



Chamber approves rate hike

by Cindy Glasson

The Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce approved the first raise to their membership rates since 2011 at their meeting last Thursday evening.

The base membership rate for non-profit organizations and non-profit clubs without staff increased by \$10 while businesses went up \$20.

The chamber has not kept up with inflation over the past few years, which has been about three percent. Rather than trying to catch up now, they determined raising it by just one percent would be less of a shock.

The plan is to continue to revisit the membership costs each year to adjust up or down as needed. The board agreed they do not want to make it expensive to the point where they lose membership, but they still need to be able to maintain their operating expenses, too.

In committee, the board members have been reviewing some of the events the chamber sponsors to see if they still fit in with the goals and values of the chamber.

So far, everything they have on their schedule for the coming year fits the bill, but they do plan to review in the fall to see

if perhaps there are other events they could be looking at that would fit in as well.

The board approved a new annual contract with the Travel and Tourism Board at the meeting.

Board member Gayla Mead has gone over the contract, and while the premise remains the same, she brought the language down to a clearer, more simple level to alleviate any misunderstandings that might arise between the two entities.

Travel and Tourism director, Amanda Moeller, will take the contract to her board for approval at their next meeting.

Travel and Tourism approves 2015-16 event funding

by Lara Love

The Travel and Tourism Board approved funding for a number of events in their 2015-16 budget during their meeting Tuesday.

Three events new to the funding list were Smokin' Waters Golf Tournament, Main Street Oktoberfest and 12 Days of Christmas.

Other events receiving funds include Hot Spot Car Rally, Gift of the Waters Pageant, Kiwanis Craft Fair, Thermopolis Cowboy Rendezvous PRCA Rodeo, Arts in the Park, Big Horn Basin Football Camp, Thermopolis Demolition Derby, 3-on-3, People of the Earth Days, Thermopolis Fire Department (Fourth of July fireworks) and Second Friday ArtStroll.

Tom Butler and Joe Moon, representing Smokin' Waters Art Guild, presented a proposal to update the three small (4'x8'), brown billboards west of Thermopolis along Highway 120.

Board members approved a cost of \$400 per billboard for an updated look. The work will be completed by the end of September.

Tony Nettles, owner of the new business going in where the old A&W was, will be working with the board to install a digital billboard on the property to help with signage for visitors coming into Thermopolis from the south.

According to Travel and Tourism director Amanda Moeller, the goal is to get some of the people to keep coming into town that are now taking the Canyon Hills Road cutoff.

The board discussed revamping the special event funding process. The board currently gives funds to a variety of events for their own individual advertising.

A plan is being considered to do more of the advertising for these events through Travel and Tourism in order to qualify for special package deals.

No action was taken but the idea will be revisited at a later meeting.

The board will be sponsoring the Keys To The Campaign again. They agreed there is a need for more winter promotions and Moeller will be looking for ideas.

Moeller will be doing marketing research on where guests are coming from and trying to determine what events are bringing hotel/motel guests to Thermopolis.

Board members approved a contract with the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce & Visitor Center for year round weekend staff for the Visitor Center.

The Travel and Tourism Board will compensate the Chamber of Commerce up to \$6,300 annually for weekend staff.

The Chamber of Commerce will be responsible for hiring, training and supervising the weekend employees.



Taking his shot

Carson Christensen throws popcorn toward a bowl in one of the games during the Hot Springs County Summer Reading program as Austin Corbin waits for his turn. -Zachary White photo

Town approves budget

by Holly Thomas

Town Council approved the 2015-2016 budget at Wednesday evening's meeting with the addition of a \$25,000 amendment for maintenance and upkeep for Town Hall. The primary concern for Town Hall maintenance was carpeting in the building that is original from the building's construction in the late 1980's.

Mayor Mike Mortimore opened the floor to discussion regarding the amendment, but with no comments from the public the motion passed and the budget with the new amendment passed.

The final budget approved was for 11 million

The 2015-2016 Town of Thermopolis budget will be available to view online later this week on the Independent Record website at www.thermopolis.com.

Multiple liquor permits for upcoming summer activities were approved including Mac's Bar during the July 10-11 Ranch Rodeo, Shorty's during the June 25-27 PRCA Rodeo, Armory Fly-In on the Fourth of July, Brown Wedding on Sept. 5 at the fairgrounds, and Thermopolis Liquors parking lot dance on June 20.

One Eyed Buffalo owner Damien Oliver requested a permit to renovate a portion of the covered parking area

in the rear of the building into an enclosed beer garden.

Oliver assured the council this would not obstruct passageway through the alley. He said there would still be plenty of parking for tenants in the building's upstairs apartment. The permit was approved.

Also discussed during the council meeting was the progress of hiring the joint town and county appointment for the Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center.

The position was advertised and one individual, Peter Coggi, applied. The motion to appoint Coggi for the position was approved.

Mayor's assistant Fred Crosby received word from the state regarding SLIB funding for the Richard's Street Project.

The application was denied and it was speculated that recent emergency funding for the city sewer project may have been a reason for denial; however the application will be reapplied.

Council updated town maintenance director Ernie Slagle that they were working on new specs for the vac truck and would go through a new bid process for a less expensive truck. Funds for the vac truck will still be available in the new budget.

Arts in the Park performance tonight in HSSP

by Zachary White

Out of Nashville, Tennessee, Rebecca Frazier and Hit & Run will be performing June 18 at the Pavilion in Hot Springs State Park starting at 7 p.m.

Playing bluegrass tunes, the Colorado-based group is the first part of the Arts in the Park performances being put on this summer.

Rebecca Frazier and Hit & Run, including band members Isaac Eicher, Mike Sumner, Erik Alvar and Christain Ward, performed once before in Thermopolis in 2006.

Coordinator Bruce Webster said he looks forward to having them back. "They really did a nice job," he said. People are invited to bring lawn chairs and blankets to the performance. Webster said there should be vendors on site, and possibly a merchant stand.

Later in the summer the park will be host to a blues group.

On Aug. 13 the band Blind Dog Smoking will take the Pavilion's stage playing along with their rhymed narratives.

Webster said he's excited for that performance as the group was nominated for a Grammy Award this year.

They are known for their "handspun yet motor-driven" music that earned Hit & Run their reputation as "one of the tightest groups performing," according to their website.



Three small billboards just west of Thermopolis will be getting an updated look this summer from members of the Smokin' Waters Art Guild. -Holly Thomas photo