

School board candidates screened during IR forum

by Cindy Glasson

The six candidates for four vacant seats on the Hot Springs County School District No. 1 School Board attended a candidate forum on Oct. 23 at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center. The forum was sponsored by the Independent Record.

Four questions were presented to each of the candidates, incumbents Dr. Travis Bomengen, Joe Martinez and Clay VanAntwerp, and Melissa Johnson, Britnee Nelson and Danny Pebbles.

The local school district is now in its second year of the 4-1/2-day school week. In your opinion, are there more benefits than detriments to the alternative school calendar, or vice versa, and what are the pros and cons of the 4-1/2-day week?

"I was on the board during the transition, and it was not an easy decision," Bomengen said. "We are going to resurvey to make sure it's the right decision. Right now, the staff, parents and administration still feel it was a good decision."

"The longer hours for the younger students is difficult, but we're trying to keep the teachers in front of the students."

"I wasn't in favor of it at first," Johnson said. "I would rather see a full four-day or full five-day week. I do understand that the four-day alleviates the athletics problems and allows for professional development, but I would like to see shorter days for the

younger ones. Those long hours make for pretty crabby kids at the end of the day."

"We would have to survey the community to decide whether to continue it or not."

"The change was not set in stone then and it's not set in stone now," Martinez said. "A full school day for a kindergartener is tough and there's a lot to get used to. It's a real energy drain, but the district is trying to alleviate that with rest time, at least in kindergarten."

"I wouldn't be opposed to looking at something different, especially for kindergarten. It's not a perfect system. Is this the best for the education of the kids? If it doesn't work, then we change it."

"I think it should be a four-day or five-day week," Nelson said. "I don't think we're saving money and we're not accomplishing anything with it. The longer days are a real concern."

"I wasn't opposed to it at first," Pebbles said, "but after dealing with it for a while, I've noticed some problems. It needs to be everyone's decision whether or not to continue it."

"I was in support of it then and I support it now," VanAntwerp said. "The community support for it was good and we wanted to hear what they had to say."

"The biggest pro to the change was it saved 60 teacher days this year with the flexibility."

Since the No Child Left Behind Act was passed in 2001, national testing in pub-

lic schools has been, at times, controversial and criticized. Proficiency Assessments for Wyoming Students, known as PAWS, has come under fire in recent years. What value do you see in PAWS and is too much emphasis placed on test results from it?

"We need some sort of testing and that's what we have available," Pebbles said. "I have researched it and the teachers think it's too extensive."

"The information you get back doesn't arrive until summer. Is there a better test available? It's about 50-50 right now."

"I get so angry with PAWS," VanAntwerp said. "They can't get it right and this is what we're using to assess our kids. I think there's too much emphasis put on it."

"By the time we get the scores we've already missed those kids. We need to try to get out in front of it."

"It's been extraordinarily frustrating," Bomengen said. "The feds say we have to have some sort of objective measure. Right now we're all teaching the same subject matter in the classrooms so we can detect the deficiencies ourselves, now, rather than later."

"I'm not a fan of it," Johnson said. "It takes the kids out of the classroom too long and it's hard on the teachers. We need to look at the possibility of using something different on a high

See Candidates on page 14



Thermopolis volunteer firefighters and EMTs work on extricating one of the victims in a head-on collision on U.S. 20 at the north edge of Thermopolis Saturday night. Pictured, left to right, Jerry Williams, Jim Lash, Mark Nelson, Dion Robbins and Josh Brown are inside the Ford Expedition after removal of the vehicle's roof. — Cindy Glasson photo

Infant killed in head-on collision

The Thermopolis Police Department, Mortimore Ambulance Service, Thermopolis Volunteer Fire Department, Wyoming Highway Patrol and Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office all responded to a head-on collision Saturday at approximately 9 p.m. on the north edge of Thermopolis.

According to a press release from the police department, witnesses observed a 2004 Ford Expedition, northbound on U.S. 20 at mile marker 133, drift across the center line of the road and collide with a southbound 2006 Ford pickup.

Witnesses said the driver of the pickup, Jessica Slagle, 31, of Kirby, tried to avoid the crash by swerving, but struck the SUV driven by Heidi Dietrich, 33, of Worland.

Passengers in the SUV included Dietrich's 27-year-old sister, Rikki Dietrich, and Rikki's 6-month-old son, also of Worland.

Tragically, the infant was killed in the crash. His mother, who was in the back seat of the SUV, had just removed him from his child restraint seat prior to the collision.

