

Bob Poch receives  
Kiwanis Life  
Member award **5**

Basketball teams,  
wrestlers wrap up  
pre-holiday action **6**

Hot Springs County  
Centennial: More  
pioneer profiles **7**

Rocky Mountain Elk  
Foundation  
grants to county **12**

Thermopolis  
Hot Springs

# Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 114, No. 52, December 26, 2013

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## RWE carolers at Pioneer Home



Ralph Witters Elementary kindergarten through fourth-grade students started their school morning last Friday singing Christmas carols for folks across town. Above, Michelle Burgess, Ashlynn Harvey and other fourth graders sing for Wyoming Pioneer Home residents. Bronwyn Dobbins is in the purple coat. — Joe Sovo photo

## Van Antwerp elected new chairman of school board

by Cindy Glasson

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 will start 2014 with new officers after their December meeting last week.

After almost 10 years as school board chairman, Liz Mahoney stepped down from the office during elections Thursday – taking the vice chairman position instead in order to help newly elected chairman, Clay Van Antwerp, ease into the office.

Van Antwerp is in his sixth year as a school board trustee. He became vice chairman about six months ago when trustee Joe Martinez stepped down. Immediately before that time, Van Antwerp served as board clerk for two years.

“I’ll do the best I can and I really appreciate what Liz has done,” Van Antwerp said Monday. “The strength of the board is when seven people come together and make a decision.”

Other elected officers include treasurer, Hub Whitt, and secretary, Tom Sullivan, Jr.

The board heard a report from the teachers who traveled to Alaska in November to observe Highland Tech High School in Anchorage.

Highland uses a different teaching method, one that has won national accolades, and the HSCHS teachers wanted to see just what they were doing that was so different and so successful.

For three days, the teachers were in and out of classrooms, speaking with teachers and students as well as administrators – discovering that the school allows students to work at their own pace, taking ownership and responsibility for their work.

The lessons being taught in the various classrooms filter over into other subjects, creating a more efficient learning environment. For example, lessons learned in English class are also used in science class, focusing students on a more rounded learning paradigm.

The family and the community are both very active within the school and personal mastery of subjects is the key.

The high school teachers who went to Anchorage are excited to start integrating the things they learned into their own classrooms as well as collaborate with other teachers in the district to spread the knowledge.



Clay Van Antwerp

### Teacherage building demolition bids

Bids were opened for the demolition of the teacherage building behind the bus barn on Springview Street.

Six bids were received, ranging from \$30,900 to \$96,000.

Wyoming Demolition from Sheridan filed the winning bid. The demolition will not be fully funded until later in January through

School Facilities Commission funds, so work will not start on the project until sometime mid-month.

The board also heard the audit presentation on its finances by Koerwitz, Michel, Wright and Associates.

Michael Wright told the board there were no major discrepancies in the financials, but shared a few observations with the group – items that appear in most audits done in Hot Springs County.

Those items generally revolve around small staffing by businesses, creating some crossover between jobs that would not be seen with more employees.

The next meeting of the school board will be held Thursday, Jan. 16 at 7 p.m.

## Mead explains how natural resources affect biennial budget

by Joe Sovo

Wyoming is largely dependent on the health of the coal, oil and natural gas industries for its biennial budget each two years, and those factors are even more important during an economic downturn that appears to be making some progress.

Gov. Matt Mead sat down during his Dec. 17 visit to Thermopolis to talk about the status of Wyoming’s natural resources, abandoned mine land (AML) funds, state landfill fund and charity care given by the state’s hospitals. Questions were posed by Independent Record editorial staff.

Mead spoke briefly about his new “flat” biennial budget, which addresses the needs of Wyoming and its residents. “The closer you get to the people in terms of the decision process the better government you have. That’s why I think the money to local levels works and it works very well,” he said. “But it’s still a good time to be fiscally conservative.”

“Natural gas drives a lot of our revenue,” Mead said. “Oil has been good. The base for us, year in and year out,

has been the coal industry. We see huge pressure from this (Obama) administration on coal.”

A prime example, according to the governor, is the “regional haze rule,” and the federal government says every state must have one. “It’s what you can physically see in the air. It’s not a health issue.”

Wyoming worked on implementation of the plan before he became governor in 2011.

“The EPA rejected that plan. The EPA’s plan is going to cost a billion seven (\$1.7 billion) more for the power plants in Wyoming initially and about \$170 million thereafter for a period of about 10 years,” Mead explained. “The difference in what you can see between our plan and EPA’s you wouldn’t notice with your eyes. What that does is really put an impact on citizens who are struggling to make ends meet, citizens on a fixed income.”

