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Town expands on Safe Routes to School project

by J.D. Stetson

The Town of Thermopolis plans to expand on its Safe Routes to School project by using about \$60,000 in grant money to help build sidewalks near Thermopolis Middle School.

During the Aug. 16 meeting of the Thermopolis Town Council, Town Engineer Heath Overfield asked the council to approve a change order allowing the contractor on the current sidewalk project near the middle school to expand its scope of work to add additional sidewalks along Valley View Drive.

The contractor recently finished the installation of Americans with Disabilities Act accessible ramps and sidewalks going into the middle school parking lot. By adding the new work to the existing contract, the town will save money in the cost of mobilization and materials.

It is a 100-percent grant that will pay for the construction of projects identified by the town in its original grant application.

The town had received \$200,000 in its original application and still has \$60,000 in construction funds, said Mayor's Assistant Fred Crosby.

The council also talked about the possibility of adding sidewalks to Canyon Hills Road, which also is included in the grant, but the town doesn't have enough funding for the road. The road currently does not have curb and gutter, and it may require the town to wait until the

next round of two-year funding to bring it into compliance with the grant program.

The council approved the change order and extended the deadline for the work to be finished to October.

Water tank project

Overfield also provided a status report on the new water tank currently under construction southwest of Roundtop Mountain.

The Thermopolis Water Storage and Pumping project entails the construction of a pump station, three pressure-reducing valve stations, a SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) system, 7,200 lineal feet of 10-inch water line and 4,300 feet of 8-inch water line.

The entire pipeline needed for the tank has been installed and Wilson Brothers Construction, Inc., is in the process of pouring the foundation for the tank.

Overfield asked the council to approve a change order directing the contractor to install the electrical conduit and vaults needed for the project. The work was not included in the original scope of work because the town was not sure where Rocky Mountain Power would require the town to connect to the system.

The council approved the change order. The \$2.2 million project is expected to be substantially complete in December.

Planning Board hears requests for land use

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Planning Board heard two requests for land use changes during its Aug. 17 meeting.

First on the agenda was a request from Wyoming Whiskey for a land use change from agricultural to industrial for two acres adjacent to its current facility in Kirby.

Steve Nally, representative for Wyoming Whiskey, asked for the change in order to build two warehouse buildings to store distilled

whiskey barrels in a controlled environment.

Nally said there would be some perimeter lighting with the buildings; however, they are in a remote location listed as a former gravel pit. Traffic in the area would be light, using the existing ranch roads.

Using a checklist to tally up the pros and cons related to a land use change, county planner Bo Bowman suggested the

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At left, Jason Weyer (#24) sends a car driven by Kenny Smiley airborne during Heat 2 in the Demolition Derby on Saturday night. Weyer, a driver from Thermopolis, received the Most Aggressive and Prettiest Car awards. Below, Aaron Munger finds his car on the roof of Jessie Myers' derby entry during the losers' heat. Derek McGahan, driving #417, pushes Myers' car toward Munger.

— Joe Sova photos



Demo Derby draws 33 drivers

by Joe Sova

Local drivers Stephen Flinn, Jason Weyer, Clint Harris and Cory Bowman took home some cash from the 2011 Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Demolition Derby held Saturday evening. There was a huge crowd at the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds arena for the annual event.

Flinn and Weyer had the last cars operable when the 13-car losers' heat concluded. Both were knocked out during Heat 2 of the derby. Flinn's No. 1125 car was only slightly damaged, but he had mechanical problems. Weyer's No. 24 red and white car took a beating in that early competition, but his pit crew got the car ready for the losers' heat.

Harris was the men's Herbie Derby winner. He won \$500. Bowman finished second for \$400. Jake David of Riverton

was third, earning \$300.

Rob Laing of Casper repeated as the 10-car winners' heat champion at the derby, pocketing \$2,000. Laing and Brad Christopherson of Burlington were the Heat 4 winners. Riverton driver Travis Long, one of the two winners in Heat 3, was the runner-up in the winners' heat, good for \$1,000. Also collecting a check for the final heat were Dusty Watts, Hudson, third, \$700; Don Harter, Gillette, fourth, \$500; Brad Matsen, Riverton, fifth, \$300; Christopherson, sixth, \$200; and Brian Stulc, Greybull, seventh, \$100.

