

Fire in the sky (and arena)



Slim Garner provided entertaining clown acts during the Thermopolis Cowboy Rendezvous Rodeo last weekend at the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds arena. Above, a "fireman" who was part of the act tries to douse the flames after Garner set his barbecue on fire Friday night. Results of the rodeo are on page 6 of this issue.

— Joe Sovaphoto

## County introduces budget for 2010-11

by Cindy Glasson

Preliminary numbers for Hot Springs County's budget for fiscal year 2010-11 show significant cuts in some areas.

The commissioners met with various agencies June 23 to discuss their needs and budget requests for the year.

Nearly across the board, the commissioners' proposed budget is much less than the entities requested. If granting the total of all requests, the budget would have been \$1.2 million in the red.

The commissioners are dipping into \$400,000 in reserves this year, much less than the \$2.3 million in 2009-2010 or the \$1.5 million in 2008-09.

The most contentious request at the meeting involved the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber director Kathy Wallingford requested \$20,000 from the commissioners, just \$2,000 more than they received last year.

The commissioners told Wallingford that due to financial restraints, they had to adjust budget amounts for nearly every entity and told her they could do no more than \$10,000 this year.

Wallingford indicated the Chamber has lost around \$31,000 due to various budget cuts and would be receiving nothing from the Town of Thermopolis this year.

The commissioners asked Wallingford who benefits the most from the work the Chamber does.

She said the town benefits the most with lodging, restaurants, retail and gasoline sales.

"I know you need the help," commission chairman John Lumley said. "You provide an invaluable service."

Discussion about the Chamber's budget continued with questions as to why the Town of Thermopolis was not giving any funding to an entity from which they benefit the most.

The commissioners suggested Wallingford approach the town council again and request some lower amount, which the county would then match, hopefully making more funding available for the Chamber's use.

**Hospital request pared down**

Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital requested \$300,000 from the county this year, the same amount requested in 2009-10.

*See County on page 8*

## School board discusses new policy for drugs and alcohol

by Joe Sovaphoto

Board trustees tightened up the Hot Springs County High School alcohol, tobacco and drug violations policy during the June 27 regular meeting. Following discussion of the policy, board members adopted the changes by unanimous vote.

"I've heard that our policy is too lenient," Superintendent Marty Kobza told trustees.

The description of prohibited activities in the extracurricular activity code was condensed. It now states: 1. "Using, possessing, selling, furnishing or having been under the influence of any controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, intoxicant of any kind, tobacco or smoking paraphernalia. 2. The improper use/abuse, possession, selling, furnishing of any prescription or nonprescription drugs."

Added to the policy: "In case of activities that last the entire school year it shall begin the first day of school and end the last day of school." Also added: "In enforcing the provisions of this policy, the administration will investigate evidence brought forth" and "The student will have the opportunity to share their perspective about the situation."

In terms of the length of suspension from activities, this was added to the first-offense part of the policy: "In case of year-long activities this would equate to nine weeks of the school year." Remaining in the policy: "This may affect more than one sport/activity, and may carry over from one year to the next."

If found to be committing a third violation, a student "would be dismissed from participation in all activities during the student's remainder of time enrolled at Thermopolis High School."

"You commit a third offense, you're done," Kobza told trustees. "This is significantly different from what you've seen before."

Kobza added that if a violation of the policy occurs between activities "there is nothing we can do." He added that the code is only enforceable from the first day of practice to the last day of competition. That would exclude potentially illegal activity between the time school is dismissed in May to when classes begin in August.

The complete extracurricular activity code can be found on the district's website, [www.hotsprings.k12.wy.us/](http://www.hotsprings.k12.wy.us/).

**Revisions in district budget**

Trustees heard from district business manager Lisa Pearce about a number of revisions in the proposed 2010-11 budget during the meeting.

Pearce said there is a \$70,000 "overrun" in the special education budget. A transfer of out-of-district to in-district funds will cover that. There is an overrun in the high school instruction area due to the alternative school; that will be covered by Home Bound funds. Other overruns were in the technology department and Ralph Witters Elementary instruction equipment.

An added cost of \$4,500 for travel and equipment pertaining to the state champion football team will be covered by middle school funds, according to Pearce.

She said \$300,000 would be moved from the general fund to the depreciation reserve fund in another revision.

The Hot Springs County Recreation District is funded by a mill levy facilitated by the school district and trustees approved a recreation operations budget of \$200,600 for the 2010-11 fiscal year. That includes a new line item of \$20,000 for the purchase and maintenance of a new recycling trailer and transportation costs (*see related story on page 16*).

Trustees voted to pull an annual \$5,000 fee for gate receipts charged to the recreation district as an amendment to the proposed budget.

During the meeting, trustee Dr. Travis Bomen-gen commended recreation director Donnie Bjorhus and his staff for their operation of the recreation program.

"The participation numbers are crazy," Bomen-gen said.

## Stetson joins newspaper staff

by Joe Sovaphoto

J.D. Stetson has joined the Independent Record as a reporter.

Stetson, a native of Rozet, began his duties this week. He will replace reporter Tom Burkindine, who has been accepted to graduate school at the University of Missouri. Burkindine's last day at the Independent Record was Wednesday.

Stetson worked as a business reporter/writer for the Gillette News-Record for about three years, from 2006 to February of this year. He was a contributor to the 2009 news team that won the Wyoming Press Association's General Excellence award for large daily newspapers.

Earlier in his career, Stetson volunteered services compiling computer statistics to the Wyoming High School Activities Association during several state basketball tournaments.

Stetson is a 2001 graduate of Moorcroft High School. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Journalism from the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Wyoming in 2004.

He will be covering the Thermopolis Town Council and the Hot Springs-Thermopolis Chamber of Commerce for the Independent Record. Additionally, Stetson will be writing about Lodging Tax Board and Economic Development Company news and other local issues. Stetson is back in a small community after growing up in Rozet before living in Gillette.

"I kind of feel I'm going home again," he said. "I'm happy to be here and to meet people, and learn about history. I want to build a relationship with the people and strive to be a proponent FOR the people."

Stetson believes his background with the News-Record will be helpful in his position in Thermopolis.

"My creative writing experience will lend to more complete, full stories," he said, "stories that will bring you to tears or shock and amaze you."


Stetson talked about the role of a community newspaper.

"The role is to keep everybody informed," he said. "Everybody talks to each other. You've got to be ahead with that news and take it further, to that next step (with additional information)."



Stetson

Grandpa says, 'Open wide!'



Seventeen-month-old Asher Bumguardner gets a bite from grandpa Harold Bumguardner during a pancake breakfast sponsored by T&J Propane on Saturday. The event was held in conjunction with the Cowboy Rendezvous.

— Joe Sovaphoto