

Thermopolis
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Hospital board perseveres in districting initiative

by J.D. Stetson

Hot Springs County is in need of a new hospital. From among the three Hot Springs County Commissioners, six Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees, two physicians, one elected official, numerous hospital employees and one newly elected state representative, none thought the county doesn't need a new facility, but they did question how it was going to get it. All of the entities met Tuesday night before

the hospital board's December meeting to discuss a pending bill expected to make its way through the 2013 General Session of the State Legislature.

The bill intends to remove a state law for forming special districts that requires approval of the owners of 25 percent of the assessed valuation to approve the district before the district can go before the voters.

The law also requires 25 percent of the landowners in the county to also be in favor of the district

before it can go to an election, but the prospective bill would not remove this requirement.

The discussion was mixed. It touched upon the need for a new hospital, the age of the current facility, the probability of the bill successfully making its way through the legislature and the future wellbeing of the county.

At the end of the discussion, the final note was to persevere and to keep working in multiple ways to bring about the like-minded goal of a new facil-

ity and continuing to meet the healthcare goals of the county.

Alternative means

One of the reasons for the gathering was to discuss with State Rep.-elect Nathan Winters the board's reasoning behind its legislative push to end the assessed valuation requirement.

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Thermopolis captures 2A state drama crown

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County High School Drama Club returned from the 2012 Fall Drama Showcase in Riverton Saturday evening with another state championship in Class 2A.

The team did so well, according to coach Eric Kay, it could have easily competed in 3A or even 4A and come out winners. The team had the same number of points as number one 3A Riverton, and enough points they would have placed third in 4A competition.

Along with winning the 2A championship, the team produced 14 All-State medal winners and two honorable mentions, and placed eighth overall with their arena show, *Cyrano de Bergerac*. "We traveled with 21 students this year," Kay said. "That's the biggest team I've traveled with in a long time."

"The kids were great. Several times we were complimented on their behavior, in the hallways, at restaurants and even by the CWC custodians."

Seniors who were members of this year's Drama Club are Holly Dennis, Jacques Henrichs, Spencer Hu, Laurel Leonhardt, Shannon Jordan-Lorenz, Charlie Patterson and Kelley Sheperd.

The Bobcat Drama Club has been strong for many years now, and Kay sees a bright future for the program.

"We still have a pretty young team," he said, "so I am very optimistic about next year. We will stay in 2A, but we are still very competitive with 3A."

The cast for *Cyrano de Bergerac* included: Jared Mohr-Leiva (Cyrano), Amanda Randolph (Ragueneau), Patterson (Count de Guiche), Cody Bleak (Le Bret), Kaden Wood (Christian), Dennis (Roxane), Hu (captain/man), Darren Leonhardt (cadet 1) and Kameron Olsen (cadet 2).

Individual State Results

Darby Abbott, Publicity II "Fiddler on the Roof," 8th; Drama Duet "Children of September" (with Bleak), 1st; All-State. Tori Anderson, Dramatic Monologue "Amazing Grace," 4th; Costume II "Peter Pan," 15th; All-State.

Makelti Blake, Lighting III "The Job Review," 2nd; Publicity I "Cyrano," 15th; All-State.

Bleak, arena "Cyrano;" Drama Duet "Children of September" (with Abbott), 1st; All-State.

Dennis, Arena "Cyrano;" Fantasy Make-up IV "The Odyssey" (Siren), 11th.

Aressa Goodrich, Humor Duet "Stop Talking" (with Fawn Rush), 13th; Costume I "Don't Be Afraid of the Dark," 10th.

Henrichs, Dramatic Monologue "Coyote Killer," 3rd; Original Script One-act, 6th; Humor Duet "Necessary Evil" (with Jordan-Lorenz), 13th; All-State.

Macinna Holm, Fantasy Make-up II "Mid-Summer Night's Dream" (Peaseblossom), 11th; Costume I "Mid-Summer Night's Dream," 15th.

Hu, Arena "Cyrano;" Publicity IV "The Hobbit," 1st; All-State.

Logan Kay, Humor Monologue "Tampons," 2nd; Drama Duet "Diary" (with Jordan-Lorenz), 12th; Lighting Design II "Superhero Sanitarium," 1st; All-State; All-State honorable mention.

Abby Lankford, Real Make-up II "The Boys Next Door" (Mrs. Fremus), 7th; Costume Design I "Phantom of the Opera," 15th.

