

Commissioners approve eminent domain resolution

by Cindy Glasson
In spite of public comment against the move, the Hot Springs County Commissioners signed paperwork required by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) that would enact eminent domain proceedings should negotiations fail in the purchase of land for a new county airport.
The issue revolves around the purchase of land south of Thermopolis from Joe Holden. Negotiations for the land stalled earlier and Holden ordered the contractors and other workers from his property.
Several county landowners as well as town resi-

dents attended the commissioners' meeting Tuesday to express their concern that the county could ultimately take their land as well if the circumstances were right.
As part of the purchase process, WYDOT requires a Resolution of Condemnation to be signed by the commissioners so it is already in place should negotiations for the purchase of the land fall through.
County attorney Jerry Williams advised the commissioners at Tuesday's meeting that the resolution

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SWAT team disarms man

Thermopolis Police officers and the Big Horn Basin SWAT team were called to a residence on the 1300 block of Clark Street between 2 and 4 p.m. Dec. 22 after a 36-year-old man threatened to blow up buildings in town.
Officers arrested Duard Cable Jr. after he led officers to believe he would hurt himself or others. He was evaluated and transferred to a medical facility in Evanston last week, said Police Chief Mark Nelson. Criminal charges are pending.
During the incident, officers set up a perimeter around the area and talked to Cable by phone. Cable continued to make threats and then decided he would harm himself and anyone who tried to stop him, Nelson said.
Officers confronted Cable just outside the home

and set off two "flash bang" grenades to distract him. They then shot him in the back of the leg with 44-millimeter rubber "sponge" round, which knocked Cable down, Nelson said.
Cable then ran back into the home and attained a weapon. Officers followed and disarmed him. He was then taken to Hot Springs County Memorial hospital where he was evaluated and then taken to jail. No one was injured during the standoff and there was some property damage to the home, Nelson said.
Officers did not find any explosives in the residence, but they did find gasoline and several firearms, Nelson said. Besides two SWAT-trained Thermopolis officers, one SWAT-trained officer for the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office and seven SWAT-trained officers from Washakie County responded to the incident.

Commissioners consider hospital district

by Cindy Glasson
The Hot Springs County Commissioners discussed the possibility of a hospital district in the county and made appointments to two county boards during their meeting Dec. 21.
Tom Sullivan, Sr., along with Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital CEO Charlie Myers and hospital board chairman Bill Williams, approached the commissioners with the idea of creating a hospital district.
"Our rural levy has dropped," Sullivan said, "and bond issues were paid off in 2004 and 2009."
"This would be the perfect time to vote for a district."
Sullivan provided copies of the county tax assessment, showing the reductions brought the mill levy from 71.200 down to 64.655 mills.
He suggested the commissioners contact the 10 largest taxpayers in the county to get their reaction. In previous years, Sullivan's oil company had been the third largest taxpayer in the county, but now sits in the No. 12 spot.
"As you know," he said, "Hot Springs County is very dependent on yearly crude oil sales and crude oil prices for our tax revenues."
"With declining oil sales and minimum future oil development in the Big Horn Basin, a hospital district has become a critical need for our community. Health care for our citizens is a top priority."
Commission chairman John Lumley said he had spoken with Merit Oil, the largest taxpayer in the county, and they had indicated to him they would be amenable to the suggestion of a hospital district once the bond issues were completed.
"I respect you immensely," commissioner Brad Basse said, "being the 12th largest taxpayer in the county and coming in here saying, 'raise my taxes.'"

"It shows a tremendous amount of community spirit."
Vision for the hospital
Addressing Myers and Williams, commissioner Mike Baker said they really needed to articulate a vision for the hospital and show that they're doing everything possible to handle their dollars right now.
"The taxpayers are going to want answers to this," Baker said.
"With a district, a known revenue stream, it will make us more viable for grants and loans," Williams said.
A hospital district would amount to 3 mills if it were to appear on a ballot.
The commissioners agreed to send letters asking for support for a hospital district to the 10 largest taxpayers in the county, using Sullivan's letter to the commissioners as a reference.
Appointments to boards
In other business, the commissioners made appointments to two county boards, the Land Use Planning Board and the Museum Board.
Retired businessman Terry Tonn was appointed to the Planning Board. Tonn has 48 years experience in the construction business, including residential housing.
The commissioners appointed Kelly Andreen to the Museum Board.
In her application, Andreen pointed out her experience with working on various boards including the Chamber of Commerce and Beta Sigma Phi as well as her current position as secretary to the superintendent and board of trustees for Hot Springs County School District No. 1.
Andreen said her family has lived in Hot Springs County for generations, and would like to give back to the community by ensuring future generations have the opportunity to experience the unique history our area has to offer.

