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Sewer line reconstruction

Project gamble pays dividends for town council

by Pat Schmidt
There was good news for Thermopolis and for employees during the Thermopolis Town Council meeting on Dec. 1.

A contract for \$274,823 tentatively had been awarded for Phase II of the sewer lines reconstruction to Reiman Corp. at an earlier meeting. The gamble paid off as enough money had been returned to the state from other projects around Wyoming to cover the cost of the project.

The council also approved a contract with Engineering Associates to perform the reporting requirements under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus program before Dec. 31. The mayor was also given advance approval to sign any necessary ARRA paperwork before the deadline.

MAYOR BILL Malloy recommended since no pay raises are planned for next year that full-time town employees split a Christmas bonus of \$10,800 based on longevity. The council approved the measure unanimously.

The council also approved Malloy's recommendation to close the afternoon of Dec. 18 to allow town employees to attend a Christmas party with a sit-down dinner. The closure does not include vital operations such as the police department or dispatch.

Malloy noted the party last year was lightly attended, and he felt closing might increase the attendance. The party is paid for through a pop fund and other donations, according to Stansill.

AN ORDINANCE establishing new rules for structures

protruding into town rights of way was approved, including several minor changes recommended by town attorney Mike Messenger.

It establishes standards for construction, maintenance and location of marquees, canopies, fixed awnings and similar structures with the central and highway business districts, including penalties for violations. The changes originated with a request to modify the entrance at Nature's Corner in the 500 block of Broadway.

The entire ordinance is printed on page 12.

IN OTHER business, the council:

- Again approved payment of the retirement fund contributions for employees in the law enforcement department.

Earlier the council had approved continuing the policy for all employees to meet federal internal revenue requirements, but there was some question whether that included the department.

- Approved a change order of \$6,895 for emergency crack sealing around some asphalt patching on two blocks during the \$109,243 street resurfacing project completed earlier.

- Accepted written reports from police chief Mark Nelson, public works director Ernie Slagle, codes administrative assistant Barbara Moeller, water plant operator Don Rood and town engineer Heath Overfield.

Town council members Tom Linnan, Al Braaten and Dick Hall attended. Toni Casciato was absent.

The next town council meeting will be at 7 p.m. on Tuesday.



Zupan Electric and Zupan Plumbing (above) took top honors Saturday as float winners of the 2009 Christmas Light Parade. Carquest finished second for reindeer pulling a snowmobile. A&W Lanes finished third for their entry featuring decorated four-wheelers and an El Camino pulling a float. — Pat Schmidt photo

Tour of Homes next on docket Light decorating contest deadline approaching

The Christmas Tour of Homes that begins at 5:30 p.m. on Monday is featuring six houses this year.

Tour coordinator Janine Kelso said the \$6 tickets are selling quickly. Proceeds from the Tour of Homes benefits People for People.

Kelso said local merchants "went overboard" with their donations for door prizes. Nearly 50 door prizes will be drawn at 15- to 30-minute intervals throughout the evening during a reception at the museum.

Homes on the tour are Charlie and Mary Myers at 1144 Arapahoe, Jennifer Domhoff at 1221 Amoretti, Kelly Andreen at 827 Amoretti, Frank and Cindy Toth at 745 Amoretti, Linda and John Herrin at 152 Hwy. 20 South and Beth and Guy Drake at 353 Bar None Drive (formerly 353 Hwy. 20 South).

Children's movies
Children are invited to attend a free movie Saturday at The Ritz at 1 p.m. The movie this week is "Christmas Story."

Those who can should bring a canned good or other nonperishable item for the community food drive.

Decorating contest
The deadline to enter the business and residential lighting contest is Monday. Homes in Thermopolis, Owl Creek, Lucerne and Hamilton Dome are eligible for judging.

Chamber bucks will be awarded to the winners of the contest.

Entry forms are available at the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce office at 220 Park Street.

Christmas Baskets
Registration for the Christmas Baskets program continues through Friday at NOWCAP and the HOPE agency. The food baskets will be distributed Dec. 19 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Elf Tree
The Department of Family Services is

taking applications from youngsters up to age 14 to be included on the Elf Tree for the holidays. Applications may be picked up and returned to DFS or the H.O.P.E. agency until Friday.

Those wishing to purchase a gift for an "elf" may pick a name from the tree displayed at Owl Creek Graphics. Gifts must be returned to Owl Creek Graphics no later than Monday afternoon.