The governor indicated power companies are going to pass on added energy costs.

“It’s not just your heating bill, it’s the

cost of all goods and services. Energy is required for all of that,” Mead said. “They’re not looking at forest health because in the west, the number one contributor to regional haze is forest fires. You have to do a better job of managing your forests.”

Mead visited Taiwan and South Korea earlier this year.

“They know Wyoming coal and they want our coal, today. I’ve been to British Columbia about expansion of deep-water ports there,” he said, and such ports in Oregon and Washington are possible. “We’ve got to have that export. That will help coal somewhat.”

According to Mead, Wyoming produces more than 400 million tons of coal a year.

“We have to look at 70 to 80 million tons to sustain a coal industry. I am very concerned about coal. The administration seems to ignore the fact that coal produces more electricity than any other fuel source in the country,” Mead said.

### AML money, landfill fund

AML funds amounts to money that

companies in Wyoming have paid into the federal government.

“As of now, we will be getting AML funds back,” Mead said and that money has been worked into his new budget. “But it’s hard to look into the future and say this is going to continue to come.”

AML funds serve a valid purpose, the governor said, as some mines still need to be reclaimed.

“That AML money we can use for energy development projects, for reclamation efforts,” he said.

Mead was asked if the money used from the state landfill fund to pay for the 2012 wildfire season would be restored.

“I’ve asked for another \$15 million to build up the landfill account,” he said of his new proposed budget, and wants to start sending the money being put into the account the last couple of years back to communities that need financial help with their landfills.

“I hear the estimates are from \$300 to \$400 million for state liability. I’ve seen local communities build landfills in accordance with what everyone says this is the right way to do it. In some areas

we didn’t have them lined because we didn’t believe we’d have leaching issues,” he said. “You can’t say to a community, ‘fix this,’ because you would take every dime of local government’s account to do that. We’re now in a position to say we need to start spending that money (in the landfill account). We’ve got a plan on how to spend it.”

Mead said that in the summer of 2012, the state spent about \$45 million fighting wildfires in Wyoming.

“Through the veto pen, I gave the state \$60 million for last summer’s fire season. We recognized we had a drought, a terrible fire season,” the governor said. “Let’s be transparent and reflect the possible need that is out there.”

Last summer, the state spent only \$1.9 million on wildfires.

“We want to refill those cans. We’re talking about life and property,” Mead said. “We have to be very aggressive in fighting those fires. We see lightning strikes all over the state and you have to be very aggressive in that initial attack (of the wildfires). You have to have money to do that or you’re going to be

## Looking back upon top local stories of 2013

Here in Hot Springs County, there were many local stories that made headlines in the Independent Record during 2013. As the year draws to a close, we are recapping the top stories of the year.

Stories from January through April are highlighted in this issue, followed by May through December in subsequent issues.

A couple of the top stories in January involved somewhat of a controversy in the appointment of a new county treasurer to replace retiring Mickeyjean Ford and Amanda Moeller taking the position of Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Executive Director.

In February, top stories were about a wrongful termination suit filed against Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital and Ryan Bradshaw winning a state wrestling championship. Also, Donnie Bjorhus made the transition from Hot Springs County Recreation District director to Legion Town and Country Club manager and David Evans became the new recreation director.

March stories included a change of managers at the airport as Tim Lippincott and Jerry Fields took over. The Thermopolis Elks Lodge was reinstated,

the high school speech and debate team won a state title and the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center celebrated its 40th anniversary.

In April, former Gov. Dave Freudenthal was involved in a bottling operation at Wyoming Whiskey in Kirby and New Era Petroleum, a company specializing in extraction and production of stranded oil, made a presentation to the Hot Springs County Commissioners. A U.S. District Court lawsuit pertaining to the Aug. 10, 2010, killing of a horse by a former employee of the Hot Springs County Sheriff’s Office has resulted in a settlement.

Here are those top stories from January-April of 2013:

### JANUARY

January 10 - At 3:20 p.m.

Friday, dispatchers received a report of a 48-year-old woman tied up in the bathroom of the VFW Post 2281.

The woman, who was unharmed, is an employee of the club who had gone

to work before the club opened. Another employee found the woman in the bathroom and contacted law enforcement, said Police Chief Mike Chimenti.

Officers collected enough evidence to suspect a burglary occurred at the

club. A list, or value, of items taken is not available at this time. Several items from the club have been sent to the state crime lab for analysis, Chimenti said.