People for People in action



Shelley Deromedi takes carry-out boxes of Christmas dinners from Ann Pederson during the People for People event at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. Deromedi said 32 meals were delivered to community members and 53 more were served at the church. People for People served 3,053 meals in 2010.
— Joe Sovo photo

School calendar input sought

by Joe Sovo
Hot Springs County School District No. 1 will host a third public meeting to discuss the four-and-a-half day school week option Tuesday, Jan. 4. The discussion begins at 7 p.m. in the Thermopolis Middle School commons.
Superintendent Marty 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.
With a four-and-a-half day week, 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.
The school day would be 35 to 40 minutes longer Monday-Thursday.
Some of the district patrons who attended either or both of the earlier calendar option public meetings asked questions and provided input.
Here are Kobza's responses to some of the questions:
• Will sports activities continue to occur during the week? Response: The district will try to schedule as many sports activities on Friday and Saturday as is

possible.
• Is this change driven by the budget? Response: The study of an alternative school calendar is driven by education quality. The plan presented will not show any real savings to the district. Research has shown that there is no significant increase or decrease in academic achievement just by changing the days of the week. The impact has come through the amount of time spent with the classroom teacher.
• What happens with students in special needs program? Response: The amount of time would stay the same. Any additional instruction on Friday afternoon would be on an individual basis depending on the student's IEP.
• What would happen on Friday afternoons if the Lights On program gets cut? Response: There are four years left of grant funding for the Lights On program.
• Would study tables contin-

ue at the high school? Response: Study tables would continue and a seventh period would be added.
• There was a concern about the length of day for younger students. Response: Naptime or rest time for kindergarten students is currently in their schedule. An option would be to allow parents to pick up their child in the afternoon. This would need to be scheduled on a semester basis and could not change day to day.
District patrons are urged to complete a brief survey about the alternative calendar on the website, www.hotsprings.k12.wy.us. Click on the "Hot Springs County School District Studying Alternative Week" link.
After gathering input from the Jan. 4 meeting and the website survey, district officials will report to trustees during the Jan. 20 board meeting. The board is expected to take action on the option during its Feb. 17 meeting.

Commission objects to Tribal land being held in trust by feds

by Cindy Glasson
The Hot Springs County Commissioners are requesting a meeting with Gov. Dave Freudenthal and Gov.-elect Matt Mead along with the state's attorney general regarding an application by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to have a parcel of land in Hot Springs County held in trust by the U.S. government.
The land in question was formerly owned by Jack and Ellen Baird. The Bairds sold the 243 acres at Red Cut on Highway 20 South to the Northern Arapaho Tribe. The Tribe is now asking the federal government to hold the land in trust for them per the Act of Feb. 28, 1891, which states, "So long as the title was held in trust by the United States it was not subject to state or local taxation or regulation."
Taxes on the land for 2010 were less than \$500, which would fall from the tax rolls for the county should the request be accepted by the feds.
According to research done by county planner Lee Campbell, the Thermopolis Purchase in the early 1900s shows the tribes completely relinquished control of said lands upon signing the purchase agreement.
The commissioners agreed a formal objection to the trust action had to be voiced on behalf of the county.
"By putting the land in trust,

it's going to create all kinds of problems," commissioner Mike Baker said.
"It's in the best legal interest of the county to oppose this," county attorney Jerry Williams said. "We have to continue to provide services, but have no control over the land and what it's used for."
Building a casino
The possibility of the Tribe erecting a casino in the area has been discussed for several years.
Even though the land would be in trust for the Tribe, Hot Springs County would be responsible for emergency services, including fire and ambulance service, hospital service and law enforcement to the area as well as provide infrastructure services such as water and power, a concern the commissioners have if the land were to house a new casino.
"The added burden could put a stress on our services," Williams said.
With a minimal amount of time to object to the application, the commissioners moved immediately to take an oppositional stance and moved to ask for an extension of the comment period to allow for additional research.
Based on the upcoming change of governors in January they asked for a 90-day extension as well as a meeting as soon as possible with the governor, governor-elect and the state's attorney general.

Ugly sweater contest



Deb Milek and Penny Herdt had a wonderful time at the courthouse's ugly sweater contest. The ultimate winner was Shelley Deromedi with a red holiday sweatshirt sporting a picture of the Tasmanian Devil and his love, kissing under the mistletoe.
—Cindy Glasson photo

IR closed

The Thermopolis Hot Springs Independent Record office will be closed Friday, New Year's Eve.
Regular office hours will resume Monday, Jan. 3, 2011.
Happy New Year from the Independent Record staff!