

Relay for Life receives
award from
Cancer Society 3

Wrestling, basketball
recaps, track
preview 6-7

Greater Learning
Foundation's
year in review 9

HSCHS speech team
excels in meets
at Cody, NWC 12

Thermopolis
Hot Springs

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Commissioners draft letter to BIA regarding land plans

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners drafted a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs expressing several issues with a proposed land status change to property south of Thermopolis.

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, eliminating any possible taxation on the property for Hot Springs County.

In a letter addressed to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the commissioners expressed their displeasure with the timing of the initial notification of the proposed change and the inadequacy of the time allowed for refuting the change.

The letter states, "The timing of this notification made a timely, adequate response difficult due to

its arrival immediately prior to the Christmas and New Year's holiday break.

Further complicating a timely response was the changing of administrations and newly elected officials taking their respective offices on January 3, 2011."

In addition, the commissioners have been denied access to pertinent information contained in the Tribe's application.

The letter to BIA states attempts were made to acquire the information and were told they could view the information if they visited in person, however, they were unable to make an appointment until the last day of the comment period.

In order to accurately comment on the application, the commissioners would like to have full access to the application, including all relevant details explaining the need for the status change, future uses for the property including any business plans, how the BIA intends to handle additional law

enforcement issues on the land and how the county can address any future, significant harm that may impact the county.

Other questions posed by the commissioners in the letter cover items like economic development of the area, Tribal housing, fee lands which border the area and natural resource protection issues.

The commissioners have requested a 90-day extension to the comment period, but in the event the extension is not granted, asked that the letter serve as a formal objection to the proposed land status change.

"We object to the piece by piece erosion of the tax base of Hot Springs County," the letter states. "Nineteen percent of our acres are exempt from taxation due to reservation or trust status."

In addition to the BIA, the letter was forwarded to both U.S. senators and our U.S. representative, the governor, and the attorney general.



Russ and Nettie Hohnhorst are pictured with their daughters, Reata and newborn Anna Marie, the first baby born in Hot Springs County in 2011. Behind them are maternal grandparents Emory and Renee Naylor and paternal grandparents Ron and Maxine Hohnhorst. Seated next to Russ Hohnhorst is Shirley Morgan of the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary. Russ and Nettie received gifts from the hospital auxiliary and local merchants.

Presenting the first baby of 2011

by Joe Sovà

It was no surprise to Russ and Nettie Hohnhorst that Nettie would be giving birth to their second child Friday, Jan. 7 at Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital. It turned out to be the first baby born in the county in 2011.

What was a surprise, however, was the newborn baby was a girl when they were fully expecting a boy.

Nettie said an ultrasound during her pregnancy indicated the baby would be a boy, so Russ and Nettie settled on Tilden James for his first and middle names. Before the ultrasound process, the Hohnhorsts had also chosen a girl's name – Anna Marie.

"We had girls' and boys' names picked out a long time ago," Nettie said. "I liked the name Anna and he (Russ) liked the name Marie."

So the baby came into the

world with the name Anna Marie Hohnhorst, Nettie and Russ' second girl.

"I was shocked," Nettie said about her second child being a girl. But the main thing was the baby was a healthy 6 pounds, 7 ounces. Anna Marie was delivered by cesarean section with no complications, the same way her older sister Reata was born nearly two years ago. Reata's second birthday is Feb. 9. Reata has fiery red hair like her mom and the newborn's hair is dark, like her dad.

On hand for the birth of the baby were her paternal grandparents, Ron and Maxine Hohnhorst of Pinedale and her maternal grandparents, Emory and Renee Naylor of Basin. Ron and Maxine now have five grandchildren, four girls and a boy. Anna Marie is Emory and Renee's ninth grandchild; they now have five

girls and four boys, with another grandchild on the way in March.

Russ and Nettie live on Owl Creek Road in western Hot Springs County. Russ is a cowboy who works for the the Arapaho Ranch; Nettie is a stay-at-home mom. They were married three years ago in August.

Nettie has an aunt and uncle, Judy and Larry Anan, who live in Thermopolis. Nettie's grandmother Evonne Harvey lives in Worland. She has two cousins, Kim Schierkolk and Kelly Jo Burr, in Thermopolis.

The new parents said they have no plans to expand their family at this time.

With Anna Marie Hohnhorst the first baby of the New Year born in the county, the family received gifts from the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary and a number of local merchants.

School calendar info goes to the board

by Joe Sovà

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 held its third of three public meetings Jan. 4 in the middle school commons to address the option of going to an alternative calendar, featuring a four-and-a-half day school week.

Superintendent Marty Kobza said the purpose of looking at alternative calendars was to find a way to keep teachers in the classroom – ultimately increasing teacher-student contact time.

As of early this week, Kobza said 108 district patrons had completed the brief online survey and 75 percent were in favor of going with the alternative calendar.

