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Thermopolis
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Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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3-on-3 hits the streets, still time to volunteer

by Tom Burkindine

As the town prepares to welcome hundreds of visitors for the annual 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament this weekend, the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce is still in need of volunteers to facilitate the event.

Chamber vice president Rick Ridenour said as of Monday morning, 215 teams had signed up to participate and he expects at least 230 by the end of the week.

In order to allow everyone to enjoy the event the sign up deadline was extended until Wednesday April 28. That figure would make the event larger than last year's when volunteers were also sparse.

"For a town like Thermopolis 230 or 235 is a perfect number," Ridenour said.

With the large outdoor event on the horizon, event organizers are beginning to look at the weather forecast that calls for a low chance of rain with temperatures around 50 degrees as of Tuesday. Ridenour said those conditions would not hurt the tournament.

Hoops World, owned by parent company World Events in Sacramento, is organizing the event and representative Kim Dennis said the company has a plan for adverse weather conditions and the company does not anticipate any problems.

"The whole time I've been in this business we have never had a total rain out," Dennis said.

The largest concern is the number of volunteers. Help is needed to keep score and any amount of time that can be contributed is beneficial.

"This is something that's a great jump start for the summer in Thermopolis," Ridenour said. "A lot of people benefit from this and we need to solicit help from the community."

Dennis said he is excited to see the numbers increase from last year and anticipates the event growing each year.

Hoops World organizes 18 basketball tournaments each year and the Thermopolis 3 on 3 tournament is the third largest of those events, even surpassing the annual event held at the NCAA Tournament March Madness Powerade Event held during the national college basketball tournament.

"This is one of our biggest events," Dennis said. "The only larger tournaments are held by the Houston Rockets and Portland Trailblazers."

Organizers hope to have the help of between 25 and 32 volunteers to help the event run smoothly. Without the help from the community, those officiating the games must also keep score.

Those who wish to volunteer for the event should contact the chamber at 864-3192.

Town approves rezoning of controversial property

by Tom Burkindine

A large crowd was present for a public hearing at last week's meeting of the Thermopolis Town Council to voice opinions on the controversial rezoning of a section of property in the Hillberry area west of 14th Street. Following the lively public hearing, the town passed the rezoning request on the third and final reading.

The lots in question extend from Broadway to 500 S. 14th St. The area will be zoned as medium-density which will allow multi-family residences to be built. The request was made by the Thermopolis Housing Committee and Watkins Development which owns the land.

The rezoning request was submitted in order to build a housing project that would create between eight and sixteen affordable, government-subsidized residences. Plans to build the structure have been ongoing for several years in a collaborative effort between the Wyoming Housing Network and the Thermopolis Housing Committee.

During recent months howev-

er, owners of local rental properties have asked the town to deny the rezoning request. The prevailing feeling is the housing would be in direct competition with the local business people while using government funding to subsidize the rental price.

Local businessman Jim Collins said he had considered building a multi-unit housing structure but said he would not go into competition with a government subsidized property.

"I can't compete with you when you use my money," Collins said.

Rental property owner Joe Casciato said he had talked to several property owners and feels there are numerous units available in Thermopolis.

The assembled crowd was split, with many locals saying there is a need for affordable housing. Amanda Kraushaar, of the HOPE Agency, said the organization could fill five units immediately with current clients.

"I empathize with local property owners, but there is a need," Kraushaar said.

Local resident Helen Kinsel said she had searched for housing for seniors recently and saw a clear need for the development. Ann Hardesty, who resides on Peppermint Lane near the proposed project said the area of land should be developed because the brush currently covering much of the lot is a fire hazard.

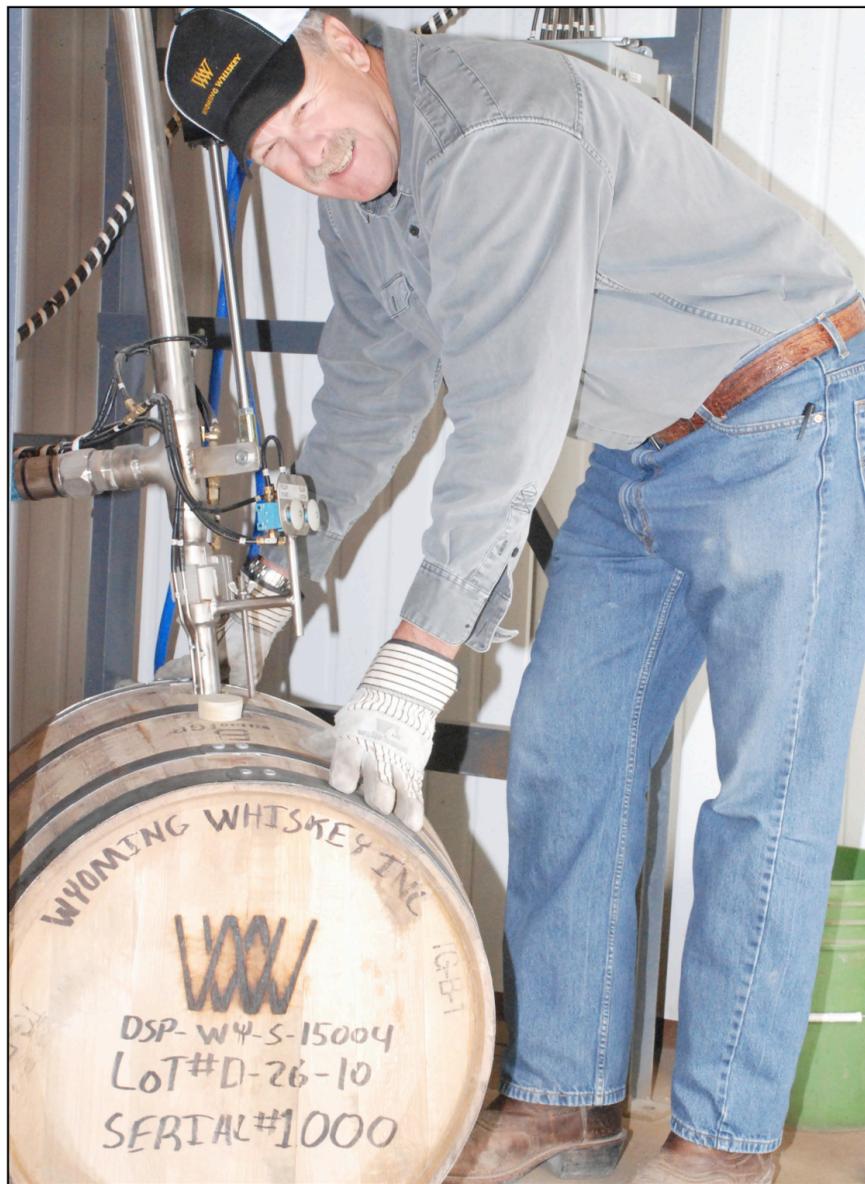
Mayor Bill Malloy said the meeting was not in reference to the housing project.

