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Merchants rally to save 3-on-3

Do communities and businesses really want the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament in Thermopolis?

During the past few weeks, this question has wracked the minds of parents, business owners and elected officials who have been faced with the dilemma placed in front of them by the Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board.

Just before Thanksgiving, the Lodging Tax Board chose not to fund \$12,500 for the 3-on-3 unless they see support for the event from the community, businesses and other governmental agencies.

Since the decision, there have been two subsequent meetings dealing with the issue. One was among the Thermopolis Town Council, the Hot Springs County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the Lodging Tax Board. The second was a regular chamber board meeting.

There are still two more meetings in December where the issue is expected to be a major topic. But the meeting to decide the fate of the event won't be until January.

Chamber's position

At its regular board meeting Dec. 8, the chamber board took a firm stance that the chamber will not host the event in the spring

unless it receives community, business and financial support by the next regular chamber board meeting Jan. 12.

Board president Donna Nally reported the outcome of the chamber's meeting with the town council the previous night.

The town council and the Lodging Tax Board all want to work as a team to keep 3-on-3 in the community, but the town cannot afford to directly contribute financially to the event.

Many of the members were disappointed with the attendance at the meeting. There were no individuals and few businesses there to give their voice for the event.

"We want people to come out and say they will help, financially or to volunteer," Nally said.

The chamber also was able to push back a Dec. 20 deadline for the first \$6,250 payment to World Events, the 3-on-3 organizer. The board hoped during the meeting to get the deadline pushed back until after the chamber has exhausted its avenues for funding.

Both the Hot Springs County Commission and the Lodging Tax Board plan to meet Dec. 21, the day after the deadline. The chamber has asked to be on the agenda for the commission meet-

See 3-on-3 on page 10

Tour of Homes beauty



Liz and Tom Ryan light the final candle on their dining room table at their home at 103 Cedar Ridge during Monday evening's Holiday Tour of Homes. Visitors also stopped at the

homes of Jerry and Linda Umbdenstock, Dan and Penny Herdt, Ray and Cindy DeVries, and Julie Lehman as well as the Merchant House. — Joe Sovo photo

Concerns raised about proposed 4 1/2-day school week

Patrons of Hot Springs County School District No. 1 are expressing their opinions and concerns about the option to convert to a four-and-a-half day week for all grades, beginning with the 2011-12 school year.

The school district hosted its second public meeting about the calendar option last Thursday in the middle school commons. Several parents and other community members, along with school administrators and school board members, were in attendance.

"There are concerns about contact time," superintendent Marty Kobza said, speaking about the need to maximize classroom time for students and strengthen the relationship with teachers.

Kobza said a SWOT analysis determined four focus areas when the district looked at the four-and-

a-half day week option in the spring of 2008. SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In the spring of 2009, the district committed to a two-year calendar to study options to the current five-day week.

With the four-and-a-half day week, the strengths, according to the study, are parents/childcare are manageable, education core is taught Monday-Thursday, non-core doesn't impact elementary students when missing for sibling activities, limited activities travel during school time, all staff is involved with district initiatives for professional development and with Friday collaboration, students have a regular week.

The only weakness listed is that Friday attendance may be an issue. There are opportunities for

enrichment/remediation on the half-day off Fridays and there are incentives for attendance (Friday off).

"We want to look at ways to enhance the curriculum," Kobza said, and create consistency for students, parents and the community.

School hours would be 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Fridays for high school; 8:05 a.m.-3:40 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8:05 a.m.-11:25 a.m. Fridays for middle school; and 8 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Monday-Thursday and 8 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Fridays for elementary.

Therefore, the school day would be 35 to 40 minutes longer Monday-Thursday.

A concern about contact time is the large number of days taught by substitute teachers.

"It's phenomenal what's lost" when a substitute teacher is in the classroom, new board member Tom Sullivan, Jr. said.

The current Lights On program figures into the equation, and Kobza said the district is trying to gather information as to how many students are involved in the Friday afternoon program.

Input from parents

William and Sara Struemke have three school-age children, a sixth-grade boy, and third-grade and kindergarten girls. Another child will be in the school system in a couple of years.

