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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 114, No. 36, September 5, 2013

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

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Commissioners award roof bid

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners opened three bids, awarded a second bid, renewed two liquor licenses in the county and heard an update on the airport during their meeting on Tuesday.

Three bids were opened Tuesday morning from GDA Engineers, Engineering Associates and Owl Creek Engineering for engineering services for gravel crushing that would need to be done this fall at one of the county gravel pits. The gravel will be used for road work next year.

GDA Engineers proposed \$5,372 for the work. Engineering Associates offered \$5,350 for the project and Owl Creek Engineering proposed a low bid of \$4,000.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Dave Schlager will review the bids before returning to the commissioners with his recommendation on which company should receive the bid.

Schlager also asked the commissioners if he could put together a proposal for a new truck for road and bridge, an item already budgeted for in the rolling stock line. Requests for bid will be advertised.

Bid for multi-purpose building roof awarded

Two bids were also reviewed by the commissioners for a new

roof on the multi-purpose building at the Hot Springs County Fairgrounds.

Bids were received from Roy Decker and Sons, Inc. from Worland and Altas Roofing of Thermopolis.

Decker proposed \$148,833 for removal of the roof and insulation, installation of new sheeting and installation of new insulation. Atlas Roofing proposed \$115,625 for the same work with upgraded roofing materials.

The commissioners awarded the bid to Atlas Roofing.

Two liquor licenses were renewed during the meeting, one for the Flying Dutchman and the second for Stones Throw.

According to the Wyoming Liquor Commission, the Flying Dutchman is behind in its taxes to the state, so the commissioners informed the business owner they have 30 days to get into compliance on their delinquent taxes with the state or they would consider suspending their license until such time as they are in compliance.

Airport construction progressing

Phase I of the new airport construction is officially completed, according to GDA Engineers.

A final construction report has been sent to the state and

See Bid on page 10

Fill the Boot for MDA



Working hard to Fill the Boot for the Muscular Dystrophy Association are Thermopolis volunteer firemen Obadiah Bishop and Forrest Coleman-Weisz. Firemen and their wives spent most of Monday at the stoplight

and 14th and Broadway street intersections gathering donations for MDA, an event most fire departments across the U.S participate in each year to help raise funds for research.

— Cindy Glasson photo

WDE to initiate model accountability system by fall 2014

by Cindy Glasson

The Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) and the State Board of Education partnered recently for 13 sessions across the state updating stakeholders on the Wyoming Accountability in Education Act (WAEA).

The meetings were held at five sites in the state as well as online last Friday morning in an attempt to accommodate the largest number of residents.

Paige Fenton Hughes, temporary coordinator for the State Board of Education, was one of the presentors for the online meeting along with Deb Linsey from the Department of Education; Julie Magee, Standards and

Accountability director; and Dr. Mike Flicek, a consultant hired by the WDE to work out the accountability plan.

Hughes indicated all the information gathered at the public meetings and the online presentation would be shared with the legislature.

Hughes said, across the board, district goals are generally aligned with the WAEA goals, but entities need to work harder at getting the good things out to the public, not just limiting the information to test scores.

“The governor is very committed to education, as are our legislators,” Hughes said. “We want to move accountability

forward. Other states are currently practicing accountability, and the good thing about us being slightly behind the others is that we are learning from their mistakes.”

Districts to be placed in performance level categories

A professional judgment panel will convene this fall and a model accountability system is slated to go into effect by fall of 2014.

“We’re trying to create a method of accountability that actually works,” Hughes said.

To that end, each district will be placed in one of four performance level categories during the next year for a “practice run.”

According to Hughes, there will be separate indicators for each school and will be broken down into grades 3-8 and grades 9-12.

The breakdown will be PAWS-based for the lower grades for the next two years, SAWS for grades 3, 5 and 7, and ACT scores for 11th grade.

Schools will receive points based on each student’s test scores. The average of all the scores will determine the school’s final score for accountability.

Magee said each school will also be scored on four criteria – alignment, district-wide consistency, fairness and standard setting.

“We will review each of these areas for 2013-14 in a pilot program,” she said. “Those results won’t actually count. We’ll take that information, work on our system, and then relaunch in 2016-17.”

“We figure all of the districts will be ready for total curriculum assessment by then.”

Future of PAWS in question after next year

Linsey said there is no contract in place for PAWS after 2014.

“We do have some testing options,” Linsey said. “We could continue to build our own test or adopt a test from another source.”