Rikki Dietrich suffered serious head injuries and was flown to Wyoming Medical Center in Casper via Life Flight after initially being taken to Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

The driver, Heidi Dietrich, was transported to Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital with leg injuries and eventually transported by ambulance to Wyoming Medical Center as well.

The drivers of both vehicles had to be extricated by firemen using the Jaws of Life. The entire roof of the SUV had to be removed in order to get Dietrich out.

The extent of Slagle's injuries are unknown, but according to the police report are not believed to be serious.

Chamber searches for new director; adds new board members, officers

by J.D. Stetson

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors accepted the resignation of Executive Director Michelle Lue during a special meeting of the board Oct. 23.

Lue said after the meeting, "I love my job and the people I work with."

In a follow-up interview, Lue thanked the chamber board and the Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board for its support and the opportunity.

"I've learned a lot in this position that will just carry on," Lue said.

Lue has worked at the chamber for approximately four years, two of which as executive director.

She said she is confident the chamber board will be able to find someone to fill the position. Her final day with the chamber will be Nov. 6.

According to a chamber release, the board is in the process of advertising for a new executive director and office manager, and it will be accepting applications for the position until Dec. 3.

The board thanked Lue for her time and wished her the best.

The release also introduces the chamber membership to four newly elected board members to serve from Nov. 1 through Oct. 31, 2015.

The new members include Thomas Butler of Flying Eagle Gallery, Kevin Dickey of Owl Creek Veterinary Service, Bob Rollings of The Ritz and Diane Sova of the Bank of Thermopolis. They were elected to three-year terms.

The board also elected new officers for the year,

which include president, Meri Ann Rush of Print Zone; vice president, Phillip Scheel of T&J Propane; and secretary/treasurer, Tawna McQueen of Pinnacle Bank. Past president is Donna Nally of Wyoming Whiskey.

Mark O'Laughlen of Butch's Place and Dixie Vialpando of Mac's Bar also currently occupy seats on the board. The release thanked the outgoing board members, who include Gene Boehmke of CAPTEL, Jessica Lippincott of Imagine Photography and John Gibbel of Central Bank & Trust.

Little garden flower



A lovely little flower from the garden, Taylynn Birdsley, took second place in the age 1-and-under Halloween Costume Contest during Moonlight Madness, sponsored by

Pinnacle Bank. The annual contest had to be moved to the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center due to cold temperatures and falling snow. — Cindy Glasson photo

Wyo-Ben bentonite mining project to proceed off U.S. 20

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has issued a finding of no significant impact and a decision record for a bentonite mining project by Wyo-Ben, Inc. in Hot Springs County.

This will allow Wyo-Ben to begin new bentonite mining and concurrent reclamation on public land in the Meeteetse Draw area north of Thermopolis.

The exact location of the mining project is being kept intentionally vague due to the need to protect archaeological resources in the mining area and that the only viable access to the area is across private land west of U.S.

20, north of Owl Creek.

A start date for the mining has not been released; however, the plan will allow for 10 to 15 acres of mining per year for an estimated 10 to 20 years.

The operation will use the "cast back" technique for mining where the overburden for the next area to be mined will be placed over the area where mining just ceased.

This allows only a few acres at a time to be open for mining, yet prevents large piles of stored topsoil and overburden, saving not only the aesthetic look of the area but protecting the areas of archaeological significance as well.



Candidates

school level, too.

“We’re making progress as a state; unfortunately, we’ve had to go through the long haul with PAWS.”

“It’s federally mandated that we have to do something,” said Martinez, “but the test scores go through the state first rather than to the schools first, so too much data has to be filtered through before it gets to us.

“Several states are trying to work on a standard test better than PAWS, but it has to be through an accredited company and the legislature also has to have a hand in determining what we test on. We have to make sure our curriculum matches up with the testing.”

“I agree PAWS is an issue,” Nelson said, “but we definitely need some kind of testing in place. Too much emphasis is put on PAWS, but we have to wait ‘til something better comes along.”

Drug use by students has been a nationwide concern for many years and is an ongoing issue. Some schools have instituted a policy under which students are required to take a periodic drug test. Do you support such a test and if it should be implemented in the Hot Springs school district, when should that occur?

“That’s a tough issue,” VanAntwerp said. “I don’t have much tolerance for drugs, but if it were a school-wide thing I might be in favor of it, but I’m not really sure I could support it.

“We’re here to teach the kids. It’s more of a parental thing. I would have to do more research before I could support it.”