Ninth-, 10th- and 11th-grade students in the district were surveyed, along with teachers.

"Initially both staff and students are positive toward it," Kobza said of the alternative calendar.

Surveys in relation to the calendar were mailed to parents earlier this week and they are due by Wednesday, Jan. 19.

All the input will be presented to trustees during the Jan. 20 board meeting, along with results of the district's online survey.

"What we've proposed now needs to be tweaked," Kobza said. "There are some really good ideas we're getting back from them (district patrons). A majority of the people has been receptive to the idea."

Out-of-district training

Kobza said the district has been working at making teachers local trainers so the need for out-of-district training will be decreased. Also, administrators are scrutinizing conferences and training being attended during the school year to see if they can be done during the summer, and to make sure

they correlate with district goals.

A comment was made during the Jan. 4 public meeting that possibly a four-day week would give more time for students to get in trouble. A parent noted possibly parents and students would get home closer to the same time with the extended day required under a four-day school week. He said he would prefer a four-day week with Fridays being optional or "bonus time" for students.

Kobza also noted the four-and-a-half day schedule would give staff more time for actual collaboration and could include classified staff as well.

A community member attending the meeting could see the benefits of the half-day on Fridays where those teachers who are coaches would only be missing a half-day on Fridays rather than a full day.

In other input, it would be easier to serve all students lunch on Friday and then release them to go home.

Kindergartner concern

Regarding kindergarten students, Kobza indicated parents would have an option of picking up their children at 1:30 p.m. on Fridays. This would be on a semester basis and not a daily choice.

Kobza indicated offering a half-day kindergarten is probably not an option for the district due to funding and students not having the skills needed when entering kindergarten.

If the district stays with the five-day school week, the early release may be moved to Fridays.

The district will gear up for a decision on the alternative calendar at the Feb. 17 board meeting.

To provide input about the proposed alternative calendar, go to the district website at www.hotsprings.k12.wy.us/.

Sampling Saturday's soups



Twenty-three different soups were offered during Soup-er Saturday at the Thermopolis Eagles Club, sponsored by the Ladies Auxiliary. Above, Dwight Merklein, left, and Mark Nelson serve themselves. It was the first time Soup-er Saturday was a fundraiser for the Suicide Prevention Coalition and \$627 was raised. — Joe Sovà photo

2011 Wyoming Legislature begins *Quarberg: resources*

by Joe Sovà

Few Wyoming residents can refute the fact that mineral resources play a huge role in the economy of the state, and now wind energy has joined natural gas, coal, uranium and other minerals as the 61st Wyoming Legislature unfolds in Cheyenne.

The session, scheduled for a maximum of 40 weekdays, began Tuesday with newly elected Gov. Matt Mead delivering his State of the State message.

Rep. Lorraine Quarberg (R-HD28) represents Hot Springs, south Big Horn and southeast Park counties and is starting her fourth term and seventh year in the Wyoming State House. She is the new chairwoman of the Transportation, Highways and Military Affairs Committee. It is the only committee on which she now serves.

"Wind right now can't be severed from land," Quarberg said before the session began and she expects legislation from perhaps both the House and Senate pertaining to the taxation of wind energy.

In 2009, the Wind Energy Task Force was created. The task force was directed to report its findings and recommendations to the governor and legislature no later than Nov. 10, 2010.

During three meetings – in May, July and September – the public was invited to provide comment, address issues and provide information. The task force also received reports and testimony from various governmental and non-governmental experts.

See Quarberg on page 10

Geis: eyes ag issues

by Karla Pomeroy

The Wyoming Legislature opened the 2011 session this week with the State of the State Address by Gov. Matt Mead and the State of the Courts by Chief Justice Marilyn Kite.

Following the opening ceremonies, work began introducing bills and assigning them to committee. State Sen. Gerald Geis (SD20, Worland), as chair of the Ag Committee, expects to be assigned a number of Joint Ag bills that have been filed this year. There are 21 Joint Ag Committee bills pre-filed as of Monday morning, according to the Legislature website, <http://legisweb.state.wy.us>, nine in the Senate and 12 in the House.

In an interview prior to his leaving for Cheyenne, Geis spoke on a number of the bills. There are a total of 82 bills or resolutions filed in the House as of Monday and 76 files in the Senate.

Geis said the committee is bringing back the Economic Analysis bill (Senate File 009) that was vetoed last year by Gov. Dave Freudenthal. The bill contains an appropriation of \$312,000 from the general fund to the Department of Administration and Information. It authorizes one full-time position, an economic analyst.

Geis said the data is important for counties to have access to when federal or state agencies want to make changes – so they can access the data and show the impact for any of those changes, including management plans from the Bureau of Land Management of U.S. Forest Service.

See Geis on page 10