January 17 - Hot Springs County



The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce commenced its monthly Cash Mobs in the early months of 2013. The Cash Mobs have resumed in the fall and are set to continue in 2014.

has a new treasurer in place after a final vote by the Hot Springs County Commissioners at their meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Isabelle Willson was chosen to replace Mickeyjean Ford after Ford’s retirement from the county, effective Dec. 31. Willson will fill the elected position until the next election in 2014.

There has been something of a controversy over Ford’s replacement. Most residents of the county figured the job would automatically go to Ford’s second-in-command at the treasurer’s office, Julie Mortimore, who has worked in that office for 30 years.

However, by statute, as Ford was a registered Republican, it was up to the Hot Springs County Republican Central Committee to seek out qualified candidates, narrow the prospective applicant pool and present three names for consideration to the county commissioners.

January 24 - The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce Board of Trustees has announced its choice for executive director.

The board chose Amanda Moeller

See Year in Review on page 8

# Year in Review

from page 1

to fill the vacant post that became open after Michelle Lue resigned in October.

Board President Meri Ann Rush said Moeller grew up in Thermopolis and she is excited to relocate back to her hometown from Casper.

Rush said Moeller has several good ideas and brings with her experience in nonprofit grant writing and raising revenue for nonprofit entities.

Moeller graduated from Hot Springs County High School in 1995 and attended Laramie County Community College and Casper College. She is currently working toward her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wyoming.

## FEBRUARY

**February 7** - A wrongful termination lawsuit filed in October 2011 against Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital has been dismissed with prejudice in U.S. District Court.

In a judgment filed Dec. 12, U.S. District Court Judge Scott W. Skavdahl dismissed the case filed by Lisa A. Blakesley with prejudice, which means the lawsuit cannot be refiled.

Blakesley filed the case Oct. 21, 2011, claiming the hospital violated the Americans with Disabilities Act when it terminated her part-time employ-

Ronnie Mitchell and his son, Curtis Mitchell, ran the business in Gillette and have now come to Thermopolis.

Ronnie serves as area manager for the Big Horn Basin. The primary clients of the business are people in the oil field, but the company also worked in the coal bed methane industry and wells in northeast Wyoming.

**February 21** - When Donnie Bjorhus moved his family to Thermopolis from Albin nearly eight years ago, he knew there would be challenges running the Hot Springs County Recreation District as its director.

Bjorhus has made the transition from the local recreation director to Legion Town and Country Club manager. Last week, Bjorhus worked with new recreation director David Evans, showing him the ropes and introducing him to community members. Evans comes to Thermopolis from Sparta, N.C., where he was recreation director of the Allegheny County Recreation Department in Sparta, N.C., for about 5-1/2 years. His mother, Linda Williams, lives and works in Thermopolis.

**February 28** - Thermopolis took eight wrestlers to the state tournament at the Casper

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.

**March 14** - After a 13-year hiatus, Thermopolis Elks Lodge #1746 is being reinstated as a lodge this week.

The charitable social organization surrendered its charter in 2000 after a drastic drop in membership and monetary struggles pertaining to the maintenance of its building, which once housed the Old West Wax Museum.

Richard Oberosler, past statewide president of the Elks, said a core group formed in the past year to get the ball rolling on the reinstatement. Another reason for the reinstatement is for the lodge to retain its funds for a new building and scholarships, which would have been lost if the lodge was not reinstated.

**March 21** - The Hot Springs County High School speech and debate team topped off a winning season by bringing home the Class 1A/2A championship trophy from Rock Springs Saturday night.

Three full days of competition challenged the speechsters, who stepped up and walked away with nearly all the top rankings in their division.

During tournaments, the teams are not split into class divisions like 1A/2A, 3A or 4A. All of the speakers are pitted against each other, so in any particular round a competitor may be up against a 3A or 4A speaker.

That makes the win by junior Tori Anderson special.

Anderson came home with third place overall in humor for the state tournament as well as first-place honors in humor in 1A/2A.

"It's official," Anderson said. "A panel of judges has voted me third funniest person in Wyoming."

And she's not alone. Senior Spencer Hu garnered first place in Lincoln-Douglas debate for 1A/2A, a terrific way to end his high school career.

Charlie Patterson, another senior on the team, took home second place in extemporaneous speaking as well as first place in public forum debate with his partner, junior Kaden Wood. He also took first place in extemp.

Sophomore Dani Yarrington had her first taste of victory for the season, winning first place in 1A/2A for dramatic interpretation.

**March 28** - This year marks the 40th anniversary of the existence of the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center and everyone is invited to attend a commemorative lunch Monday at the facility in Thermopolis.

