EA process, which started with a scoping meeting in April 2008, analyzes and describes the potential environmental affects of the proposed airport relocation. A study input committee of community members and interested parties was formed.

According to a news release, with the help of agencies and the study input committee, the consultant team worked to gather information on the proposed relocation sites through research and on-site surveys.

These surveys describe the existing conditions of the sites and were used as a baseline to

measure potential environmental impacts.

The purpose of the airport relocation is to increase the safety and utility of the airport by meeting Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) airport design standards and to provide adequate runway length for existing and future airport users, according to the news release. The FAA has developed national airport design standards and criteria to ensure the safe and efficient use of the national airport system.

Currently the existing Hot Springs County Airport does not meet many of these design standards because it was originally constructed without federal funding assistance, the news release states. According to previous site selection stud-

ies, it is not considered feasible to upgrade the existing airport to meet these standards due to terrain issues that prevent the extension or realignment of the runway.

For the FAA to approve and fund the relocation of the airport, the county must satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 by conducting the environmental review.

A public hearing is not required for an EA, unless a request for a hearing is received. However, county officials feel it is important to receive feedback.

Representatives of the county, the study input committee and the consultant team will be available to provide information and answer questions about the project.



Pirates Gino Hinojas-Castle and Kirsty Tillack prepare a cannon on the senior class float that won top prize in the 2009 Hot Springs County High School Homecoming Parade on Friday. --Sean Ryan photo