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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

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DU Banquet blackjack



Jered Nichols smiles while playing blackjack with Remington Ferree, 8, while his siblings Katie Ferree and Bailey Ferree, 5, watch during the Ducks Unlimited Banquet Saturday night. — J.D. Stetson photo

Chamber sees changes

by J.D. Stetson

Change has come to the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce.

The chamber's board of directors voted at its Feb. 9 meeting to accept the resignation of executive director Kathy Wallingford, who started work for the chamber in February 2006, and promoted Michelle Lue from office assistant to interim executive director.

The board also welcomed its newest board member, James Raymond, owner of Liberty's On Broadway.

The board announced its decision regarding Wallingford and Lue after a discussion in executive session.

After the announcement, the chamber moved on to business regarding the chamber's annual banquet scheduled for March 26.

Board president Donna Nally reported the chamber has received bids for the banquet and some of them had come in higher than expected, but the banquet will go on.

"It's important for us to have this banquet," Nally said.

"It's important that we do business as usual," added vice president Gene Boehmke. "The chamber does not exist because of a single individual."

Financial situation

After months of running on a shoestring budget, the chamber board discussed its current financial dilemma and whether to take about \$9,400 out of savings to help cover the cost of operations.

The money was part of a certificate of deposit set to mature in April. Board treasurer Nancy Blaich reported the chamber had more than \$7,000 in its account on the day of the meeting, but much of the money is earmarked for other uses such as the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament. Blaich reported the chamber would run

into an operational funding deficit without the additional money from the CD.

The board unanimously chose to withdraw the money in order to keep the chamber operational.

The board's membership committee also presented the board with a draft document listing a new membership dues system for critique.

The board is leaning toward a system similar to what the chamber did prior to the advent of the recent tier system. The newer system bases the amount paid in chamber dues for most businesses on the number of people the business employs. The system also breaks down hotels, campgrounds and financial institutions with a cost per room/space for the hotels and campgrounds and a set cost for financial institutions.

Many of the board members questioned the amounts for each bracket, which started at \$150 and went up to \$1,500. They said the costs were too high for many Thermopolis businesses.

Boehmke, who serves on the committee, said the document was a work in progress and the amounts depicted were arrived based on allowing the chamber to break even.

Other issues

Also, the board discussed the recent decision by the Hot Springs County Commission to retain a lawyer to advise them on how to stop land in the county from becoming part of the Federal Land Trust.

After discussing the economic boon a possible casino may bring into play if that is the intention of the Northern Arapaho Nation Tribe, the board decided the goal of the chamber is to support business and economic growth within the town and county and left it at that.

The board also decided to change the date for their board meetings from the second Wednesday of the month to the second Thursday.

The next board meeting will be at 5:30 p.m. March 10 at Days Inn.

BIA sent concerns about casino

by Cindy Glasson

Holland and Hart, the law firm recently hired to represent Hot Springs County regarding the possible placing of a casino in the county, has sent a seven-page letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) with comments on its land trust application.

The commissioners had previously requested a 90-day extension on the comment period for a land trust application made with the Federal Government on behalf of the Northern Arapaho Tribe.

They were granted just a 30-day extension and voted unanimously to hire Holland and Hart to represent the county at their Feb. 1 meeting.

With very few days to compile a response, the law firm forwarded the commissioners' concerns to the BIA in Ft. Washakie on Feb. 8.

In addition, letters requesting documents regarding the Tribe's application to the Federal Government were sent to the Wind River Agency Freedom of Information Act coordinator in Ft. Washakie and the Rocky Mountain Region Freedom of Information Act coordinator in Billings, Mont.

In December, a letter was sent to the commissioners stating a copy of the application was available for review at the Wind River Agency office.

Access to application

Commissioner Mike Baker made arrangements with the BIA in Ft. Washakie to view the application in person and upon arrival was denied permission to look at the documents, prompting the letters sent under the Freedom of Information Act.

In the comment letter sent by Holland and Hart, several issues are addressed, including concerns the application sent to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar do not reveal the intended end use for the property.

According to the letter, "This concern is magnified by oral statements received by BIA personnel regarding gaming on the Property and the inability of the Board to review the application."

That raises concerns about the secrecy involved in the application and what may or may not be disclosed to Salazar in the paperwork.

The letter pointed out the

Tribe currently operates two casinos, a hotel, fueling station, convenience store and restaurant on Tribal land near River-ton and Ethete.

