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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Commission accounts for overbudgeting

by Cindy Glasson

Two building projects by the county using SLIB board monies have gone over budget, Hot Springs County commissioners were told at their last meeting.

The recently completed Road and Bridge building is about \$21,000 over budget, and the county commissioners expect a shortfall of close to \$48,000 with the building of the Alternate Emergency Operations Center/Search and Rescue facility.

Hot Springs County clerk Hans Odde said the commissioners knew there would not be enough funding through the SLIB board for these projects and did budget for the expected shortfalls.

"It's a bit more than was anticipated, but there will be no problem covering them," Odde said.

"Our estimates were low," commission chairman John Lumley said. "The overage will be the county's expense. But when looking at the Alternate Emergency Operation Center/Search & Rescue building and the addition to the Road and Bridge, we were able to achieve projects that we perhaps could not have without those (SLIB) funds."

In April, the commissioners agreed to help subsidize Arrow Bus Lines in order to keep bus service coming through Hot Springs, Park, Washakie and Big Horn counties.

The agreement was originally based on a 25 percent split between the four counties and each municipality. The amount for Hot Springs County would have been \$12,500, with the same amount coming from the Town of Thermopolis.

The amount eventually was broken down further, basing the subsidy on ridership. That brought the agreed upon amount

down to \$3,562 for the county and \$2,679 for the town, amounting to about \$35 per ticket purchased.

The agreement revolved around participation from all the counties and municipalities. If any of the involved parties dropped out of the program, Hot Springs County would drop out as well.

During the Jan. 5 meeting, the commissioners were informed that Park County had refused participation in the program. A majority of the ridership for the bus service comes out of Park County, and it would have been the county with the most to gain from continued bus service.

As a good will gesture, the commissioners agreed to contribute \$1,800 to the subsidy, far less than originally planned.

"I'm all for doing our fair share," vice chairman Frank Manning said. "But we're not paying Park County's share, too."

In other business, a lawsuit filed on behalf of Johnson, Weston, Washakie, Campbell and Hot Springs counties against the Environmental Quality Council (EQC) has been withdrawn at the counties request. The suit, filed in the spring of 2009, was prepared to prevent the EQC from closing off the use of water from coal bed methane and oil production.

The counties contend the water is beneficial for ranching operations, irrigation of fields and particularly beneficial for wildlife.

Use of the water was deemed dangerous by the EQC, and the lawsuit would have prevented farmers and ranchers in the state from using it for irrigation or other means.

Fifth Judicial District Court
See "County," page 9



Thermopolis Middle School sixth-grader Lily Carey concentrates on dissecting a sheep's eyeball during a class session taught by Amy Kay on Monday. The students were shown the different parts of the eye and how they function, including the optic nerve, cornea, iris, sclera, retina and lens. The youngsters then identified those parts as they dissected.

— Keith E. Domke photo

Student numbers constant

by Keith E. Domke

Enrollment in the Hot Springs County school district remained virtually the same from a year ago as 2010 got underway, statistics showed. In fact, there was only one more student both one month and one year ago compared to the start of this new year.

"Historically, the district has experienced declining enrollment since the '80s," superintendent Marty Kobza said. "The last few years, it has stabilized, and we have had a little bit of growth. We are hopeful that trend continues."

Total enrollment in the district as of Jan. 5 was 646 students. The school breakdown was 205 at the high school in grades 9-12, 203 at the middle school in grades 5-8 and 238 at Ralph Witters Elementary School in kindergarten through fourth grade.

Second, fifth and ninth grades were the largest with 58 youngsters in each. There were 56 eighth-graders, 52 third-graders and 51 high school sophomores.

First grade had the lowest number of pupils with 39. There were 42 kindergartners and seventh-graders.

"Our kindergarten and first-grade numbers are somewhat low, but we have been gaining numbers in the upper grades," Kobza said. "Some of this is due to people within established careers moving into town. We also have experienced (this) due to some of the new employees in the schools."

If the numbers hold true, 47 students would graduate from Hot Springs County High School this spring. In 2009, 41 received diplomas. There were 49 juniors.

