

Town has water projects in the works

5

Five wrestlers headed to state tourney

6

Rollover wreck results in only minor injuries

8

The Pearce gravel pit debate rages on

12

Thermopolis Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 112, No. 8, February 24, 2011

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢

4½-day school week a 'go' Kobza resigns; Hunt new superintendent

by Joe Sovo

Hot Springs County School District trustees voted 6-1 to adopt a 4½-day calendar during Tuesday's board meeting and there will be a new superintendent to oversee the first year of the alternative option for the 2011-12 school year.



Dustin Hunt

Superintendent Marty Kobza resigned his position in order to accept the same position with Sheridan County School District No. 1. He will continue his position in Thermopolis, fulfilling his contract that ends June 30.

Dustin Hunt, in his fourth year as Hot Springs County High School principal, will replace Kobza as superintendent. Trustees accepted Kobza's resignation

and approved the transition of Hunt by unanimous vote after a one-hour executive session to discuss personnel and administrator contracts.

In Hunt's first year as superintendent, the district's high school, middle school and elementary school will operate with a 4½-day school week rather than the current full five-day week. With the alternative calendar that begins in late August, the school day would be 35 to 40 minutes longer Monday-Thursday. Classes would begin at 8 a.m. and end at 3:45 p.m., and school would be dismissed

at 11:30 a.m. Friday.

Kobza said during an earlier meeting the focus of the exploration of an alternative calendar was to maximize contact time between students and teachers in the classroom.

With the alternative calendar, contact hours with students – including those with special needs – would remain the same as in the five-day school week.

"We want more consistent quality time with the kids," Kobza said at an earlier meeting.

Kobza shared survey results from parents, students, teachers and other community members about the alternative calendar option. He said a large majority

See School on page 15

Celebrating Presidents' Day



Kiddie Kollege students Kori Linton, left, and Maile Mae McCumber greet each other during a Storytime session to celebrate Love Your Library Week at the Hot Springs County Library last Friday. The students learned about former U.S. presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in honor of Presidents' Day/Washington's Birthday on Monday.

— Joe Sovo photo

Bullying Hurts program set tonight at TMS Commons

by Joe Sovo

Thermopolis is the site of one of a series of school bullying "town hall meetings" this evening (Thursday). The open forum, sponsored by the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE), is set for 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the middle school commons.

The series of meetings is funded by Safe & Drug-free Schools.

Rodeo clown Marvin Nash of Cheyenne created the Bullying Hurts national program about nine years ago. It's a division of LRNCO, LLC. Nash will be the meeting moderator.

The 55-year-old Nash said Monday this event is the last program in the contract with WDE. There were 20 programs in the series, beginning last fall, and the locations were selected by WDE.

He believes there has been a "phenomena" brought about by bullying in schools and it's not a good one. "It's a very important community issue," Nash said, tying in parents, teachers and administrators.

Bullying is often considered a "rite of passage" as children grow older. Some fall into the "mean girl" or "wolf pack" syndrome.

"It's an issue. You deal with the downside of it," Nash said, and bullying can create mental and physical anguish. Cyber bullying has also become more prominent.

Dealing with bullying in the proper manner can result in "crime prevention," according to Nash. Recognizing that, the Bullying Hurts program is supported by such organizations as sheriff's associations.

"At the meeting, we're going to talk about the importance of what our children really go through,"

he said. "We work real hard to get the entire community involved."

Bullying Hurts faces a challenge, according to Nash, because of a trend of "parent apathy." That's seen as a lack of interest in bullying going on in schools, and/or a lack of feeling or emotion about the issue.

Such questions as, "What preventive and proactive measures can we take?" are addressed at the Bullying Hurts town hall meetings.

"They've been quite controversial," Nash said of the meetings and they have been rejected by a number of school districts in Wyoming. He related conversations with administrators of some districts asking why bullying needs to be addressed there.

"They are blocking the voice of the local community," Nash said.

On the other hand, school districts such as Thermopolis have been quite receptive and he lauded the attitude of superintendent Marty Kobza.

"Marty has been a breath of fresh air," Nash said, and they agree "the more we know the more we can do" in curtailing bullying in schools. "The district says, 'Let's take a look at it (bullying) and see how we can fix it.'"

Nash pointed out kids who get bullied don't want to go to school – for fear of facing the same or similar harassment. According to Nash, 150,000 children miss school every day because of the influence of bullying.