Salazar was encouraged to consider the precedent being set by allowing a third casino operation by a single Tribe "in an era when hundreds of other federally-recognized Tribes do not have a single casino."

Issues of jurisdiction

Jurisdictional issues with law enforcement, fire service and other emergency services were addressed as well.

With Thermopolis just two miles from the property, "the county sheriff and town police will constitute the closest available source of peace officers."

The comment letter goes on to show BIA law enforcement is 95 miles from the property and arrival on scene would take at least an hour and a half, more when weather and road conditions are not prime.

This would require local law enforcement to remain on the scene until BIA officers arrived, pulling them away from other county priorities and possibly

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Legislature reaches cross over

Concealed weapon issue

by Joe Sova

Legislation pertaining to carrying a concealed weapon, health care reform, teacher accountability and school finance are among the high-profile House bills and Senate files being debated this week during the 61st Wyoming Legislature in Cheyenne.

According to Rep. Lorraine Quarberg (R-HD28), of the 598 bill drafting requests there were 438 bills and resolutions jacketed and numbered for introduction into either the House or Senate at the "cross over" of the legislature Tuesday. There were 338 individual legislator bills numbered for introduction as well as 99 committee bills.

There were 154 bills that passed the House after being introduced, which was 56 percent of the numbered pieces of legislation. There were 110 Senate files that passed that house of origin, or 68 percent of the numbered bills.

The state's supplemental budget bill, from the Joint Appropriations Committee, is on the table in Cheyenne this week. The committee is recom-

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Veterans Welcome Home

by Karla Pomeroy

On Monday's consent list for third reading the Wyoming Senate approved House Bill 177 that would make March 30 each year as Wyoming Veterans Welcome Home Day.

Sen. Gerald Geis (R-SD20, Worland) said the bill would not make the day a state holiday but rather a designation. "It's a warm and fuzzy bill. Some veterans have liked the bill others resent it because the war was 30 years ago," Geis said, adding that some feel it's "too little too late."

On March 29, 1973, the U.S. completed the withdrawal of combat troops from Vietnam.

Geis said, "The best thing that happened for those veterans is the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D.C." The memorial was dedicated in 1982.

The bill outlines some of the history of the Vietnam War where more than 58,000 members of the U.S. armed forces lost their lives and more than 300,000 were wounded.

The bill states, "The Vietnam War was an extremely divisive issue among the people of the

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Stars of Tomorrow truly shine

Hot Springs County residents were treated to an evening of entertainment Tuesday with the 49th annual Kiwanis Stars of Tomorrow Show at the school auditorium.

Competing in four age divisions, the participants showed their skills in song and dance as well as with piano and guitar performances.

Winners in the different divisions were: Kindergarten through second grade, Hallie Martinez; third through fifth grade, Tahja Hunt; sixth through eighth grade, Hannah Weyer; and senior division, ninth through 12th grade, Sarah Basse.

It was Basse's 13th consecutive Stars of Tomorrow performance. She has competed since she was in kindergarten and she sang and played the piano for Tuesday's show.

Harley Rhodes finished second in the senior division. Basse and Rhodes will go on to the Division 10 Show with the chance to advance to the District Show in Colorado. Jordan Jamieson, who placed third, is



Third grader Katie Burrows, above, was dressed like a genie while singing "A Whole New World" during the Kiwanis Stars of Tomorrow Show. — Cindy Glasson photo

the alternate.

According to Kiwanian T.J. Shoenewald, proceeds from

the Stars of Tomorrow show are used for scholarships for graduating seniors.

by J.D. Stetson

Deer management, nuisance enforcement and utility rate increases top the list of priorities for the Thermopolis Town Council to work on in the next year.

The town identified the three issues in its master plan completed last fall, and the council prioritized them during a workshop Feb. 9.

In a later interview, mayor Bill Malloy elaborated on the council's discussion listing the town's abundance of deer as one of the top three priorities.

Malloy said the council discussed the possibility of killing up to 50 deer a year in town after hearing of the success of similar programs in other Wyoming communities.

If the council goes ahead with the program, it plans to pay to have the meat processed and then donate it to charity. Malloy expects the killing of the deer would not take place until the fall and there are still

many details to work out in the meantime. In other communities, police officers carry out the program.

Malloy added the master plan surveys had indicated sick and unhealthy deer were a major problem for people in town and the goal isn't to completely remove the animals but to manage them.

