

Goals

School board revamps its strategic plan

by Keith E. Domke

With the overarching goal to be recognized in Wyoming as the top performing school district in the state, the Hot Springs County school board has adopted its strategic plan that centers on five specific target areas that zero in on that ultimate prize.

The District 1 board and administration has worked on the plan for months and formally adopted the majority of it during a special work session on Feb. 8. There remains one piece of small business to be finalized during Thursday's regular board meeting dealing with the third indicator of goal No. 4, but other than that, the strategic plan is in place.

Now, it's up to District 1 personnel to meet the five individual goals.

"We looked at where we are as a district and the board looked at where it was as a board," superintendent Marty Kobza said last week. "We wanted to pull it all together, talk about our common goals and interests and develop something we could focus on together."

The strategic plan will be a working document, Kobza said, which means it continually could change once goals are met or are tweaked, revised or changed to reflect needs and changes within the district.

"It will be a working document," Kobza said. "For now it's a start. We took a true, honest look at ourselves and came up with this document. We don't want to remain stagnant."

The superintendent said it can be an edgy process to look within the district to study its strengths and weaknesses and develop goals to strive to obtain.

"It can be an uncomfortable process, but how else are you going to grow if you don't do this?" he said. "We looked for commonalities and solutions to any problems we thought we may have as well as take advantage of our strengths."

The result was the strategic plan.

"I'm happy with the process," Kobza said. "The community, parents, students, teachers, classified staff all had a say in this. I like it that everyone had

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What is that over there?



With several ducks minding their own business nearby, a goose seemingly looks and points to the other side of the Big Horn River earlier this winter as it stands along the shore while inside Hot Springs State Park. — Keith E. Domke photo

Town says no to extended liquor hours

by Tom Burkindine

During the first reading of an ordinance that would have amended the Thermopolis Sunday liquor dispensing hours, local business owners and town officials were split over the possible benefits and problems caused by an extended distribution period.

In a split vote during last week's Town Council meeting, council members voted against the ordinance that would have extended Sunday dispensing hours to 6 a.m. until midnight. Town code currently allows liquor sales by retail businesses from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. Local business owners stated the additional hours would allow liquor stores and bars to take advantage of increased tourist activity during the summer months.

Thermopolis Police Department Sgt. Mike Chimenti spoke on behalf of local law enforcement and said an increase of liquor dispensation could lead to increased criminal activity and put undue stress on an understaffed police department.

Chimenti said he has worked in the community for more than 30 years and remembered when bars were

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ALLAN BRAATEN
Thermopolis Town Council member

not required to close until 2 a.m. on Sunday. He said he was concerned about revisiting the same problems law enforcement faced then.

"It isn't just the (people driving under the influence) we have to deal with," Chimenti said. "People get drunk, go home and we have family problems after hours."

Council member Allan Braaten voiced his concerns about the extended hours exacerbating negative issues in Thermopolis and Hot Springs County.

"Alcohol is a big problem in our community," Braaten said. "Increased access to alcohol will lead to increased problems."

Local business owners said there was an untapped source of revenue in visitors traveling to Boysen Reservoir early in the morning who could purchase package liquor on their way to the lake. In addition, visitors who utilize the hot springs pools until they close at 9 p.m. could purchase drinks at local businesses after the 10 p.m. cutoff.

Braaten said local authorities are not aware of the problems that occur on the lake because it is out of county jurisdiction.

Assistant to the mayor Dan Stansill said he agreed with Chimenti and added that budgetary concerns for the upcoming fiscal year may be a factor when considering additional officers and overtime pay for additional weekend hours.

The final vote was 2-1 with Braaten and Toni Casciato voting against and Richard Hall voting in favor. Tom Linnan abstained.

Convicted sexual offender gets lengthy sentence

◆ Monte Sullivan, 37, was sentenced to 20 to 35 years in prison on each count. The terms will run consecutively.

by Tom Burkindine

A Thermopolis man was sentenced last Thursday after being found guilty

last year on two counts of sexual assault against a minor.

Monte Sullivan, 37, was sentenced to 20 to 35 years in prison for each count. The terms will run consecutively, meaning he likely will serve at least 40 years in prison, barring a successful appeal.

Circuit Court Judge Robert Skar presided over the sentencing hearing. Hot

Springs County attorney Jerry Williams prosecuted the case and said these situations are some of the most difficult for everyone involved.

"Everyone was touched by this case. These are some of the most emotionally trying cases," Williams said. "It's not only difficult for the victim."

Although Williams has requested a

bond hearing and an appeal also is likely, the attorney said the lengthy sentence reflects the severity of the crimes.

"When people prey on children, we see some of the largest sentences," Williams said.

Because the victim in the case is a minor, few details of the crimes or trial proceedings are available.

Back-to-back storms add moisture

◆ The seven inches of additional accumulation brings the season snow total in Thermopolis to 21.5 inches.

by Keith E. Domke

Hot Springs County picked up some significant snowfall during the past week as a pair of storms passed through the area. According to National Weather Service Riverton office statistics, Thermopolis accumulated seven inches of the white stuff from the two systems that blanketed the area from Feb. 18-21.

During the first storm, which hit last Thursday, five inches was recorded in Thermopolis by the regional NWS office, which uses trained spotters to help with local data. The second storm hit in the couple of days after that as another two inches fell in town.

Around the county, varying amounts from three to five inches were recorded from the first wave

while two to five inches were recorded during the second.

The seven inches of additional accumulation brings the seasonal snow total in Thermopolis to 21.5 inches, according to figures from the NWS and the local wastewater treatment plant, which records the town's official temperatures and precipitation. The five-inch amount from Feb. 18 ties the single-day high for the season. On Oct. 9, an early season storm also dumped five inches.

As far as precipitation, through Tuesday, Thermopolis has received .45-inch this month. Last week's storms added .37-inch to the total. At the wastewater treatment plant, three inches of snow fell on Feb. 18. The amount left on the ground over the weekend that was measured on Monday was an additional inch.

Earlier this month, the NWS Riverton office and the Wyoming Area Office of the Bureau

of Reclamation in Mills indicated there is a below normal mountain snowpack across Wyoming which will lead to below normal runoff forecasts.

They said the mountain snowpack across Wyoming is generally below normal at 62 to 81 percent of normal. The Wind and Big Horn watershed basins are expected to see below-average spring snowmelt streamflow volumes. The NWS report said mountain snowpack numbers in this area were at 62 to 75 percent of normal.

According to the Bureau of Reclamation, February snowmelt runoff forecasts for the Shoshone and Wind rivers of the Big Horn River Basin for from April to July indicate below-average amounts.

The National Weather Service's water supply outlook map indicated the Big Horn River flowing through Thermopolis northward is at less than 75 percent of capacity.



Hot Springs State Park employee John Fish last week scrapes snow to the side of the road while crossing the bridge over the Big Horn River that leads into the park. — Keith E. Domke photo