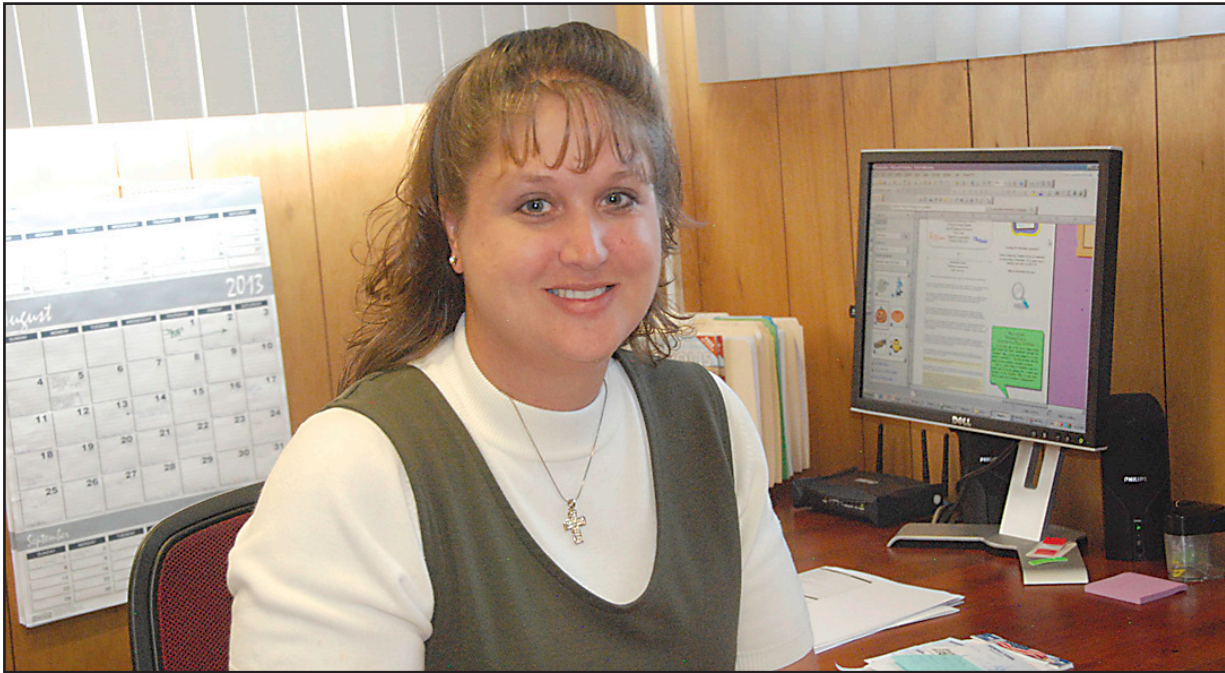
Linsey said there is starting to be some competition in the testing field, opening things up for more opportunities the state can use, something of an “off the shelf” test.

One assessment system the state is looking at is the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium (SBAC).

The cost of using SBAC is about half the cost of PAWS.

An issue with SBAC is that it does not use ACT testing, a current requirement for Hathaway scholarships.

Linsey indicated the legislature would have to make the call on the ACT requirements should SBAC be implemented.



New Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Meri Ann Rush began her position with the chamber Aug. 28.

Chamber hires Rush as director

by J.D. Stetson

After about two months of searching, the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce has officially chosen a new executive director.

The chamber chose Meri Ann Rush to fill the position based on her extensive experience with the chamber and with businesses in Thermopolis.

Rush stepped down as president of the chamber’s board of directors earlier in August in order to apply for the open position, which was vacated at the end of June by Amanda Moeller.

Acting President Phil Scheel said Rush was the clear choice as the new director.

“(Meri Ann) has demonstrated her commitment and proven she’s committed to Thermopolis,” Scheel said.

Scheel said the chamber wants to emphasize that the selection of a director is the start of a new dynamic. He said the chamber now has several new horizons to follow in order to make the chamber into something it has been before.

“Up is the only way,” he said.

Rush officially started in the position Aug. 28, but she isn’t new to the duties of the executive director. Rush has acted in the directorship capacity on and off for about a year. She filled in during the time it took to hire Moeller after learning the job from former director Michelle Lue.

As a board member and president, Rush said she has already gone through each chamber event and knows what to expect.

“I saw it as an opportunity to help Thermopolis,” Rush said. “I really believe that Thermopolis will do great things and I want to be a part of it.”

Some of her goals coming into the directorship are to increase and improve communication between the chamber, its members and the community.

The chamber is also in the planning stages to host various business seminars to help chamber member business, Rush said.

Rush also plans to keep her own business, Print Zone, operating while working as the full-time chamber director.

Council addresses BIA decision and possible casino

by J.D. Stetson

Water and sewer are the top concerns of the Thermopolis Town Council in the event that the Northern Arapahoe Tribe chooses to build a casino on land currently undergoing an appeals process for the land being placed into trust.

Town Attorney Mike Messenger presented the council with a response to correspondence from the Bureau of Indian

Affairs about the placement of the Baird property into trust.

The land is currently being used by the tribe for agricultural needs, but tribal officials have stated the land uses, “might include gaming and other uses which will promote economic interests of the Northern Arapahoe Tribe and its members,” according to a BIA decision letter released in July.

Messenger said town administration discussed the issue and determined there is only one direct impact on the town through its dispatch service.

Indirectly, the town also is concerned about water and sewer on the property in the event a casino is established.

Parameters for sewer system

In a memorandum to the council,

the administration lists that any sewer system on the property needs to be well treated, controlled and monitored by appropriate agencies for the quality of the water that is returned to the river. The property is upstream of the town’s take-out or inlet for its water treatment plant.

For water, the town is concerned any wells drilled may have impact on

the aquifer that contributes to the Big Spring, and that the casino would need to come to an agreement with the town or the South Thermopolis Water and Sewer District for service.

The council expressed a desire to work positively with the tribe to address utility issues and was clear that it does not want to take an adversarial stance against the tribe or the BIA on the issues.