Utility rates

Malloy stressed his hope to keep the master plan at the forefront of the council's decisions.

"I don't want it to sit on a shelf, that's not our intention," Malloy said.

The plan indicates a need for the town to increase rates for each of its three utilities — water, sewer and solid waste.

He said all three accounts are losing money because of increased costs due to inflation and electricity costs.

"We can't lose money on these things," Malloy said.

He added the town's current rates are lower than many other places around the state and the council has held off raising the current rates for too long.

Malloy does not have specific details for how much the rates will increase, but stressed it is a priority which may happen soon and people should plan accordingly.

Currently, the monthly base rate for residences is \$41.35 for all three utilities. The water rate is \$3.05 for the first 1,000 gallons and is included in the base rate, and \$3.05 for each additional 1,000 gallons, which is not included.

Nuisance abatement, subdivision updates

The council's goal will be to update and clean up town ordinances and step up enforcement with regard to nuisances such as unlicensed vehicles parked

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BIA

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requiring the hiring of additional personnel, creating a financial burden on Hot Springs County and the Town of Thermopolis.

Concerns were also raised that the land is currently agricultural, surrounded by other agricultural properties, and a land use change to allow a casino to be built could impair the area.

The property is adjacent to the Arapaho Ranch and any commercial development could have an effect on both the agricultural and historic qualities of the ranch.

In addition, the property is next to the Wind River Canyon Scenic Byway, and commercial development on the property would be inconsistent with the designation as a scenic byway.

Further, the letter states the visual impact of a large development could impair agricultural and rural qualities of the area as well as impact the views of surrounding landowners and visitors to the area.

Traffic control issue

Traffic control issues were also discussed in the letter, stating a casino and ancillary facilities would require hundreds of employees and there is concern what impact that would have on Highway 20.

In addition to the traffic issues, those employees would need housing that could create a housing shortage in the county and place a strain on other infrastructure.

Quarberg

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mending some changes in the draft budget proposed by Gov. Matt Mead last week. Funding of local governments is a major topic of debate.

Senate File 47, Concealed Weapons, passed the Senate and was approved by the House Travel, Recreation, Wildlife and Cultural Resources Committee by an 8-1 vote. The committee amended the bill to stipulate that a person cannot carry a concealed weapon if they are intoxicated.

Firearms training and a background check would still be required for someone who purchases a firearm. No guns would be allowed in bars, schools and other select locations.

As of Tuesday, SF47 was on General File in the Senate. If the bill becomes law, Wyoming would join Alaska, Arizona and Vermont as states that would not require permits for concealed weapons.

Hot Springs County Sheriff Lou Falgoust recognized the Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which states “the

right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.”

“This is a right, not a privilege. I’ll uphold the statute no matter which direction this takes,” Falgoust said Monday. “Any law we create is not going to prevent someone from acquiring or using a weapon illegitimately or illegally.

“It’s not the use, it’s the abuse,” the sheriff said.

Enrolled legislation

As of Tuesday morning, a number of bills have passed both houses and are set to head for Gov. Matt Mead’s desk for his signature. They include: HB117, data processing service centers-tax exemptions; HB177, Vietnam and veterans welcome home and thank you day (see story quoting Sen. Gerald Geis); SF110, School Facilities Commission reorganization; and SF120, workforce services and employment reorganization.

HB35, Health Care Choice and Protection Act, was in the

A particular concern the commissioner’s have is the capability of fighting fires in structures over a certain size.

The attorney asked Salazar to consider this issue carefully as new equipment might be necessary to provide adequate protection services. Who will cover the cost of new equipment and training of additional personnel should be discussed between the Tribe and the county.

Cultural resources need to be surveyed as well, including the Wedding of the Waters, a nearby cave that includes petroglyphs and a small cemetery created during railroad construction in the area, adjacent to a hospital that was in operation during the early 20th century.

Social impacts

Social impacts on the community were also addressed, with the commissioners expressing concerns about individuals who may suffer from gaming addictions.

As the letter states, “The Board understands that some individuals may suffer from gaming addictions which can result in a suite of issues which require public assistance, including counseling and family services.”

The commissioners emphasized their concern with the potential rise in costs for those social services in conjunction with gaming addictions and where the funding would come from to fund counseling and other social services.

Senate Labor, Health and Social Services Committee on Tuesday.