To learn more about the Bullying Hurts program and to let your voice be heard, attend tonight's meeting. There will be special cash drawings and you must be in attendance to win. You can find more information on the website www.bullyinghurts.com.

Legislature heads into final run

Money for towns, counties

by Joe Sovo

Wyoming's House and Senate appear to have differing views on the state's supplemental budget. Both have agreed on the largest budget amendments during the 61st Legislature, but a conference committee will determine how \$10 million devoted to towns and counties can be used.

According to Rep. Lorraine Quarberg (R-HD28), the Senate wants the money to go into capital construction while the House believes the funds should go directly to towns and counties for use at their discretion.

Both the Senate and House approved \$45 million in supplemental funding to local governments and transferring \$15 million from the state's reserve fund to establish a fund to renovate landfills around Wyoming. The House and Senate both want \$250 million in spending via the supplemental budget. That would be in addition to the two-year, \$2.9 billion budget the Wyoming Legislature approved last year to carry the state through mid-2012.

The Senate and House both want to keep the state's reserves near its current high level.

Health care, education issues

Gov. Matt Mead signed legislation Saturday that will allow Wyoming residents to vote next year on a proposed constitutional amendment asserting they have the right to make their

See Quarberg on page 14

Amendments to budget

by Karla Pomeroy

The Wyoming Senate heard 56 amendments to the supplemental budget last week before approving it on third reading Thursday.

Sen. Gerald Geis (R-SD20, Worland) said the Senate added about \$25 million to the budget that passed out of the Joint Appropriations Committee, and included an additional \$10 million for towns, he said.

An amendment to add \$15 million from the Wyoming Tobacco Settlement Fund to the Wyoming Wildlife Trust Fund failed, as did an amendment to require zero-based budgeting. Zero-based budgeting would have required two departments each year to start budgeting from the ground up.

Geis said a conference committee, with five House members and five Senate members, would likely be appointed today to iron out the differences between the two versions.

According to the fiscal note attached to the bill, prior to any amendments the bill appropriated:

- \$215,339,680 from the General Fund.
- \$4.58 million from the School Foundation Fund.
- \$183.4 million from the School Capital Construction Account.
- \$196 million from the Federal Funds.
- \$19.6 million from ARRA Stimulus Funds.
- \$215,000 from the Tobacco Settlement In-

See Geis on page 14



A scientific sign created by the University of Wyoming explains the geology behind layers of sediment inside a crevice on Calvin King's property north of town. The crevice also produces water in a similar fashion as the hot springs.

King of the hill

Local biologist leaves legacy on the land, wants to get his affairs in order during final years

by J.D. Stetson

What do most residents know of Calvin King?

Do they know him as a man of science, religion, conservation or patriotism?

For those who've walked the trails on his 30 acres of land nestled just beyond a fence lining the northern edge of town, they know him in all of those capacities.

Not just anyone is allowed to traverse the King property. Many simply glimpse the land as they drive north on Sixth Street or look down from Airport Road as they visit the Legion Town and Country Club.

Others are able to attain his permission to walk up the King-Spiller Butte Relic Site and Wolf Point while learning about geology, wildlife and a little about faith in the process.

Those few who do get the opportunity to walk the trails, read the signs and see the natural and manmade wonders of the property learn more than just simple insights about the

hot springs and the ecology surrounding their home. They learn about the man and the values he's cherished during the course of his 90-year life.

Cal King has left his legacy on the land by creating and protecting another world adjacent to the world others know as Thermopolis.

Priceless significance

It won't be too long now before something will have to be done with King's land between Round Top Mountain and Hot Springs State Park.

As King works to prepare himself for the remainder of his life, the future of the property has been a constant thorn.

King first offered the land to the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, who remain interested in the land but lack funding for the property, said Kevin Skates, state park superintendent.

The land is contiguous with the state park and it features unique geographic and ecologi-

cal resources only found in five other similar places around the Big Horn Basin.

In King's book, "History of W-I-L-D-L-I-F-E in the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming," King quotes Herbert G. Fisser's 1964 study of range conditions in the basin with regard to relic sites and semi-relic sites, which are areas that include extensive vegetation types that are protected from grazing and other influences by the topography of the landscape.

Round Top would be considered a true relic site, while the King property and the buttes it comprises are considered to be semi-relic sites. The University of Wyoming, Hot Springs County Conservation District and Wyoming Game & Fish provided King with informational signs to indicate areas of interest and the type of flora and fauna found in the area in order to bring groups of students to see the "Outdoor Learning Center."

