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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Bomengen takes over as new chief of medical staff

by J.D. Stetson

The Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Board of Trustees met Monday for the board's December meeting.

During the meeting, Dr. Travis Bomengen presented to the board as the new chief of the medical staff, replacing Dr. Kurt Pettipiece, who retired from the position.

Bomengen is also the liaison between the hospital and Red Rock Family Practice. He explained the clinic is currently down a physician and a nurse practitioner, which has stretched the current physicians thin.

He said the clinic is actively recruiting to fill the positions and may hire two part-time people to fill one of the vacancies, if necessary.

Bomengen also updated the board on the physician-side of the ongoing EMR project and said there were still some issues from the physician's perspective that continue to be addressed.

The medical staff also recommended the board approve credentialing for V-Rad, a contract tele-radiology service, Bomengen said.

Bomengen added that the medical staff is very much in support of the hospital and its pursuit to keep the hospital solvent through local support. He said the medical staff would support the hospital to eventually bring the hospital districting issue back to the Hot Springs County Commissioners and to voters.

Bomengen ended his report by complimenting the hospital as a partner with Red Rock Family Practice to bring about a successful Tree & Wreath Festival this year. He said Marketing Director John Gibbel brought experience with the festival that helped make a good transition from Central Bank & Trust to the new location.

Earlier in the meeting Gibbel provided a report citing the \$15,775 made for the Thermopolis Community Fund. Gibbel said the event had improved attendance and made about \$2,000 more than in previous years for the fund. Last year, the event was also a fundraiser for Hot Springs Hospice.

Financial audit

Michael Wright with Koerwitz,

See Hospital on page 12



Dark Bay Arts, located at 113 Peppermint Lane and owned by Brooks and Schuyler Young, won first place in the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce 2013 Commercial Lighting Contest and third in the Residential Contest. Thermopolis Eyecare placed second and Needful Things won third in the Commercial Contest. Marvin Andreen won first and Debbie Mount placed second in the Residential Contest. — J.D. Stetson photo

Thermopolis FFA marks 75th anniversary

Thermopolis FFA (Future Farmers of America), which stems from Hot Springs County School District No. 1, is celebrating its 75th birthday today (Thursday). The charter was enacted as Hot Springs FFA on Dec. 19, 1938, according to current FFA advisor Britton Van Heule.

On a national scale, FFA is celebrating its 85th year of existence. Founded in 1928, FFA brought together students,

teachers and agribusiness to solidify support for agricultural education. In Kansas City's Baltimore Hotel, 33 young farm boys charted a course for the future. They could not have foreseen how the organization would grow and thrive.

Since 1928, millions of agriculture students have donned the official FFA jacket and championed the FFA creed. FFA has opened its doors and its arms to minori-

ties and women, ensuring that all students could reap the benefits of agricultural education.

Today, the National FFA Organization remains committed to the individual student, providing a path to achievement in premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education. Now, the organization is expanding the nation's view of "traditional" agriculture and finding new ways to infuse

agriculture into the classroom.

In 1950, the 81st Congress of the United States, recognizing the importance of the FFA as an integral part of the program of vocational agriculture, granted a Federal Charter to the FFA.

Research by FFA students determined the charter members of Hot Springs FFA, in 1938. They were (correct spelling not

See FFA on page 12

Early deadlines for Dec. 26, Jan. 2 issues

With Christmas Day and New Year's Day falling on Wednesdays this year, the Thermopolis Independent Record will have early deadlines for the Dec. 26 and Jan. 2 issue.

Our deadline for legal, display and classified advertising for the Dec. 26 issue is 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 20. The deadline for editorial content is noon Monday, Dec. 23.

The IR deadline for legal, display advertising and classified advertising for the Jan. 2 issue is 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 27. The deadline for editorial content is noon Monday,

Dec. 30.

In order for our employees to spend time with their families during this holiday season, the Independent Record office will close at noon Christmas Eve, Tuesday, Dec. 24 and will be closed Christmas Day, Wednesday, Dec. 25.

Our office will also be closed New Year's Day, Wednesday, Jan. 1. We will have regular office hours on Thursday, Dec. 26 and Thursday, Jan. 2.

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

Tax Board idea: 'real western experience'

by Cindy Glasson

The Thermopolis Hot Springs Lodging Tax Board met Tuesday and discussed a few ideas for the coming tourist season that could help garner more visitors to the area.

What tourists are looking for when they come visit the west is the real western experience, including things like horseback riding and chuckwagon dinners – things that combine the spirit of the west with an entertainment factor thrown in.

To that end, the board contacted Nate and Maecile Brown, owners of Horseworks Wyoming, who came in to visit with the board about what they may be able to do to bring that western experience to visitors to Hot Springs County.

With their company, the Browns bring in folks for three-week sessions, mainly from Europe, who participate in an intensive program that teaches them the basics of riding and horsemanship. They have been conducting these internships for many years and it has been a lucrative business.