Darren Leonhardt, Scene Design I "Cyrano," 5th; Arena "Cyrano;" All-State.

Laurel Leonhardt, Scene Design IV "Frankenstein," 6th; Publicity II "Darcy and Elizabeth," 6th; All-State.

Jordan-Lorenz, Drama Duet "Diary" (with Kay), 12th; Fantasy Make-up III "Little Mermaid" (Ursula), 11th; Humor



Hot Springs County High School Class 2A state champion Drama Club members are, front row, from left, Aressa Goodrich, Fawn Rush, Jacques Henrichs, Macinna Holm, Darby Abbott, Kelley Sheperd; second row, Laurel Leonhardt, Shannon Jordan-Lorenz, Tori Anderson, Charlie Patterson, Abby Lankford, Cody Bleak, Makelti Blake; third row, Holly Dennis, coach Eric Kay, Darren Leonhardt, Kameron Olsen, Logan Kay, Kaden Wood, Spencer Hu, Jared Mohr-Leiva, coach Robert Kelly. Club members Amanda Randolph, Krista Tippetts and Danielle Yarrington are not pictured. — J.D. Stetson photo

Duet "Necessary Evil" (with Henrichs), 13th; All-State Honorable Mention.

Mohr-Leiva, Arena "Cyrano;" Humorous Monologue "Red," 3rd; All-State.

Olsen, Arena "Cyrano;" Scene Design I "The Hobbit," 11th.

Patterson, Arena "Cyrano;" Publicity III "The Book of Mormon," 2nd; All-State.

Randolph, Arena "Cyrano;" Real Make-up III "Cyrano"

(Cyrano), 11th.

Fawn Rush, Humor Duet "Stop Talking" (with Goodrich), 13th; Publicity I "Equus," 15th.

Sheperd, Publicity III "Harvey," 15th.

Krista Tippetts, Fantasy Make-up III "Wizard of Oz" (Tin Man), 5th; Original Script Monologue, 15th; All-State.

Wood, Arena "Cyrano;" Publicity III "Godspell," 1st; All-State.

Danielle Yarrington, Original Script Monologue, 15th.

Commissioners discuss Lane 3 project, get airport update

by Cindy Glasson

At Tuesday's meeting of the Hot Springs County Commissioners, an update on the completion of Lane 3 was heard along with an airport update, a request for equipment in the Law Enforcement Center and a request for archival materials for the County Clerk's office.

The report from Engineering Associates on Lane 3 informed the commissioners the work is

almost completed and they are hopeful the signage and mailboxes ordered for the road will be delivered this week.

The question still remains whether or not the commissioners will assess liquidated damages to Dave's Asphalt for going well over the initial completion date.

"We haven't seen any action on their part that would indicate we shouldn't assess them," said

commissioner John Lumley.

In the contract with the company, if substantial completion was not met by Oct. 16, a \$1,300-per-day assessment could be imposed on the company. The date of completion was moved back to give the company more time; however, they did not meet that date, either.

Because of the delay, the county has had to pay additional

fees to Engineering Associates.

The commissioners are considering a meeting with Engineering Associates, the commissioners and Dave's Asphalt to come to a conclusion.

Airport update

Anyone driving by the new county airport location west of town may have noticed a lot of cleaning and hauling of materials going on in the area.

According to GDA Engineering, Phase I of the project is nearly completed and the company doing the demolition and other work on the land will probably be shutting down soon for the winter.

There has been a lot of work going on trying to complete a road for Holden Ranches to use to get to their property during this phase, and a real push to get it done before the winter

shutdown is underway. The hope is to get the gravel down on the road before then.

Bids for work on Phase II will be opened at 10:15 a.m. in the commissioners' chambers today (Thursday) and GDA Engineering said they are anticipating anywhere from three to 10 bids for this phase.

All the bids opened will be

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2012 Tree Festival nets nearly \$14,000

by Cindy Glasson

The 2012 Christmas Tree Festival, hosted by Central Bank & Trust, was a success again this year with 15 decorated trees, 19 wreaths and seven other items in the "on their own" category.

The 12th annual event kicked off with dinner at 5:30 p.m. Monday, giving attendees about an hour to socialize, look over the offerings and formulate their bids.

