

Hospital district bill filed in Senate

by J.D. Stetson

Legislation to streamline the process of placing the question of creating a hospital district on the election ballot has been filed in the Wyoming Senate.

Sen. Gerald Geis sponsored the bill, which would remove the state requirements to place the special hospital district initiative on the ballot.

The bill allows the county commissioners to pass a resolution to submit the question of formation of a hospital district to the voters to create a special hospital district.

If the voters elect to form the district, the commissioners would enter the result of the election on the county's record that the district would be established.

Currently, state law requires entities responsible for 25 percent of the county's assessed valuation and 25 percent of property taxpayers to be in favor of the district before it can go on the ballot. If passed, the new law would remove both requirements.

Geis estimated there is a 50-50 chance of the bill passing the legislature this year, and he doesn't know why several of his colleagues in the legislature are not in favor of the bill.

He said the bill establishes a necessary tool for locals to take control and tax themselves for their needs, instead of relying on the uncertainty of grants, which continue to "dry up."

With regard to oil companies that would pay the lion's share of the property tax if a district is formed, he said their employees would use the services of the hospital at some point in the future and he questioned why the companies shouldn't pay for it if the voters choose to form the district.

Hot Springs County isn't the only county in the state with an interest in streamlining the process. Geis said he was approached by entities in both Hot Springs County and Washakie County, which also does not have a district, to sponsor the bill.

Geis said he had also heard there are 14 hospitals in the state that currently do not have a district to support them. He added that he did not know which ones were pushing for legislative action.

As for the bill's status if it reaches the state House of Representatives, Geis said he has an ally in a Star Valley representative to help shepherd the bill in the house.

"I'm going to give it the best shot I can to get it passed," Geis said.

Christmas lighting winner



The Amoretti Street home of Kevin Kohler buzzes with holiday cheer Monday night during the judging of the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce 2012 Residential Lighting Contest. Kohler won first place, Kyle Hessenthaler was second and Dale Beyette's home placed third during the contest. — J.D. Stetson photo

Chamber closer to choosing new director

by J.D. Stetson

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is getting closer to finding a new executive director.

Board member Phillip Scheel reported during the board meeting Dec. 13 that the chamber received approximately 25 applications for the position. The board narrowed down the applications to five qualified applicants and had intended to perform telephone interviews early this week.

The chamber plans to perform face-to-face interviews with the applicants who are chosen after the phone interviews are complete.

Scheel said applications for the position came from all over the state and included college graduates and various experience.

He said there were also a few local applicants that were included in the five selected applications.

The various board members agreed hiring a new director to accompany the new board is a great opportunity for the board in developing a new direction for the chamber.

Other business

The board met with Shyla Buckner, who was representing the Thermopolis Ambassadors, in order to learn more about the ambassadors, which is an organization that represents the Town of

Thermopolis and the chamber in welcoming new businesses to the community.

Traditionally, the executive director of the chamber has also served in the ambassadors, which is now considered a subcommittee of the chamber.

Buckner said she hopes the new executive director will continue in the capacity as liaison between both entities.

The board also briefly discussed the chamber's role in the upcoming celebration of the 100th anniversary of Hot Springs County being planned for 2013.

The chamber agreed to offer its services in organizing and orchestrating a parade for the celebration, but chose not to volunteer as the central entity regarding the entirety of the celebration.

The board also briefly discussed upcoming events, which include the January Cash Mob scheduled for Jan. 12, the Harlem Ambassadors basketball game set for March 18 and the Chamber Banquet on March 23.

Lodging Tax Board discusses rodeo, billboards

by Cindy Glasson

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Lodging Tax Board met Tuesday at Days Inn, receiving a report from the Rendezvous Rodeo committee along with an extensive review of the various billboards advertising Thermopolis throughout the state.

Gayla Mead, representing the PRCA rodeo committee, told the board the 2012 rodeo saw an increase not only in the number of participants, but showed a trend toward Thermopolis' rodeo once again becoming the destination for contestants and their fans.

Plans are already underway for the 2013 event, according to Mead, and will include a couple of new events this summer.

A pack race will be held on Thursday, stretching the event to three days. Trick riders will be part of the lineup this year, and a new sound system should make things more enjoyable for all those in attendance.

Board member Carl Leyba suggested to Mead that signage should be put up at all three entrances to town to promote the event. Mead said some of the footwork has already been done to get banners in place north, south and west of Thermopolis.

Leyba said once the poles were made permanent, they would benefit the community and other events throughout the year.

There has been several months of discussion between the Chamber of Commerce and Lodging

Tax Board regarding a billboard south of town on property owned by the Hessenthaler family. An agreement was reached last month as to who would be paying for the billboard and its maintenance in the future.

To that end, board member Jim Mills has been in contact with the Pepsi Corporation, which has shown interest in paying for a new vinyl covering on the billboard. The only request they have is the addition of the Pepsi logo somewhere on the board.

Chamber president Meri Ann Rush told the board she had contacted Lamar, a company that creates the vinyl coverings for billboards, and they had quoted her over \$2,000 to cover the billboard. Mills will continue his talks with Pepsi.

There are several other billboards throughout the state on which the Lodging Tax Board advertises, and Rush has taken photos of some of them during her personal travels.

A list of the billboards and what repairs need to be made will be compiled and a priority list started to get all of the boards updated as soon as possible.

There are about three billboards that are no longer in use in the area, leaving approximately \$6,000 that had been budgeted for replacement of vinyl that can now be put aside for maintenance. A firm number will be discussed at the January meeting.

The January meeting will be held on the 15th at noon at Days Inn.

Early IR deadlines

With New Year's Day falling on a Tuesday this year, the Thermopolis Independent Record will have early deadlines for our Jan. 3 issue.

The IR deadline for legal and display advertising for the Jan. 3 issue is 5 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 27. The deadline for classified advertising and editorial content is noon Friday, Dec. 28.

In order for our employees to spend time with their families during this holiday season, the Independent Record office will be closed Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25 and New Year's Day, Tuesday, Jan. 1. We will have regular office hours on Wednesday, Dec. 26 and Wednesday, Jan. 2.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Independent Record staff!

TMS trumpeter



Fifth grader Garrett Yetter plays the trumpet during the Thermopolis Middle School Christmas concert Monday evening at the auditorium. — Cindy Glasson photo

What is closed on Christmas Eve?

Most government or nonprofit agencies will be closed Tuesday for Christmas. Many of the offices will also be closed Monday, Dec. 24, Christmas Eve, with the following exceptions:

- Thermopolis Post Office.
- Regular services open until noon. Package pickup only between noon and 2 p.m.
- Hot Springs State Park Bathhouse
- Department of Family Services
- Town of East Thermopolis, open until noon.
- The H.O.P.E. Agency office will be open until noon. Its 24-hour hotline at 864-4673 will also be available.
- Gottsche Rehabilitation and Wellness Center, open until 2 p.m.
- Thermopolis Independent Record

The following offices and agencies will be closed Monday: Hot Springs County, Town of Thermopolis, Town of Kirby, Hot Springs County Museum and Cultural Center, Hot Springs State Park Headquarters, Hot Springs County Counseling Center, Hot Springs Conservation District, USFWS offices and the Hot Springs County Senior Center.

Hot Springs County Library will be closed Saturday, Dec. 22 through Tuesday, Dec. 25.

The Hot Springs County Economic Development Co. will be closed Dec. 24 through Dec. 26.

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce will be closed from Dec. 22 until Jan. 1. It will be open for business Jan. 2.