See School on page 10

Christmas Parade winners

A rush of people bundled up for the cold Saturday night to watch the 2010 Thermopolis Lighted Christmas Parade.

There were eight entries in the event, which was down from more than 20 floats in 2009. The event lasted a little less than an hour, but the festivities didn't end with the parade.

Children were lined up in Bicentennial Park to get candy canes after telling Santa and Mrs. Claus what they wanted for Christmas.

Adults found their way to Arapahoe Street to taste roasted chestnuts, courtesy of Las Fuentes, Game Time Athletics and Daylight Donuts, and warm up next to two fires. Others tasted chili served by Hot Springs County volunteer firefighters in front of Kiddie Kollege to benefit Tim Anderson.

"We had a wonderful parade," said Kathy Wallingford, executive director of the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce. "It was a little smaller than we're used to, but next year, we'll shoot for 30 floats."

Winners are:
First: Northwest BOCES.
Second: Thermopolis Cowboy Rendezvous PRCA Rodeo.
Runner-up: Mayor Malloy.



Wally Nielson of the Eagle Riders hands out toys during the Lighted Christmas Parade Saturday night. — J.D. Stetson photo

Area Christmas church services and programs

The schedule of Christmas church programs and services in Hot Springs County includes:

- Community Federated Church, 244 N. Sixth — Dec. 19, Cowboy Christmas Concert, 6:30 p.m.; Dec. 24, candlelight services, 5 p.m. and 7 p.m.

- First Baptist Church, 310 S. Sixth — Dec. 18, Christmas dramatic musical, "Good Will to Men," 6:30 p.m.; Dec. 19, Christmas dramatic musical, "Good Will to Men," 10:45 a.m.; Dec. 24, Christmas Eve service, 6 p.m.

- Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 642 Arapahoe — Dec. 24, Christmas Eve service, carols, 9:45 p.m.; Dec. 24, Holy Eucharist, 10 p.m.; Dec. 26, morning prayer, 9 a.m.

- Living Waters Assembly of God, 318 N. Eighth — Dec. 19, DVD showing "The Bethlehem Star," a documentary showcasing what the star most likely was, 6 p.m., with a Cookie Fellowship following the showing; Dec. 24, Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service, 7 p.m.

- Risen Son Southern Baptist Church, 342

Amoretti — Dec. 19, Sunday school program, 10:45 a.m.; Dec. 24, Christmas Eve service, 6 p.m.

- Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church, 129 Mountain View — Dec. 24, children's Christmas service, 6:30 p.m.; Dec. 26, Christmas service, 9:30 a.m.

- St. Francis Catholic Church, Eighth and Arapahoe — Dec. 20, Communal penance service, 7 p.m.; Dec. 24, family Christmas mass, 5 p.m.; midnight mass; Dec. 25, Christmas Day mass, 9 a.m.; Dec. 26, Feast of Holy Family, 9 a.m.; Jan. 1, New Year's Day mass, 9 a.m.; Jan. 1, Epiphany mass, 5 p.m.; Jan. 2, Epiphany mass, 9 a.m.

- St. Paul Lutheran Church, 288 Highway 20 South — Dec. 24, Christmas Eve service, 7 p.m.; Dec. 25, Christmas Day service, 9 a.m.

There is still time to add other church services and programs to be published in the Dec. 23 issue of the Independent Record.

Call 864-2328, fax 864-5711 or email news@thermopolis.com.

Letters to Santa due Friday

Are your children "making a list and checking it twice" in preparation for the arrival of Santa Claus?

If so, there is still time to submit a letter to Santa to be published in the Independent Record.

We are extending the dead-

line for submitting letters to Santa. That deadline is noon Friday.

Letters can be mailed to the Independent Record, P.O. Box 31, Thermopolis, WY 82443 or can be placed in Santa's mailbox outside the newspaper office at 431 Broadway.

Youngsters are encouraged to add drawings and other artwork to their letters to Santa. Some artwork will be used when the letters are published in a special "Letters to Santa" section of the Dec. 23 issue of the Independent Record.