Last year, the proceeds were split between the Thermopolis Community Fund and Hot Springs Hospice. Nearly \$14,000 in bids were gathered this year with \$250 going to hospice. Gary Nash donated his time as auctioneer for the evening.

Some of the highest selling trees included the "Angel Collector" by the Community Federated Church, featuring dozens of angels in all shapes and sizes, which was purchased by Vicklund Pharmacy for \$550, and the "Fire and Ice" tree created by the Firemen's Flames with red and gold balls along with sparkling icicles that was purchased by the Days Inn for \$450.

Scout Pack #5053's tree, "Scouting for S'more Christmas Goodies" was covered in little bags of caramel popcorn, the makings for s'mores and all the things that represent scouting. It was purchased by Central Bank & Trust for a bid of \$225.

Lucy's Sheep Camp purchased "The Butterfly Tree," decorated by the Roundtop Wranglers 4-H Club. It featured — you guessed it — butterflies and flowers. It will be on display at Thermopolis Rehabilitation and Care Center for the residents to enjoy.

A wreath, "Cabin Christmas," decorated by the Rotary Club, was purchased by the V Ranch for \$225, and Lola Cordingly took home "The Power of Purple," created by Relay for Life, covered in purple and silver balls.

"A Bobcat Christmas," featuring purple and gold, created by the Independent Record, sold to the V Ranch as well for \$300.

For a complete list of the high bidders on the trees, wreaths and other displays, see the advertisement in this issue of the Independent Record.



Auctioneer Gary Nash works the crowd Monday night at the 12th Annual Christmas Tree Festival, hosted by Central Bank & Trust. Taking care of the paperwork, behind Nash, is Hannah O'Rourke. The festival proceeds are split between the Thermopolis Community Fund and Hot Springs Hospice. — Cindy Glasson photo

Commission

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reviewed before GDA Engineering makes a recommendation to the commissioners.

Fingerprint scanner

Hot Springs County Sheriff Lou Falgoust approached the commissioners, asking for approval to order a live scan fingerprint machine for the Law Enforcement Center.

Hot Springs County is one of only five counties in the state that does not have one of the state-of-the-art fingerprint scanners that allows identification of fingerprints through a national database within 24 hours. Using conventional methods, it takes anywhere from 10 days to two weeks to get that same information.

Falgoust told the commissioners the scanner would cost somewhere in the neighborhood of \$100,000, but the costs would be covered by a grant from the Department of Criminal Investigation (DCI).

The only outlay the county would have for the scanner would be yearly maintenance, about \$6,400 per year, which,

if the Town of Thermopolis agrees, could be split between the two entities.

The commissioners gave Falgoust their approval on the purchase and he will be approaching the Town of Thermopolis with the idea as well.

Archival materials

All of the land plats for Hot

Springs County are kept in a secure area of the County Clerk's office, but County Clerk Hans Odde has noticed a problem with the plastic envelopes which hold the documents.

The current envelopes are large enough to hold the maps in a flat position, but Odde has noticed the envelopes are starting to seep some kind of

residue inside, damaging the enclosed maps.

Odde had a professional take a look at the situation and it was determined new envelopes would have to be purchased to prevent further deterioration of the documents.

The commissioners approved \$1,300 for Odde to purchase new archival envelopes.

Hospital

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Winters opened by firmly stating he is solidly with the board in its desire to build a new facility based on his experience learning about the current facility, but that he believes removing the state law is the wrong direction to go.

He believes that by shutting out the people and companies that would be responsible for paying most of the tax is a form of taxation without representation.

He also stated he has discussed the issue with many members of the legislature and he is of the opinion that the bill would likely be defeated in the House and possibly in the Senate.

The hospital has already begun working with State Sen. Gerald Geis to sponsor the bill, and Winters said he has discussed the issue with Geis at length. He suggested finding an alternative means to fund the building of the new facility.

Some ideas he suggested included drawing a different district boundary within the county in order to reach the 25-percent goal, bond measures and the possibility of privatizing the hospital.

Board member Margaret Stansil informed Winters the downside regarding privatization would be the hospital would no longer be able to offer charity care to people who need it.

She said the hospital's purpose is to serve, treat and to not turn away any citizen. Under privatization, the hospital could not afford to operate the same way.

Creating a smaller district also is not a feasible option because it would be cutting away most of the needed revenue the district would bring in.

Bond measures were also discussed, but they would also require a district in order to create a fixed source of revenue to pay back the bond.