See King on page 15

School

of respondents supported the calendar.

With the alternative calendar, principals Hunt, Matt Spring and Deb Brown agreed the number of classroom hours missed by regular teachers would be greatly reduced with the alternative calendar.

A motion by trustee Hub Whitt was seconded after questions were answered by the principals and superintendent. Before the vote, trustee Joe Martinez said he believed the district should stay with the five-day calendar, pointing out there are school activities that can affect student learning all week long and not just on Fridays.

"The 4½-day week allows us the flex-

ibility we need," trustee Dr. Travis Bomengen said. "We can individualize the learning. There are cons as well as pros. We're stepping out on a limb, but with the goals we've set this is what we have to do."

"Why can't we do that with a five-day week?" Martinez asked.

Trustee Karen Leyba sat on the committee that investigated the alternative calendar option for more than a year. "I don't believe it's the wrong thing to do," she said.

Kobza said what he has learned from districts using the 4½-day week was "extremely positive," he said.

After the discussion, trustees Whitt, Bomengen, Leyba, Tom Sullivan Jr., Liz

Mahoney and Clay VanAntwerp voted in favor of adopting the 4½-day school calendar. Martinez cast the lone "nay" vote.

Kobza replaced by Hunt

Kobza was selected as superintendent by the Sheridan County School District No. 1 Board of Trustees after the conclusion of that board's executive session last Thursday. He was officially offered the position Friday and accepted at that time. His contract begins July 1.

In Thermopolis, Kobza is serving his third year as superintendent. He was superintendent of Unified School District 481 in Eudora, Kan., from 2001 to 2008. Kobza will replace current superinten-

dent Sue Belish for the 2011-12 school year. She is retiring after 12 years in the position and 20 years in the district. Sheridan County School District No. 1 consists of Tongue River and Big Horn high schools and neighboring middle schools and elementary schools.

Kobza and his wife Nicke have five children, ages 16, 13, 11, 9 and 6.

"That's the only place I would have considered moving (to)," he said late Tuesday night. "There are opportunities there that are intriguing to us. It's a good fit for me professionally as well."

"Mr. Kobza has been an outstanding mentor to work with," the 36-year-old Hunt said after the meeting. He had as-

pirations to become a superintendent, but not until he had a good mentor. "Mr. Kobza helped me down that path."

"This is a great opportunity in a great district," Hunt said.

"The district is extremely fortunate to have someone like Dustin taking over," Kobza said. "There is a lot of momentum happening and it's because of what Dustin is doing at the high school. He has the ability to take it (the district) to a whole other level."

Hunt and his wife Heidi have four children, ages 19, 16, 9 and 5.

Kobza said the district would begin a search for a new high school principal immediately.

King

"These places are very priceless," King said. "You don't talk about them and money because money doesn't enter into the value of the site."

The area is protected under The Nature Conservancy program, which King entered into voluntarily to prevent development within the property and preserve the resources he cherishes as an author and former biologist with Game & Fish.

King recognizes most people in town don't have an idea of how significant and precious the property is from a scientific point of view.

"Like a jewel out in the desert, people don't even know what they've got," King said.

Private buyer

Unfortunately, King doesn't have the time or patience to wait for Cheyenne bureaucrats to make up their mind about buying the property from him.

King said the state asked him to donate part of the property, but he has chosen instead to pursue other avenues to sell his land.

"I've got a lot of pride in myself, and I don't have to cater to nothing," King said. "They wanted me to give them half of it, so how stupid do they think I am?"

King thinks in 10 years, the state will regret not purchasing it because he sees them needing to add more space to the park by then because of the rising number of visitors.

His latest attempt is to offer the land to national real estate developer Donald J. Trump in hopes that the ability to offer a private getaway from the big cities of New York or Las Vegas will appeal to "The Apprentice" producer and star.

Some may balk or laugh at the thought of Trump being interested in a spot of property on the fringes of a small Wyoming town, but King isn't laughing and has even thrown down an asking price of \$500,000 for the property.

He thinks the value of the property to people like Trump is the privacy it can provide by coming to the small town for short periods.

"I don't even know Donald Trump, but I respect him," King said. "But when I send him this letter, he's going to buy it or he's not going to buy it ... but he's going to have the opportunity."

The downside to residents if a private owner buys the property is the owner won't be obligated to allow public access to the property.