Some of the other active bills that passed the House on the second of three readings this week include:

- SF99, sales tax on certain food items;
- SF128, abandoned vehicles-storage expense;
- SF137, ignition interlock devices; and
- SJ0002, health care freedom. SF70, education accountability, and SF146, Teacher Accountability Act, were both in the House Education Committee on Tuesday. SF81, omnibus water bill, passed the Committee of the Whole in the House and SF106, school finance-local resources was on General File in the House.

Two bills sponsored by Quarberg will be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee on Feb. 23. They are HB122, no duty to retreat, and HB167, castle doctrine modifications. Her HB246, National Guard-disposal of land, is on General File in the Senate.

Town

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on the street, weeds and junk in people’s yards.

Malloy’s goal is to prevent the town from receiving complaints from neighbors by having officers be more aware of violations while on patrol.

“I don’t think a neighbor should have to complain about it,” Malloy said.

Recently, officers have stepped up enforcement on existing ordinances and most people have responded well to officers’ requests to take care

of the nuisance.

Malloy would like to have an officer who would handle nuisances full time and follow through with cases, but said current budget conditions prevent it. Most existing officers don’t have the time in addition to their other duties, he said.

The council also will task the Town Planning Commission to start updating the town’s zoning and subdivision ordinances in accordance with issues identified in the master plan.

Malloy said the goal of the commission won’t be to go in and make drastic changes to the town’s current zoning, but it would be to improve future development in and around the town.

He added that in the future, the town could also tackle converting sidewalks from boulevard to curb side and vice versa to make the town more consistent, but the town does not have a way to fund the expense at this time.

Geis

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United States. Upon their return home, members of the United States armed forces who served bravely and faithfully for the United States during the Vietnam War were caught in the crossfire of public debate about the involvement of the United States in the war. Many of these veterans were treated with disrespect ... Our state and nation has learned the value of a simple “thank you” and “welcome home as shown by the recognition and celebrations for those who are serving in the ongoing War on Terror.”

Wyoming Veterans Welcome Home Day, according to HB177, recognizes those who served in the Vietnam War and “to all those members of the United States armed forces who were not properly thanked or welcomed home following their military service.”

The bill encourages communities to have Wyoming Veterans Welcome Home Day celebrations.

Geis said it’s been pretty routine business this past week, after the education bills were sent to the House. The Senate killed SF52, which would have eliminated tenure. He said many legislators did not want to upset the teachers back in their districts.

The Senate did approve the two accountability bills — SF70 (Education Accountability) and SF146 (Teacher Accountability).

Other bills approved on third reading in the past week, include:

- HB15 Weed and Pest Control.
- HB68 adds battery to a new definition for violent felony.
- HB76 adds wild turkey to Game and Fish pioneer licenses.
- HB61 provides funding for planning for projects in the omnibus water bill.
- HB98 increases the number of bar and grill licenses available in a community.

A bill that would have required permission from a district or completion of kindergarten before a student could enroll in first grade was defeated on third reading on a 15-15 vote with Geis opposed.

In the Ag Committee, Geis said the committee voted against HB06 that would have repealed requirements for packaging, labeling and advertising of honey.

On Monday, Geis testified before the Labor, Health and Social Services Committee on HB154 that allows for multiple special handicapped license plates. The primary sponsors are Rep. Elaine Harvey of Lovell and Rep. Lorraine Quarberg of Thermopolis with Geis a co-sponsor in the Senate. He said the committee passed the bill easily.

One bill that has been on General File since Feb. 4 is HB74 on the validity of marriage. Geis said he didn’t know why the bill hasn’t come before the Committee of the Whole yet, adding the Senate Majority Leader has supported the bill in committee. The bill would void any marriage or union, including those from out of state, that are not between one man and one woman.

“We still have time,” he said.

Supplemental budget

Monday marked first reading of the supplemental budget, Geis said. “They’ll (Appropriations Committee members) walk us through it and tell us what they did and why they did it.”

Geis said he does not plan on introducing any amendments to the budget but does expect some on second and third readings.

“The state will run without this budget. We approved the two-year budget last year. This is just some departments wanting more money,” Geis said.

The budget does include more funding for cities, towns and counties, but Geis said the legislators are not in favor of earmarking funds from the severance taxes. “We’re not opposed to the money, but we’re not going to allow an earmark back.”

As of Monday morning the Wyoming Senate had lain back second reading of Senate File 52 twice. The bill would remove tenure or continuing contract status for teachers.

The Legislature will be off on Monday for Presidents’ Day/Washington’s Birthday.