For details, call Donna Joachim at DFS, 864-2158.

Miscellaneous
• Hazel-n-Pearl's Holiday Bazaar is from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday at 511 Broadway.

- Parents who need child-free holiday shopping on Saturday have a child care option at Kiddie Kollege from 7 a.m. to midnight.

There is a fee, and you must preregister by calling 250-2900.

Community Fund gets Christmas 'tree'tment

by Keith E. Domke
It still may be an economic struggle for many as 2009 comes to a close, but those financial woes were maybe not as evident on Monday night at Central Bank & Trust as the ninth annual Christmas Tree Festival brought out festive spirits and open wallets.

When all was said and done, \$13,525 was raised for the Thermopolis Community Fund, which in turn gives money to various causes and projects throughout Hot Springs County.

For example, in the past the fund has gone toward Lights On, the Fourth of July fireworks, the Children's Resource Center, the Hot Springs County Library Foundation, Leadership Hot Springs County, BOCES and the Hot Springs Greater Learning Foundation.

"We had a good crowd," said Valerie Bjorhus, event organizer and Central Bank & Trust bookkeeper. "I was happy with the way it went. With the way the economy is, we did pretty well."

Bjorhus said there was not a specific fund-raising goal set for 2009, but the hope was the event would raise as much this year as last year. The 2008 total was \$14,225.

"There wasn't that much difference," she said of this year's

total compared to last year. "We'll take it."

About 100 people crowded into the Central Bank & Trust lobby to bid on the 14 theme-decorated artificial trees, the 17 theme-decorated artificial wreaths and the half-dozen other items available. Gary Nash was the auctioneer.

"These funds will be reinjected into the community," Community Fund board member Louis Walrath said just before the auction began. "They go to charitable organizations that are community spirited. The funds are 100 percent used in the community for worthwhile projects."

The highest-selling tree was "Cooking with the Cowboys," which was decorated by Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital. Wyoming Gas purchased the tree for \$1,000.

On the wreath side, "It's a Wonderful Life," decorated by Hot Springs County Hospice, was bought by Vicklund Pharmacy for \$450.

Blair's Super Market was the most active and expensive bidder, ending up with five wreaths and three trees.

In the nine years the festival has taken place, \$153,010 has been raised. Recent annual totals through the years have been \$30,600 in 2007, \$21,650 in 2006, \$21,025 in 2005 and



John Gibbel displays "Time for Celebration," one of the items auctioned Monday. — Keith E. Domke photo

\$20,015 in 2004.

On Tuesday, Hot Springs County FFA members bagged

the trees for traveling and delivered them to the desired locations.

Lodging Tax Board takes over budget

by Cindy Glasson
After a series of discrepancies were found in its financial reports, the Lodging Tax Board resumed control of bill payments and the budget from the Thermopolis Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce during its Dec. 2 meeting.

A review of financial reports found several accounts had accrued late charges and some had not been paid in full for several months. Board members approved payment of all late charges and payments to bring all accounts up to date.

In addition, a number of bills have been marked for pre-approval, allowing checks to be written to those accounts without having to wait until the next board meeting, eliminating the possibility of late charges.

Lodging Tax Board member Rick Ridenour, also vice chairman of the Chamber of Commerce board, made a request on behalf of the chamber to have the lodging tax revenue removed as a line item on the chamber's budget. Ridenour said having the funds received from the lodging tax included in the chamber's budget makes that budget appear much higher than it actually is.

The Lodging Tax Board approved the removal and will

contact Koerwitz, Michel, Wright and Associates to have the issue resolved as soon as possible.

Even though walk-in activity is down because of the onset of the tourist offseason, the chamber reported 20,000 visitors to its Web site during November, prompting discussion about adding the chamber's Web site address to billboards.

The Lodging Tax Board will begin researching the cost of adding a simple "sticker" to the billboards for Hot Springs County, citing the Web address.

Three large bills were paid by the board for promoting Hot Springs County:

- \$9,795 to be included in the "What to do in Yellowstone" guide.

- \$7,353 for inclusion in the official Wyoming Tourism Guide.

- \$2,400 as the annual amount for the billboard west of Shoshoni.

In addition, the board approved payment of \$2,405 for hotel expenses, airline tickets and registration for chamber coordinator Kathy Wallingford to attend a national tourism show in Reno, Nev.

The Lodging Tax Board will conduct its next meeting at noon on Jan. 12 at the Days Inn.