Weyer, one of the local favorites, finished just out of the money in the winners' heat in eighth place.

Debbie Waters of Casper was the winner of the two-car women's Herbie Derby, taking the \$650 top prize. Lea Wiggins of Riverton was second, winning \$550.

There were 33 cars in competition in this year's Demolition Derby, just three fewer than last year.

Chamber Interim Executive Director Michelle Lue said 1,738 tickets were sold for the derby. Figuring in the drivers, pit crew, volunteers and vendors, more than 2,000 people attended the big event.

"I think it was awesome, it was great," Lue said Monday of the derby. "Everybody I talked to had a great time."

The derby is a major chamber fundraiser each year and Lue believes the event was even more profitable than last year.

Other heat winners:

Heat 1 – Matsen and Watts. Heat 2 – Harter and Kenny Smiley, Riverton. Heat 3 – Stulc and Long. Heat 4 – Christopherson and Laing.

The top two in each of the first four heats won \$75.

Lodging Tax Board assesses Chamber costs

by Cindy Glasson

During their Aug. 16 meeting, the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Lodging Tax Board discussed a possible funding request, ac-

cepted a presentation by Ad-bay.com and went over division of administrative costs with the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce.

Board member Carl Leyba said he had been approached by the fair board regarding a funding request for an electronic billboard at the fairgrounds. Other members felt it would be a good project for the Lodging Tax Board and a real addition to the fairgrounds, suggesting the fair board send in an application for the \$23,000-\$28,000 purchase.

In addition to being able to display announcements of goings on at the fairgrounds, the sign could be used for Amber Alerts and any number of community calendar items.

A recent presentation by Ad-bay.com to the board revolved around branding of the area, an advertising campaign geared toward giving Thermopolis and Hot Springs County a slogan that could be used to further tourism and economic growth.

The board approved the most recent presentation by the company, but is holding back the specifics of the branding and future campaign until contracts have been approved by the Hot Springs County Commissioners.

Chamber costs

Next on the agenda was a breakdown of administrative costs for the Chamber of Commerce. Interim Chamber Director Michelle Lue presented the breakdown to the board, including costs for managing walk-in

tourists, telephone calls and arranging tourism packets as well as processing bills for payment each month.

The board questioned what percentage of the administrative costs the Lodging Tax Board is covering compared to the percentage paid by the Chamber itself.

The Lodging Tax Board is concerned they are being saddled with more of the costs than necessary, but understands the Chamber is in a delicate position at this time.

"We're bucking up to the plate in terms of money," Leyba said. "I want to know what the Chamber board is doing to buck up to the plate."

"We're in a position to help right now, but we haven't been in that position in the past."

Lodging Tax Board member Harvey Seidel suggested going to the Chamber board and asking that they pick up more of the tab and see where things go.

"I think when they're looking for board members they need to really look at them," board member Dan Moriarity said. "What kind of business are they in? What can they bring to the board?"

"Some of them don't have a dog in the fight, so if a project fails, they aren't really losing anything."

The board will have its next meeting at Stones Throw on Tuesday, Sept. 27 at noon.

Fiery sunset over Sugar Loaf



Heavy smoke from the Norton Point Fire continues to blanket Hot Springs County creating difficult breathing conditions for some. Smoke from additional fires in

northwestern Wyoming are adding to the hazy conditions. This picture was taken from an Owl Creek residence last Thursday evening.

—Lara Love photo

Planning

board approve the change with a plus-25 score.

Initially, conditions were included with the request, including a lighting plan for the perimeter lights and the agreement the land would revert immediately back to agricultural should the industrial use cease.

The board voted unanimously to recommend the land use change to the county commissioners, minus the proposed conditions.

The land use change will be on the agenda for the commissioners’ Sept. 6 meeting.