The property will remain protected under The Nature Conservancy program, making it for the most part untouchable to development. The exception is a sliver of land near Airport Road where King has access to water, electricity and gas. Eventually, he'll have it set up for a sewer septic system for a single home.

"I would like to see the park have it, or the town to have it, but I can't afford to give it to them," he said.

Personal touches

If the state ever does decide to buy the property from King, the state would likely preserve the natural state of the land and do what it can to preserve the unique touches King has done to paint a portrait of his life on the property, Skates said.

Besides the scientific resources identified on the land, King's world is full of details of his life.

On the west side of the property, a U.S. flag blows in the wind near the east entrance to the parcel. There's nothing else around the flagpole and it seems to be an odd place to find one.

But the meaning behind the flag is obvious: It's there to honor someone. Not so obvious is whom it's there to honor. King said the flag is there in memorial of an old game warden friend who suffered a life-changing accident and recovered in Thermopolis.

Other personal details include the outdoor church, featuring symbols of the Christian faith and also a rock structure called an "Inukchuk," which is a rock figure depicting a man which was used to round up big game and were commonly used as landmarks and thought of as gods.

King built both the church and the Inukchuk to honor his wife, Judith Rost King, who died in May 1996. He said his grief over her death drove him to the farthest village of Alaska where he spent time with the native Eskimos who taught him much about their culture. He sometimes regrets leaving the place and wishes he would have stayed there the rest of his life. Instead, he chose to bring a piece of the culture to Thermopolis.

He built the church as a memorial dedicated to Judith, and there have been weddings and other services at the site. Besides the handmade and rough-edged pews and lectern, three crosses stand up from the ground and a marker says, "Oh Lord, Thank you for the blessings you have bestowed upon me and the redemption of everyone's sins."

The tranquil nature of the church and its surroundings have brought peace to the man, and he hopes it will be used in the future to help others in the same manner. Eventually, King thinks the site would be a perfect place to introduce a "Passion Play" where people can gather and learn about their faith.

Another personal touch includes handmade benches scattered along a trail King named after Bob and Dorothy Milek. King chose

to name the trail after his friends, whom he's known ever since they were both small children.

"I knew her husband," King said. "He was just a kid and he rode with me all over the country."

Protecting the land

Dorothy Milek has known King ever since she was a small girl. She's been up to his property, and she knows about King's various scientific and intellectual accomplishments.

Milek isn't the only person who would like to see the land become public. For many years, there's been talk of making a path that would connect the existing trail near the Swinging Bridge at the State Park to the Milek Trail on the King property and run the trail up the road to Round Top to Riverside Cemetery.

"If (the King property) is used, it should be used correctly," Milek said. "It's a miniature state park."

Like King, Milek knows many people around town don't care about the piece of property or they don't know enough about it to go and wander it.

"We're so fortunate to have this kind of a place to live in and we don't appreciate it," she said.

Milek added the property also has historical significance because it used to have a road on it in which people used to use to go to the cemetery or to cross the buttes to head north.

The original owner of the property was a John A. Thompson; the land was later owned by Dr. G.R. Spiller who shared it with King before transferring ownership to King when Spiller left the state.

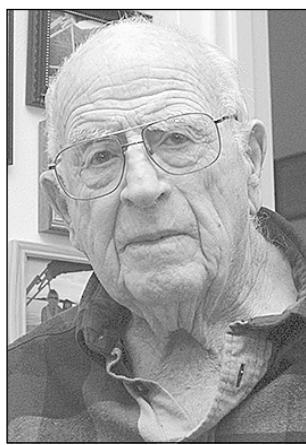
Like other areas available to the public, vandalism could be an issue when it comes to protecting the property and preserving the semi-relic site. It has been King's goal to prevent people from intentionally damaging his property. People are only allowed to walk in the area and they aren't allowed to ride horses, ride bikes, ATVs or any other motorized vehicle in the area.

King recalls the case of a couple of youngsters he once caught spinning cookies with their bicycles on the property. King had them arrested and they had to confront their parents. Eventually, the boys provided service by fixing signs and other work as restitution. They also learned something about the land.

"They wanted to learn some things about it," King said. "I don't want the place tore up, and people need to have respect for something."

Now, protecting the land is the farthest issue from the aging man's mind. It's more about getting the land sale taken care of so he doesn't have to worry about it during his final days.

But he won't just give it away for nothing, because to him, it has always been worth more than nothing.



Cal King