“We do have a problem,” Bomengen said. “Constitutionally, we have to have limits and we would need to take it to the community before taking action.

“Do we have the right to test? I think it’s a good idea if we’ve identified multiple users. It would have to be a community-wide decision with a lot of input.”

“Working in an industry where we use those tests, yes, absolutely,” Johnson said, “but when it comes to our students, I’m not sure it’s necessarily a good idea. It could easily turn into a witch-hunt. We would have to have a lot of community input on that.”

“We would have to have overwhelming support from the community,” Martinez said. “I think there would have to be such a significant level of use or abuse that you couldn’t teach any of the kids, constant trouble; then is when the school board would have to step in.

“If it’s affecting a larger population of the students we would need to take action, especially if it’s affecting the education of the rest of the kids.”

“That would be taking away some of their rights, stepping on their toes,” Nelson said. “We need to hold our parents and the children accountable. I think suspensions should be taken into consideration, especially if there are multiple problems, but community help and support would

be a must.”

“I have to say no,” Pebbles said. “We have to have good policies in place, educational modules in the upper grades, DARE type programs in high school.

“It’s an expense we don’t need right now, but may have to look at it down the road. I think we have the ability to look at it in a reasonable manner and we have the tools necessary, but I wouldn’t support it at the present time.”

Much has been said in recent years about the quality of teachers in classrooms across the nation. Does Wyoming have top-quality teachers in the public school classroom, and how do we retain such teachers and keep them in our districts?

“Three years ago, I would have said absolutely, we have good quality teachers,” Nelson said. “Now I’m seeing so many new teachers I have to ask why we can’t hang on to the ones who have been here.

“As far as quality, I think we still have good quality, it’s just really frustrating as a parent when you run into a bunch of substitutes.”

“I believe we definitely have quality teachers,” Pebbles said. “Retention is tough. A lot of them are single and moving to Thermopolis, and let’s face it, it’s tough for them. I have to commend them coming here.

“Retention has a lot to do with money. They’ve noticed there’s a big difference between them and

administration. I think if they’re doing their job we need to treat them right. Treat them right and we’ll keep them.”

“We have a good core of teachers,” VanAntwerp said. “The retention things we’re doing are great. We’ve dug into our reserve to keep them and we really appreciate them.

“They’re world-class and we can darn sure brag about that.”

“We have a great group of educators in Hot Springs County,” Bomengen said. “Have we had some turnovers? Yes. Have we lost some? Yes. Retention is hard and money is a problem, but we’re doing better than other states in that respect.

“I think we have a great administrative team that keeps things going in the right direction. We’re aggressively recruiting and young teachers are ready to jump on board because of some of the programs we have.”

“I think we have some good teachers,” said Johnson. “I like that my kids are being taught by some of my teachers. I was taught by some of my parents’ teachers.

“We have good pay and benefit packages here, but when you have young, single teachers, there is a chance of losing them. I would hope in the interview process we find teachers that are looking for a community like this rather than a larger community. I don’t want us to just be a stepping-stone.”

“I absolutely think we have top quality teachers,” Martinez said. “We’ve been diligent in our

recruiting. There is a large pool to choose from and they see how lucrative it is in Wyoming.

“Yes, retention is tough, but we have a mentoring program to help them bond with the other teachers and the community. We have a lot of technology here and that’s what those young teachers are looking for.

“We’ve had a 17-percent turnover this year and that’s in line with the national average.”

Audience questions

Questions were also taken from the audience about the math curriculum, teacher evaluations and preparing students for real life who don’t intend to attend college.

The United States ranks the highest in dollars spent per student for education and Wyoming generally spends better than average wages for teachers, yet we are still ranked 28th in education. The candidates were asked what they felt they could do to ensure all the money spent is giving our children a quality education.

Nelson said she felt there was a big emphasis on reading, and that language arts and social studies seem to overlap each other. Her feeling is that more money needs to be put toward a math curriculum.

VanAntwerp disagreed, saying there is a math curriculum and the district has put a lot of time and effort into it.

“We’re not comparing apples to apples a lot of the time,” he said. “We test everyone, not just those who are heading to college. We’ve found holes and are realigning the curriculum to fill those holes.”

“I have borderline lost my cool on the math and science numbers,” Bomengen said. “We are embarrassingly lacking in both areas, but we are working on fixing it. Results will take time, but I assure you we’ve been working on those and have a solid direction we’re moving in.”

The audience asked about teacher evaluations and should there be an evaluation of who is teaching.

