

## Library robot



Ollie Bihr talks to the robot, Silas Dickey, during a special Robot Day for little ones at the Hot Springs County Library's reading time. Each of the children took turns being the robot while listening to stories.

—Cindy Glasson photo

## Airport FBO selected

With the coming end of the fixed base operator (FBO) contract with Hot Springs County and Crowley Air Service, the county commissioners chose a new company to take over duties at Hot Springs County Airport.

Brett Crowley and Tara Chesnut will be leaving shortly for a new job in Alaska, and JT Aviation will be taking over as the new FBO.

Tim Lippincott and Jerry Fields, owners of JT Aviation, suggested a three-year contract to start, knowing the new airport should be completed by that time and their duties would change drastically.

The commissioners agreed, hiring the company contingent upon coming to agreeable terms for a contract.

## Commissioners approve funds for E911 upgrade

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners discussed upgrades needed for the E911 system in the county, reviewed the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) inspection of the completion of Lane 3 south of Thermopolis and received an update on the airport from GDA Engineers during their meeting Monday.

Traveling Computers, Inc. (TCI) – the company that handles the information technology for the courthouse, law enforcement center and other county entities – informed the commissioners there were some items that had to be taken care of as an upgrade to the enhanced 911 (E911) system currently in use.

Just over \$7,000 in equipment is needed as soon as possible to keep the system viable, with another \$12,500 needed in the near future for hardware replacement and a new generator in case of power failure.

While the commissioners approved the \$7,000 expenditure, TCI also prepared a list of items – including servers, computers and software – that they will need

to consider during the upcoming budget. Those items total more than \$82,000, but would bring the offices up to par, especially in regard to software.

Currently, most of the offices are running Office 2003 or Windows XP, software that is not compatible with most of the new software on the market. TCI would like to get the offices up to at least Windows 7.

The commissioners plan to discuss splitting the cost of some of the upgrades with the Town of Thermopolis as the police department, under the town's jurisdiction, also uses dispatch and the law enforcement center.

WYDOT has made its final inspection of the work done on Lane 3 and some issues arose that will need to be corrected by the contractor.

District engineer Shelby Carlson noted the stop sign at the intersection of Lane 3 and US 20 is out of compliance as far as its size.

According to Carlson, the sign must be 30 inches by 30 inches to be in compliance, and therefore must be replaced.

Carlson also noted a problem

with the height and location of the retaining wall on the south side of the road at the intersection. It creates a problem with sight distance for those turning left onto the highway.

WYDOT suggests removing two rows of the block on the higher wall and removing one row of blocks on the lower wall to create adequate sight distance.

In addition, a stop bar has not been painted on the road at the intersection, an oversight that will need correcting as well.

The commissioners will have a meeting with Engineering Associates to discuss the needed changes as soon as possible.

Six companies have shown interest in bidding on Phase III of the airport project, according to GDA Engineers.

A pre-bid meeting will be held at 2 p.m. March 21 at the County Annex, with bid opening to occur on April 17.

GDA also told the commissioners the contractor has stated moving onto the site for Phase II of the project, and weather notwithstanding, should begin working full force on Monday.

## Council endorses highway banners for summer events

by J.D. Stetson

The Thermopolis Town Council voted to support efforts by the PRCA Cowboy Rendezvous committee to install banners at the three highway entrances of Thermopolis to promote the rodeo during the weekend of June 21-22.

Committee spokesman Mark Ellis sought the council's discussion of the banners during a meeting Tuesday evening. The committee has already spoken with representatives of the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) and Ellis provided the council with some of the requirements.

The banners must be no lower than 18 feet above the pavement and they must be located within the town limits.

Currently, poles and a wire for banners on the north entrance of town exist; however, Public Works Director Ernie Slagle said prior research has indicated the wire may be too low for a large enough banner to meet the 18-foot requirement.

As for the other entrances, the committee is working toward gathering

financial support from other entities with an interest in promoting summer events to install poles and a wire. Ellis said the banner on Broadway Street could be located just beyond the residential areas in the town limits.

The situation is trickier on the south end, because the town limits fall between Canyon Hills Road and Lane 1. Town rights-of-way are also narrower in places in the southern end.

Ellis reported the committee has already received a donation of poles from TJ Owsley and is working with

John Zupan to install the poles.

The council discussed having the committee work with town staff to work out details with WYDOT for the location and other requirements of installing the poles. They also asked Town Engineer Heath Overfield to further discuss with WYDOT any other safety or structural requirements that may be warranted.

Mayor Bill Malloy said he personally saw no problem with the committee's effort to install the banner; however, it was discussed that the responsibility

to oversee and maintain the banners would fall to the town, according to the WYDOT requirements.

The council agreed to a motion to support the endeavor – provided town staff and the committee work with WYDOT to meet the safety, structural and location requirements necessary.

Malloy also asked who would be responsible for hanging the banners for other events. Ellis replied the work to hang the banners would be up to each individual entity once the poles and wires are installed.

## SRO position lacks funds for 2013-14

Sheriff Lou Falgoust said Tuesday that the current grant that funds a school resource officer position is set to expire at the end of the school year.

The School Resource Officer (SRO) position is currently in the final year of a four-year grant cycle. Under the grant, the Hot Springs County School District and the county have provided 100 percent of the funding for the final year of the cycle with the majority of the cost paid for by the district. Monies available from the grant were not continued at the state or federal levels for another cycle.

Unfortunately, Falgoust said the district and the county cannot continue to fund the full cost of the position without support of a grant.

Falgoust briefly discussed the SRO bill written and sponsored by Rep. Nathan Winters, R-Hot Springs County, to provide state funding to aid school districts in providing school resource officers. The bill failed to pass the Wyoming State Legislature after the Senate did not consider it for

a vote. He said he hopes Winters continues to pursue the bill in the next legislative session.

Falgoust said the sheriff's office is continuing to search for another grant, and the department will apply for a grant if it becomes available.

He said deputies will continue to provide law enforcement services and a presence in the schools as much as possible. The main difference will be that a deputy or officer will no longer be on-site at one of the six schools in the district to provide immediate service.

Thermopolis Police Chief Mike Chimenti said he expects an increase in calls to the schools by the police department in the coming school year if the SRO position goes away. Officers already provide a presence at the schools during special events, and Chimenti expects the bulk of future calls will go through the department because the schools are within town limits.

School district officials did not respond before press time to messages left Tuesday.

## Bobcat fans show their support



Supporters of the Thermopolis Bobcats and Lady Cats were out in force last weekend during the 1A/2A State Basketball Tournament in Casper. Above, fans cheer during the boys' semifinal game against Lovell.

— Joe Sovo photo