Poor odds

Commissioner Mike Baker laid out his thinking regarding the likelihood of a bill completing its way through the State Legislature.

Based on his observations, the bill has a 7- to 8-percent chance of passing in the General Session.

He said the legislative mood toward special districts has been opposed to special districts. He said the upcoming legislature would be considering a bill placing all special districts under the authority of the county commissioners.

If the bill does gain any traction, Baker would expect the bill would likely be placed under an interim study for two years, in which case it would become a committee-sponsored bill and face odds of a 40- to 50-percent chance of passing in the 2015 session of the legislature.

As a single-sponsored bill in the upcoming session, the reality of passage is remote at best.

"The legislature grinds fine, but it also grinds slow," he said.

Eventually it all boils down to convincing 47 people, which include a majority of the House, majority of the Senate and Gov. Matt Mead, Baker said.

Commissioner Brad Basse said he believed the hospital should not discount the oil companies and should continue to pursue convincing the two largest companies in the county of the benefits to the county of the formation of a district. Both Marathon Oil Co. and Merit Energy are each responsible for about 25 percent of the current assessed valuation.

Basse said there are already several smaller companies who have indicated their willingness to support the district. Having just one of the larger companies plus the additional smaller companies would be enough to satisfy the requirement.

Basse also made the point regarding the ambiguity of the current law regarding confusion in how the county measures both 25-percent requirements. Winters said he would be very willing to look into clearing up the law in order to clarify the requirements.

Commissioner John Lumley expressed the commission's intention to continue working toward convincing the oil companies of the value of a district to the county and to the companies' interests in the county.

Paying the price

Midway through the discussion, Winters said he felt he was in a very uncomfortable situation where he sees the need for a new hospital and the potential for Thermopolis to become the premier retirement community for Wyoming with the capstone of a stellar hospital. On the other hand, he also sees the climate in Cheyenne and the opposition to the proposed bill.

Dr. Vernon Miller expressed the views of the medical staff regarding the hospital district and the situation.

Miller likened the hospital to a tremendous driver in a car that constantly breaks down. He expects conditions would be even worse in the future as federal and state health care revenues diminish due to reform.

"We're going to need to pull ourselves up by our boot straps," Miller said. "We need a hospital here."

He said the staff is highly in support of the district and they are willing to pay the price necessary to make it a reality.

The board also discussed the disadvantage the law creates regarding the formation of a hospital district compared to other special districts such

as fire districts or school districts, which do not have an assessed valuation requirement.

Hospital Board Chairman Bill Williams explained the hurdles facing the hospital regarding applications for state funds or financial backing for the new facility without a district.

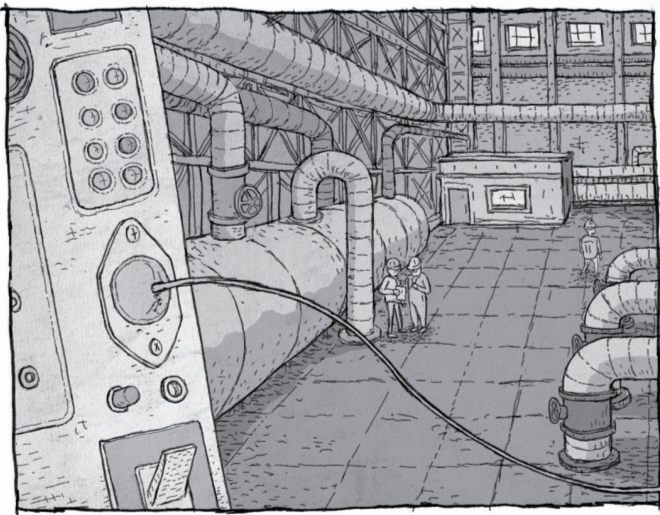
He said the State Land and Investment Board would require a district in order to grant any funds because the board wants the people in the county to first tax themselves before requesting money from the state.

Regardless of the odds and the disadvantage, the board indicated the county must persevere with the goal of eventually placing the issue on the ballot and letting the voters decide the future.

"We're going to keep rolling even with just a 7-percent chance," Williams said.



The Hot Springs County School District No. 1 Board of Trustees took their oath of office during a special meeting Nov. 26. Shown here, from left, are Clay Van Antwerp, Joe Martinez, Dr. Travis Bomengen and newest member Melissa Johnson. —Cindy Glasson photo



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