They do not, however, do the "nose to tail" trail rides tourists are clamoring for.

Through a lengthy discussion, the board and the Browns decided there could be some common ground on which they could work together to create some kind of attraction for the tourists that could incorporate some horsemanship and riding as well as a chuckwagon-type dinner during the summer months.

With plans for an indoor arena in the works, the Browns said they would still be able to do their internships in the winter months – leaving openings for day trips during the summer that could encourage tourists to stay an extra day in Thermopolis.

While no concrete decision was made, the board and the Browns did agree to keep the lines of communication open and talk about further possibilities. With tourist season starting in mid-June, both sides agreed a decision would have to be made in the next couple of months in order to get advertising going.

Television advertising; Shop Thermop theme

As far as advertising goes, the board also discussed two proposals from the Casper television stations – K2 and KCWY – for 30-second commercials.

The board voted to go with the proposal from K2. Even though K2's production cost was higher than KCWY, the remainder of their proposal was less expensive.

They would like to have a film crew come in now, during the holiday season, to film a Christmas commercial for 2014. A possible "Shop Thermop" theme for next year that would be played around Wyoming could help local businesses as well as the hotels and restaurants.

Other commercials would be made for spring, summer and fall as well to cover the entire year.

With shopping locally in mind, the board also discussed the possibility of allocating

See Lodging Tax on page 12

Gov. Mead shares views during Thermopolis visit

by Joe Sovia

State funding to support counties and municipalities as well as the new state budget, the health insurance dilemma and a new Environment Protection Agency (EPA) mandate were major topics of conversation during Gov. Matt Mead's visit with county and town officials and other community members Tuesday afternoon at the county annex.

Mead considers his new biennial budget "flat," meaning it is very similar to the budget he scripted as he took office beginning in January 2011.

"You can't double the budget every 10 years," he told those attending the session. "I wanted to keep it about the same as two years ago."

County commissioners Brad Basse and Mike Baker along with the other county officials attending wanted to hear about the \$175 million in his budget proposal for state aid to local governments.

He wants counties and municipalities to have control over how state money is spent.

"We want you to make the decision on what potholes to get filled," Mead said. "The cost of maintaining and building roads is so expensive. It's a big issue and huge, huge dollar."

Commission chairman Brad Basse said the county is putting state money to good use.

"We're doing what we can and we ap-



Gov. Matt Mead paid a visit to Thermopolis on Tuesday to speak with Hot Springs County and Town of Thermopolis officials about issues pertinent to county residents. Above, commissioner Mike Baker listens to the governor's answer to a question. — Joe Sovia photo

preciate what (funding) we get," he said.

Mead has openly voiced his displeasure with the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare.

"The insurance exchange has put way more people off insurance rather than on

insurance," he said.

"We're reducing benefits by increasing deductibles," county clerk Hans Odde said, and indicated the cost of reinsurance is very high for counties such as Hot Springs.

state more than 100 years ago.

"Can they do it within 100 square miles of where we're sitting?" Basse asked.

The tribes' motivation for filing the application was to get more federal mon-

Mead said Wyoming residents have lost the option to get health coverage from a number of insurance companies due to the Affordable Care Act.

Effects of EPA ruling

The commissioners as well as Mead are aware of an EPA ruling that could eventually affect Hot Springs County. The EPA ruled that the City of Riverton has been part of the Wind River Indian Reservation for the past 108 years. The issue came to light after a five-year wait for the approval of an application by the Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone tribes to gain state status for administering air quality on the reservation. The decision would likely bring about broad changes to how the governments of Riverton and Fremont County function, and eventually Hot Springs County, since Indian land here was deeded to the

ty to monitor air quality on the reservation and to win back land that had been opened up to nontribal members—thanks to a 1905 federal law. The tribes were able to use a piece of the Clean Air Act to win the ruling.

"We want to keep it status quo until the courts rule," Mead said. "I think our counties could have a standing (on the matter) and our towns could have a standing."

The governor said the state would be "proactive" in determining the best strategy to fight the EPA on the issue.

"It's something we should never sit still for," commissioner Mike Baker said.

Basse spoke of the county's discussion with the Northern Arapaho tribe about the land at Red Cut just south of Thermopolis that has gone into trust.

"We want transparency for them to follow the law," Basse said.

Toward the end of Tuesday's session, Mead indicated there would be \$9 million of state money in a pool to be used for school security, primarily with the funding of school resource officers (SROs), in the new budget. School districts can apply for funds from the pool.

Rep. Nathan Winters of Thermopolis, who traveled with Mead and his associates during Tuesday's visit, sponsored a bill in the last legislative session and expressed the importance of such legislation in funding SROs.