Janet Dickeson, the Senior Citizens Center director, has been with the facility for nearly 20 years. Roxie Braley, the as-



Former Gov. Dave Freudenthal and U.S. District Court Judge Nancy Freudenthal sign Wyoming Whiskey bottles during a special bottling in April. — J.D. Stetson file photo

sistant director and bookkeeper, is in her fourth year. Braley said the Hot Springs County commissioners and town council members have been invited to the lunch, along with Rep. Nathan Winters and Sen. Gerald Geis.

The Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center was established in 1973. It had a couple of different homes the first few years of existence, according to local historians. The first was reportedly the building housing the American Legion and Auxiliary, at 339 Arapahoe St. In the 1980s, 339 Horn Federal Savings & Loan was located there. The county annex is now located on that property.

## APRIL

**April 4** - It was a family affair Friday morning as former Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal, his wife U.S. District Court Judge Nancy Freudenthal and their family worked side by side with employees of Wyoming Whiskey to bottle a

barrel for charity.

Wyoming Whiskey owner and CEO Dave DeFazio joined Master Distiller Steve Nally and Donna Nally in assisting the Freudenthals and family in the process of bottling the spirits.

While Freudenthal was governor in September 2009, he signed the 11th barrel of whiskey. The same barrel—donated by Wyoming Whiskey—was prepared for the governor Friday for bottling and the two were reunited.

"Wyoming Whiskey is clearly identifiable and it arrived at the right time nationally," Freudenthal said.

**April 11** - The Hot Springs County Commissioners were given a presentation at their April 2 meeting from New Era Petroleum, a company specializing in extraction and production of stranded oil.

Paul Carlson, senior vice president of operations for the company, updated the commis-

sioners on a field the company is working east of Thermopolis—the Warm Springs Field.

According to Carlson, the company uses a combination of technologies from the petroleum industry and the underground mining industry to extract pools of oil hidden far underground while eliminating the need for dozens of pump jacks on the surface.

This type of extraction has a smaller "footprint" with minimal surface disturbance, leaving the surrounding area clear so as not to disturb the natural habitat of wildlife in the area.

**April 18** - A U.S. District Court lawsuit pertaining to the Aug. 10, 2010, killing of a horse by a former employee of the Hot Springs County Sheriff's Office has resulted in a settlement from the former undersheriff involved in the shooting.

The lawsuit, filed by Chris and Larry Bentley as plaintiffs, names Hot Springs County Sheriff Lou Falgoust in his official capacity and former Undersheriff Dave Larson in his individual capacity as defendants. When the suit was originally filed in September, it only named Larson in his individual capacity as a defendant.

In a judgment filed April 10, 2013, U.S. District Court Judge Scott W. Skavdahl noted the formal offer of Larson to settle his part of the lawsuit for \$2,700 plus the plaintiff's attorney fees and recoverable court costs.

**April 25** - More than two dozen Hot Springs County High School students returned recently from a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Spain as part of their Spanish language studies.

After spending two years doing fundraising to make the trip, the group of 26 students and four chaperones departed from Denver International Airport on March 28, arriving in Madrid, Spain, 24 hours later.



Wyoming Elks State President Fran Case, right, presents a Bible to Richard Oberosler to be used by Thermopolis Elks Lodge #1746 during its meetings. — Joe Sovo file photo

ment while she was recovering from an illness. The initial complaint in the suit sought \$1.5 million in punitive damages for violating the Americans with Disabilities Act, \$500,000 in punitive damages for retaliation against Blakesley, \$280,000 for loss of wages and benefits, and \$250,000 for pain and suffering.

In Skavdahl's order granting the hospital's motion to dismiss based upon insufficient service of process, the judge indicated Blakesley did not respond to the hospital's motion to dismiss in a timely fashion. The court deemed the lack of response coupled with the lack of effort to seek an extension of time a confession to the hospital's motion.

**February 14** - A new business to Thermopolis looks to make a splash in the central Wyoming oil fields selling, installing, testing and servicing submersible pumps.

DynaFlo specializes in submersible pumps with branches in Gillette, Oklahoma and California, and will soon expand to Kansas.

Events Center and came home in seventh place in the 21-team 2A with 80.5 points. Hoping for three state champions, the Bobcats ended the tournament with three reaching the finals, but only one became a state champ.

Sophomore Ryan Bradshaw simply overpowered the 120-pound class with his superior speed and wrestling ability. In his three marches to the championship, the closest match was the major decision he posted in the finals—defeating Saratoga's Thatcher Spiering in an 11-2 one-sided match.