“I think we do have that in place with the professional learning community,” Martinez said. “Teachers within one grade meet each week and evaluate how each student is doing, compare information and help each other in teaching different subjects in different ways.

“It’s taken some time to get it really working, but now we’re starting to see results.”

Finally, the audience wanted to know what the district was doing to prepare students who don’t intend to go to college.

“I see a strong need for vocational education,” Johnson said. “We need to inspire our children to be ready for the world, put more money there.”

Pebbles agreed, saying, “With the rising cost of college, not every kid is going to be able to go to school. There are a lot of kids that would like to get involved in some of these things early on so they’re better prepared, apprenticeships and such. We need to get them one step ahead of the game.”

from page 1

Council, state representative candidates respond to queries at forum

Local candidates in contested races in the Nov. 6 General Election answered questions from the moderator and fielded questions from the audience during a forum held Oct. 22 at the Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center. The forum was sponsored by the Independent Record newspaper.

All four candidates for two seats on the Thermopolis Town Council were also on the forum panel. They were incumbents Allan Braaten and Dick Hall along with LeRoy Hayes and Mark Nelson.

The candidates running for the House District 28 seat – Republican Nathan Winters and Democrat Connie Skates – participated in the forum.

The town council candidates were each asked the same question. The final query: How will you weigh small business interests in the community when they conflict with a public infrastructure project, utility rate increase or other action needed by the council?

“Utilities are enterprise funds,” said Hall, a current town council member. “They have to pay for themselves. They have to balance.” He stressed the importance of completing projects

in the most efficient way possible.

Braaten, also a council member, said the community must have infrastructure so everyone can grow from it. “You really need to modernize things,” he said. “You have to have people who see that vision of growth.”

“The town isn’t in business to be in competition with each other,” said Nelson, the former police chief. “We have to do the best we can.”

Hayes, a former town councilman, was impressed with how the Arapahoe Street water line project was undertaken and completed. “They did a great job getting in there and out of there,” he said and empathized with merchants that were affected by the construction. “We can keep those businesses open as best we can.”

An audience member asked why council meetings are so short compared to much longer commissioners’ meetings.

“The council acts as a board. We operate on an agenda brought to us,” Braaten said.

Dan Moriarity asked, “If you don’t want to give dollars to bring in tourists, what do you want to do with the money?”

Hayes said the council brought in the 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament when he held a seat years ago.

“This whole community should pull together, anything to get back on track,” Moriarity said “We have no drive to pull together.”

“Our budget shrank like crazy,” Hall said. “We had to decide on funding,” Braaten said. “3-on-3 had another funding source.” He was referring to the Lodging Tax Board. It was pointed out that board could only help with advertising such events as the basketball tournament. “We have to have funding for certain things that give the town life, but we need a plan. What are the priorities?”

Winters, Skates respond to questions

Winters and Skates took questions from the audience after answering several prepared queries. Toddi Darlington spoke about promoting tourism and emphasized that the Wyoming Business Council could not provide grants for tourism promotion.

“This could be the Arizona of Wyoming,” Winters said of Hot Springs County. “People have a wonderful life (here) after they retire.”

“We have the perfect opportunity here with

our growth,” Skates said. “The general idea is our tourism...We could bring younger kids here to work. We are very lucky with the facilities we have.”

An audience member lamented the difficulty now in getting a driver’s license renewed. “There is so much red tape. That is not progress,” they said. “What do you do to counteract?”

“They’re making it harder to get a driver’s license,” Skates said, especially for women who have had a name change, such as when they are married.

“It should be a streamlined process,” Winters said. “But the government grows larger and larger. It forces us into peasant hood. It’s an invasion of our personal rights.”

Mike Messenger said he only have the optional 1-cent sales tax to raise money. He asked, “How will you fight to increase the funding for operations of towns and counties?”

“Wyoming has been conservative taking care of our funds,” said Skates, and she referred to abandoned mine land (AML) funds. “Is our legislature going to sit on their hands?”

“You have to have a balanced budget. Fiscal policy is what it boils down to,” said Winters.