FFA

from page 1

confirmed) Jack Vannoy, Dan Cunningham, Vern Hammond, Harold Weeks, Norman Wallingford, Carroll Rettstatt, David Coleman, Arthur Greene, Leaton Burch, Bill Buchanan, Jim Skelton, Lyle Jones, John Austin, Burt Bent, Warren Fields, Larry Collins, George Smith, Harold Moyer, Lewis Benedict, Dick Hedges, Dish Dickison, Howard Willson, DeWitt Henry, Lester Nielsen, J. Clyde Burnap, Melloy Johnson, Ken Camp, Leonard Short, Harold Johnson and Oliver Lund.

There are no newspaper records available for 1938, but the Thermopolis Record reported the FFA officers elected in September of 1939. They were: Burch, president; Vannoy, vice president; Greene, secretary; Collins, treasurer; Wallingford, state reporter; and Bill McVey, local reporter.

FFA chapter dues for the 1940-41 school year was 75 cents.

Five Hot Springs FFA members in 1939-40 created quite a stir at the National Livestock Judging competition in Chicago, Ill. — posting a record in livestock judging that placed them sixth in the nation. The team members were

Burch, Nielsen, Willson, John Hamon and Sam Albright.

An article in the Journal circa 1938 or 1939 indicated that students interested in Vocational Agriculture (now known as vocation) would have the opportunity to enroll in courses that fall at Hot Springs County High School. The time was devoted to studying different farm enterprises, such as farm shop, livestock judging, testing soils, irrigation, feeding livestock, poultry, home beautification, etc. Regular high school credits, applicable to graduation, would be given to those who completed their classroom and project work. Any student or parent interested in this new department of Vocational Agriculture was urged to meet with school superintendent E. J. Bush and class instructor A. M. Hartwig.

Hartwig certainly had an impact on vo-tech locally. Thermopolis FFA has recently given the A.M. Hartwig Award to an outstanding supporter of FFA in Hot Springs County.

There are currently nearly 30 members of the Thermopolis FFA chapter.



Members of the Thermopolis FFA chapter for 2013-14 are, front row from left, Sasha Bleak, Spencer Luce, Sadina Hart, Shay Luce, Chandra Maddock, Lisa Bennett, Teryn Jackman, Hannah Price, Stevie Ann Jellis, Clare Denney, Mayce Sprigg, Jerry Umbdenstock and Christine Bennett; back row, advisor Britton Van Heule, Kim Waller, Katelyn King, Harley Rhodes, Jake Hart, Birch Jones, Will Denney, Zack Larson and Choc Maddock. Not pictured: Cameron Igou, Jessie Pennoyer, Liz Rhodes, Keegan Waller and Dreama Thorpe.

Hospital

from page 1

Michel, Wright & Associates presented the board with its annual audit report.

Financial Committee Chairman Brian Green said the audit was a “very clean” audit with the goal of indicating potential weaknesses for the hospital to address.

Green said the audit is not intended to show what things the hospital has done well. Wright agreed and then verbally complimented Hospital Chief Financial Officer Shelly Larson on a new approach to documenting bad debt that has strengthened the overall process and improved efficiency from prior years.

The report specifically identifies deficiencies that occurred in the past year. The hospital also

provided responses to the deficiencies in the report. Some of the deficiencies are reoccurring due to the small size of the hospital organization.

The deficiencies include segregation of duties, following state statutes regarding unclaimed checks disbursements, authorization for deductions on paychecks, authorized signors on a flex spending account, mathematical errors in deposits and providing the board with listings of expenditures monthly.

The hospital’s response to the deficiencies establish what the hospital will update and follow its policies to ensure all of the deficiencies are addressed. The exception is the segregation of duties deficiency,

which cannot be addressed due to the small size of the hospital.

The report lists some of the financial highlights from the fiscal years ending in 2013 and 2012 — both ending the fiscal year date of June 30 — to include \$12.819 million in assets and \$8.327 million in liabilities for 2013 and \$12.158 million in assets with \$7.856 million in liabilities for 2012.

It increased net assets by 5.99 percent in 2013 and 5.77 percent in 2012.

The hospital reported a net operating income of \$31,470 in 2013 and a net operating loss of \$18,191 in 2012.

Operating expenses also increased .8 percent in 2013 and 2.1 percent in 2012.

Lodging Tax

from page 1

funds to help the local retail committee next year.

The idea is to take an amount each week, have that amount matched by the retail committee and then that amount matched by Pinnacle Bank — creating a fund that would add up to \$1,000 each week before Christmas.

The money would be given away each Saturday evening in the form of Chamber Bucks — necessitating the money be spent locally, helping out the retail businesses.

By holding the drawing later in the evening, say at 7 p.m., it would encourage out-of-town visitors to spend the night and do their shopping

on Sunday.

Since the Chamber Bucks are good for a year — even if an out-of-town winner didn’t spend the night on Saturday night — it would mean they would return to Thermopolis for another visit at some point during the year, helping the economy, no matter what.

Lodging Tax Board Treasurer Carl Leyba plans to talk with Pinnacle Bank regarding the promotion this week to see if it would like to participate. Pinnacle Bank already does a Christmas Cash promotion, but a larger payout could initiate more local spending.

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