## MARCH

**March 7** - 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.



Sheriff Lou Falgoust serves lunch to Don and Alice Schoenberger during the celebration of the facility's 40th anniversary on April 1. — Joe Sovo file photo

# Public notices

## Notice

The Hot Springs County Board of Commissioners is asking Hot Springs County Residents to apply to serve on the following Hot Springs County Boards and Committee:

- Fair Board, Five (5) year term One Member
- Predatory Animal Control Board, Three Three (3) year term One Sportsman Member\*
- Natural Resources Planning Committee, Three (3) year term Five Members
- County Health Officer, Four (4) year term One Position\*\*

All of the above positions begin January 2014

\* Sportsmen and hunter representatives for the Predatory Animal Control Board shall be bona fide residents of the district not engaged in raising sheep, goats or cattle and shall hold or have held either a valid Wyoming fishing or hunting license or a Wyoming wildlife damage management stamp within the preceding twelve (12) month period.

\*\* Shall have a degree of doctor of medicine, and shall assist the state department of health in carrying out the provisions of all health and sanitary laws and regulations of the state.

Residents of Hot Springs County interested in applying to serve on a Board or position should submit their County Board Questionnaire (available on the County website [www.hscounty.com](http://www.hscounty.com) or at the County Clerk's Office) to the Hot Springs County Clerk's Office no later than 5:00 p.m. January 3, 2014. Applications will be considered and appointments made at the Hot Springs County Commissioners Meeting January 7, 2014 at 11:45 a.m.

Hans Odde  
Hot Springs County Clerk

Pub. December 12, 19 and 26, 2013

No. 7108

## Notice

The Hot Springs County Board of Commissioners is asking Hot Springs County Residents to apply to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Armory Joint Powers Board.

Residents of Hot Springs County interested in applying to serve on this Board should submit a County Board Questionnaire (available on the County website [www.hscounty.com](http://www.hscounty.com) or at the County Clerk's Office) to the Hot Springs County Clerk's Office no later than 5:00 p.m. January 3, 2014. Applications will be considered and appointments made at the Hot Springs County Commissioners meeting and the Town of Thermopolis Council meeting January 7, 2014.

Hans Odde  
Hot Springs County Clerk

Pub. December 12, 19 and 26, 2013

No. 7106

## COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

The Thermopolis Town Council met in regular session December 17, 2013 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall. Present were Mayor Pro-tem Tony Larson Council members Mark Nelson and Dusty Lewis. Also, present were Assistant to the Mayor Fred Crosby, Clerk/Treasurer Tracey Van Heule, Public Works Director Ernie Slagle, Town Engineer Heath Overfield and Town Attorney Mike Messenger. Mayor Bill Malloy and Council member Mike Mortimore were absent.

**AGENDA:** Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Nelson made a motion, seconded by Lewis and carried to approve the agenda as written.  
**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:** Nelson made a motion, seconded by Lewis

and carried to approve the financial statement for November 2013.

**CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: MICHAEL WRIGHT: 2013 AUDIT RESULTS:** Wright presented a brief synopsis of the audit. The opinion letter notes the June 30, 2013 financial statement presents fairly the respective financial position of the major funds for the Town. Wright noted the Internal Control report lists the lack of segregation of duties as a significant deficiency. The report notes that it is impractical for the Town to employ sufficient staff to achieve complete segregation of duties over all transactions at all times. Wright emphasized the importance of oversight by the Mayor and Council. Lewis made a motion, seconded by Nelson and carried to accept the audit.

**TOWN ENGINEER: HEATH OVERFIELD: PROJECT UPDATES:** Discussion ensued on the 7th street water line replacement project. Topics included a Christmas work schedule, frost, effects of severe cold, breaks on the old pipe where it connects to the new pipe and planned compaction tests before paving.

**TOWN ATTORNEY: MIKE MESSENGER:** Nothing at this time.  
**ADMINISTRATION: FRED CROSBY: OTHER:** Discussion ensued on a fire that occurred at the bulk water filling station. Slagle noted the propane tank vented, caught the propane on fire, then blew up the 100 pound tank (no one was injured). The fiberglass hut, meter and backflow preventer were lost in the fire. Current plans include reconfiguring the station (propane tank outside the hut) and replacing the meter and valves. Until the repairs are complete, the large tanker trucks will use the smaller water delivery system that requires quaters.

**MAYOR AND COUNCIL: OTHER:** The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. The next Council meeting is January 7, 2014 at 7 p.m.

## ATTEST:

Tracey Van Heule, Clerk/Treasurer Tony Larson, Mayor Pro-tem

Pub. December 26, 2013

No. 7116