GK Construction request

The second land use change was a bit more controversial with several surrounding landowners attending the public meeting.

The request is to change 20.5 acres from agricultural to industrial on behalf of GK Construction in order to create a support location for its business.

Owner Rick Grandalen has worked with Wyo-Ben for 28 years through the Lovell, Grey-bull and now Lucerne plants, and stated the land would be used for his crews to park their personal vehicles and construct a mainte-

nance building for light servicing.

In addition, three to eight haul trucks would be parked in the area along with three to four crew trucks.

Grandalen said the property is near the current plant and the future mining area, and they would like to try to stay off U.S. Highway 20 by turning on and off Black Mountain Road.

“I feel there is great stability with Wyo-Ben now as opposed to the past,” he said. “We want to get a DOT approved maintenance facility in place to do minor things like brakes, lube and oil changes.”

Area landowner Brett Belden indicated he had two concerns about the plan, mainly the noise and alleged junk that may be left around on the property.

“I would hope we could get together on the placement of this building,” Belden said.

“Absolutely,” Grandalen said. “We don’t have a definite on where it will be placed yet.

“All of our work would be done between 6 a.m. and 5 p.m., with an occasional Saturday as a make-up day.”

Grandalen said his company maintains a clean facility and would be happy to provide landowners with photos of their other facilities for their perusal.

Weeds in the area were another concern voiced by adjoining landowners.

“It will look better than it does

now,” Grandalen assured them. “We plan on bringing in some gravel and pit run for base. We will have a water truck there to keep down the dust, but if for some reason it gets worse, we will put down sodium chloride to lessen it.

“The DEQ keeps a really close eye on us. We have to comply with all the regulations.”

Visibility, lighting concerns

Grant Belden, an adjoining landowner, voiced concerns about brush on the property creating a semi-blind traffic area, indicating the brush is not in the WYDOT right of way, but rather on Grandalen’s property.

“If it’s on our property we’re going to mow them down,” Grandalen said. “We will address that tomorrow morning.”

In talking about noise from the area, Grandalen said the workers will arrive and start the trucks, and they would run for about 15 minutes before leaving the area.

“These trucks aren’t much noisier than a tractor to get up and going,” he said, “and then they’re gone.”

One area landowner was very concerned about the lights that would be on the property, saying she and her husband preferred things dark and she was worried it would “look like a little city out there.”

Grandalen said the plan is to

have two yard lights, and one light over each shop door and the entrance door. Mercury vapor lights will be used, which would turn off automatically.

Landowners also told Grandalen the trucks that are running the road out there now are driving way too fast and wondered if a lower speed limit on the road would be appropriate.

Grandalen told them any complaints should be brought directly to Wyo-Ben and he would take care of it.

“None of the complaints have made it to us,” he said. “The best thing to do is go down to the plant and let them know. They will notify me immediately and I will take care of it.”

Whether or not the land use change is approved, there will still be trucks traveling the road as there are other mining claims. Grandalen said about half the year would be spent coming down the road regardless of a land use change.

Vote on land use change

When it came time for a vote from the planning board, the motion to recommend the land use change died for lack of a second. The motion to have the land remain agricultural also died for lack of a second.

The question now moves on to the county commissioners’ meeting Sept. 6 without a recommendation from the planning board.

WR Canyon clean-up



Travis Dixon of Kirby drops a piece of carpet into a bag during a Wind River Canyon Whitewater clean-up Sunday in the canyon. Participants got a free raft ride through the entire canyon from WRCW.

WHCS to host pet parade Sat.

White Horse Country Store will be hosting a pet parade at its Thermopolis store on Saturday.

All pets are welcome to come strut their stuff in the parking lot behind the store at 10 a.m. The parade isn’t limited to dogs and cats, so whatever pet you may have, you may come down.

They will also be having a pet photo contest. There is no cost to enter the parade or contest.

A demonstration of the county’s drug-sniffing dog will be presented at 11 a.m. by Hot Springs County Deputy Robert Dale and K-9 officer Bingo.