Other student numbers
See "Students," page 9

Wax figures soon may be moved

by Keith E. Domke

Assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill is hoping the town soon no longer will have to be concerned about and care for the 30 or so wax figures that remain in the now closed Old West Wax Museum. Negotiations are ongoing with the Wind River Heritage Center in Riverton for the transfer of the pieces, which carry a value as high as \$3 million.

"We want it done quickly," Stansill said.

During the Jan. 5 town council meeting, Stansill updated those in attendance of the latest situation regarding the figures.

Current discussions are between Stansill and heritage center representatives on the packing and moving of the figures from Thermopolis to Riverton. Basically, those figures are all that remain inside the building, which closed its doors in October.

"I called the Wind River Heritage Center last week, and it's looking like we're a go," Stansill said of the transfer of the sculptures. "But they indicated they may need help in offsetting expenses to get them



The wax figures inside the now closed Old West Wax Museum soon may have a new home in Riverton.

— Keith E. Domke photo

there. They want to be able to get them there and store them somewhere until their facility is modified so it can display them."

Stansill said later in the week that WRHC representatives on their end are involving the City of Riverton and a community development group there in the discussion to find ways the crating and transportation costs could be shared. He said if needed, he would go to the town council here to request assistance with those costs in an effort to get them out of the building sooner.

"If we have to share in the

expense to get rid of them, I'd take that to the council for a recommendation," Stansill said. "Right now, we're paying insurance and paying to heat the building, so it's costing us money."

"There's really a pretty hefty little bill on those things."

He said the figures are insured for the \$3 million.

Once they are gone, Stansill said the next step will be to decide what to do with the building.

"The mayor and the council would like to sell it," he said. "We'll try to work out all those

See "Wax," page 9

Man faces felony charges

Harrison (Mitch) Bush, 39, of Thermopolis, has been charged with three counts of felony possession, receiving or disposing of stolen property, Hot Springs County undersheriff Dave Larson said.

A citizen reported finding an abandoned vehicle on Dec. 30. A check on the tow truck discov-

ered it earlier was reported as stolen by the Green River Police Department.

In a joint effort with the Sweetwater County Sheriff's Office, Rock Springs Police Department and Green River Police Department, Larson and deputy Gary Sikes obtained search warrants for properties located

on U.S. Highway 20 South and Bobcat Run.

Additional stolen property was recovered in the form of semitrailer truck tires and a set of magnetic tow lights.

Sikes said an investigation regarding other stolen properties continues here and around Wyoming.

Deaths outnumber births locally

by Cindy Glasson

According to the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Cheyenne, Hot Springs County had fewer births and fewer deaths during 2009 when compared to 2008, a trend that is being followed statewide.

Thirty-four babies were born in the county last year, seven fewer than the 41 born during 2008.

Deaths in the county in 2009 totaled 51.

That number is 13 fewer than the 64 recorded in 2008.

The trend follows through statewide as well with 5,762 births in Wyoming last year, which is 307 fewer than in 2008. There were 2,900 deaths in the state in 2009, 199 fewer than 2008.

Wyoming's population, however, grew 2.12 percent during the year, which was one of the fastest-growing populations in the United States.

Inaugural hall of fame set for Saturday

The first five members of the Hot Springs County Hall of Fame will be inducted during a ceremony and banquet on Saturday at the Days Inn in Thermopolis.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with a mixer social, followed by a banquet at 6:30. The program at 7:30 p.m. will include the induction ceremony and acceptance speeches by the honorees or family members.

One plaque will go home with the honoree or his family; the other will be displayed at the Hot Springs County Court-

INDUCTEES

Colonel Tim McCoy
Gov. Dave Freudenthal
Justice Barton Voigt
Stan Smith
Karl Allen

house.

The Hall of Fame, established by proclamation by the current commissioners, seeks to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to the life and times of the country, or

by their achievements have reflected honor and glory on their home county or town.

The Class of 2010 is the first of what is hoped to be a long line of current and former residents who are recognized for their unique contributions to the county's history and sociology.

The five inductees in the Hot Springs County Hall of Fame Class of 2010 are:

• Colonel Tim McCoy, county rancher for over 30 years, movie

See "Hall," page 9