"I'm not interested in subsidized housing," Malloy said. "I'm interested in getting this section of town rezoned."

Following the third reading of the request, the council approved the rezoning with a split vote. Allan Braaten and Dick Hall were in favor with Toni Casciato abstaining. Tom Linnan was not present.

A suggestion to enter into a revocable license agreement with the county was tabled during the previous meeting of the council on April 6. The license pertains to the signage in front of the recently built Hot Springs County Government building on page 10

1000th barrel of whiskey



Master Distiller Steve Nally fills the one-thousandth barrel at Wyoming Whiskey at the distillery in Kirby on Tuesday. The barrel was then taken to the climate controlled storage building where it will remain for the next five years before the next step in the distilling process. Production of the Wyoming made spirits has gone so well the company is planning to build another warehouse on the property in early summer.

--Cindy Glasson photo

Man arrested after road rage incident

by Tom Burkindine

A Billings man was arrested in Lovell after a road rage incident in Hot Springs County led to charges of battery and reckless endangerment.

Andrew Lopez, 30, was traveling north on Highway 20 Monday in a red 1994 Jeep Wrangler when he became upset with an unidentified vehicle carrying a male, female and child. According to Hot Springs County Sheriff's Deputy A.J. Helm the situation escalated and both vehicles pulled to the shoulder of the roadway.

Lopez and the unidentified male continued arguing and the

altercation became physical at which point the suspect brandished a handgun. One or more parties incurred undisclosed injuries before Lopez left the scene.

Statements taken from the other involved parties led the HSC Sheriff's Office to release an attempt to locate call to neighboring counties.

Lovell Police Department officers stopped Lopez as he was traveling north on Highway 310 at approximately 3:30 p.m. A silver Dodge Charger being driven by his wife also stopped, according to the department. Because officers considered the incident a felony traffic stop, other law

enforcement also responded to the scene.

Lopez gave permission to search both vehicles and informed officers there were two firearms and a knife in the vehicle. The weapons were confiscated but no ammunition was found. The suspect was arrested for driving under a suspended license and taken to the Big Horn County Annex before being transported to the jail in Basin.

After being notified of Lopez's arrest, Helm traveled to Lovell to serve him citations of battery and reckless endangerment. The investigation is ongoing.

School board examines draft budget

by Cindy Glasson

Several coaching positions are open in Hot Springs County School District according to an assignment list released during the school board meeting April 22.

High School football and volleyball have coaches in place for the season, however, an assistant boy's basketball coach position is open along with an assistant girl's basketball coach and ninth grade girl's basketball coach. Donna Daniels and Tara Bailey have both resigned their basketball coaching duties.

Ernie Mecca will be taking over as head high school boy's basketball coach, replacing Greg Herold who resigned after this year's season.

An assistant middle school football coach, assistant middle school boy's basketball coach and

an assistant middle school wrestling coach will also be needed before the seasons begin.

The board did a brief review of the first preliminary draft of the 2010-2011 budget during their meeting.

The numbers presented were estimates only as salaries and benefits had not been ratified yet. School superintendent Marty Kobza indicated this is not unusual as other schools in the state are at the same point in their budgetary talks.

Some salaries were ratified after an executive session later in the evening. For certified staff, increases in district contributions for health insurance rose to \$530 for singles and \$1,030 for families. The district will now cover the employee increase for Wyoming Retirement, amounting to 1.43%.

The board increased teacher base salary to \$41,000, base psychologist salary to \$55,630 and speech pathologist to \$53,700.

Classified staff will receive the above benefits along with a \$.10 base wage increase.

A work session to hammer out more of the details in the budget has been set for June 1 at 6 p.m.

Fuel and dairy bids were awarded to Nielsen Oil and Meadow Gold Dairy respectively. Both were the only bidders for the products needed.

The board reviewed policies GD-GDR regarding support and classified staff for any suggested changes. They agreed a lot of clean up needed done within the policies and have suggested it be turned over to the district's attorney for recommendation on crafting the policies.

I've got him Dad!



Branding crew members, l to r, Ryan Martinez, Arnold Pennoyer, Tucker and Jerry Lake work to get the job done at the Martinez Ranch on Owl Creek Road. Many area ranches are in the midst of the annual spring time tradition. --Donna Pennoyer photo