Public notices

NOTICE TO CONTRACTORS			
Notice is hereby given that Hot Springs County (hereafter referred to as the “Sponsor” or “Owner”), will receive sealed bids for the Hot Springs County Airport Relocation Project, Phase II – Earthwork and Drainage, A.I.P. No. 03-56-0043-02, State Project No. THP-11C at the new Hot Springs County Airport.			
The project involves: Bid Schedule 1: Construction of 300,000 CY Unclassified Excavation, 16,500 feet of ditch grading, subgrade preparation, 832 feet of 24 inch Reinforced Concrete Pipe, 335 feet of 30 inch Reinforced Concrete Pipe, 5 Manholes, top soil stripping, top soil stockpiling, topsoil placing, erosion control, seeding, and mulching.			
Bid Schedule 2: Construction of approximately 13,000 to 14,000 Feet of 1.5 inch Direct Bury Waterline.			
The bids must be prepared on forms supplied by the Owner and filed with Hot Springs County Clerk, 415 Arapahoe, Thermopolis, WY 82443 with the envelope clearly marked with the name of the bid no later than 10:00 am on November 14, 2012. Hand delivered bids will be accepted ONLY on the date of the bid opening. The bids will be publicly opened and read aloud in the presence of the bidders and their representatives at 10:15 am on November 14, 2012 at the Commissioners Chambers in County Annex Building located at 117 North 4th Street, Thermopolis, WY 82443.			
The Bidder (proposer) must supply all the information required by the bid or proposal forms and specifications.			
No bids will be received after the specified hour and date. Bids that are not prepared and filed in accordance with proposal requirements and conditions of the specifications, may be rejected.			
All bids must be accompanied either by a certified check, payable to Hot Springs County in the amount of five percent (5%) of the bid, or by a Bid Bond in a like amount and executed by an approved surety company. The check or bond will be retained by the Owner as liquidated damages if the successful bidder refuses or fails to enter into contract and performance bond in accord with his bid within fifteen (15) days after date of notification of award.			
Minimum wage rates as established by the Secretary of Labor are applicable to the work performed on this project.			
The Contract Documents, consisting of this Project Manual and the Plan Set, may be examined or obtained in person at the office of: GDA Engineers, 1508 Stampede Avenue, Cody, WY 82414, at the Office of the Hot Springs County Clerk, 415 Arapahoe, Thermopolis, WY 82443, or by calling (307) 587-3411 to request contract documents be shipped. Contract Documents may be obtained for a non-refundable reproduction charge of \$120.00. Interested parties may register and view the plans and specifications at www.gdaengineers.com . Online contract documents are for use by subcontractors and suppliers in preparing quotations to prime bidders. All prime bidders must purchase a hard copy of the Project Manual and the Plan Set.			
Bids may not be withdrawn after the time fixed for submitting them. The Owner reserves the right to waive irregularities in the bids and reject any and all bids.			
The proposed contract is under and subject to Executive Order 11246 of September 24, 1965, as amended, to the equal opportunity clause and the Standard Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Construction Contract Specifications including the goals and timetables for minority and female participation.			
The Bidder shall make good faith efforts, as defined in 49 CFR Part 26, Regulations of the Office of the Secretary of Transportation, to subcontract 1.07 percent of the dollar value of Bid Schedule 1 to small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals (DBE's). In the event that the Bidder for this solicitation qualifies as a DBE, the contract goal shall be deemed to have been met.			
A Certification of Non-segregated Facilities must be submitted prior to the award of the proposed contract, including any subcontracts in excess of \$10,000.00.			
All bidders are advised to examine the site to become familiar with all site conditions. The project will be shown to interested Bidders at 2:00 pm local time, on November 1, 2012, at the Commissioners Chambers in County Annex Building located at 117 North 4th Street, Thermopolis, WY 82443. A project site tour will be conducted after the pre-bid meeting.			
BY ORDER OF HOT SPRINGS COUNTY			
		/s/ _____ Hans Odde County Clerk	
Pub. October 18, 25, November 1 and 8, 2012			No. 6689
McMurry Ready Mix Company			
REQUESTING DBE/MBE QUOTATIONS			
McMurry Ready Mix Company is soliciting quotes from qualified DBE businesses for the			
HOT SPRINGS COUNTY AIRPORT-RELOCATION PROJECT-PHASE II –EARTHWORK AND DRAINAGE The bid date is Wednesday November 14th at 10:00 AM (Please submit quotes by COB 11/12/12.)			
		/s/ _____ Jerry D. Williams Williams Law Office 339 Arapahoe Thermopolis, WY 82443	
Pub. October 25, November 1, 8 and 15, 2012			No. 6695
Legal Notice Notice of Change of Meeting Date			
Notice is hereby given that the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Hot Springs County School District No. 1 scheduled for November 15, 2012, has been changed to Monday, November 12, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board Room located at 415 Springview, Thermopolis, WY.			
Pub. November 1, 2012		/s/ Elizabeth Mahoney Chairman, Board of Trustees	No. 6698