



# Commissioners plan airport grand opening

by Chandler Smith

The Hot Springs County Board of Commissioners meeting Tuesday began laying the final groundwork for the new Hot Springs County Airport opening, planned for November 7.

The three-hour meeting was dedicated to reviewing final steps for the completion of the airport, and featured discussions about the third and final coat of seal and paint on the runway, which will occur on September 21-22, fuel tank procurement, updates on the SRE building, and the possibility of renting a fuel truck from a nearby county airport for the first 3-6 months of operation until the

airport can buy a truck of its own.

Among primary concerns for the commissioners Tuesday was the closing date for the old airport, which was tentatively set at December 1.

Commissioners were concerned about paying for the upkeep of two airports and the problems that would arise during winter, like plowing the airstrip. Commissioners also were concerned about the old airport's tenants being able to fly out of the runway during the move from airport to airport. Winter is coming, the board noted, and tenants could possibly be trapped by forthcoming storms.

The commissioners, while setting a tenta-

tive date for the opening of the new airport, decided not to pick a food for the grand opening, although it appears platters of sandwiches and other finger foods will be on the menu on November 7.

The commissioners approved licenses for two Hot Springs residents, Cynthia Ellison and Clyde Fisher, as well as opening a bid for the ADA bathroom remodeling, which came in at \$6,840. The commissioners decided to continue to search for a suitable bid on the project.

One of the final acts of the meeting was the declaration of September 17-23, 2015 as Constitution Week in Hot Springs County.

## Council covers a lot of ground Tuesday

by Durward D. Jones

With skillful execution of parliamentary procedure, the Thermopolis Town Council meeting was started. The agenda was approved with one change.

A catering permit for Shorty's Saloon for Octobrewfest to serve alcohol on the main street was granted.

Alex McLean requested an application to close the street at the stoplight for the Homecoming Parade. The town needed to sign off on the parade to be able to turn around at the stoplight. Mayor Mike Mortimore signed the application so it can be passed on to WYDOT.

Movement to approve U.S. Constitution week was the final bit of citizen participation.

Anthony Barnett from Engineering Associates stating that several chip seal projects have been started.

Bids for the town water system improvement have come in. Many of the bids were over the advertised bid estimate, but still fell within the budget. The town was holding a \$50,000 retainage for Wilson Brothers out of Cowley until they return to fix a broken sewer line.

Assistant to the Mayor Fred Crosby brought up that the town is under the process to install a RF transmitter on all resident water meters. This will make it so no one has to enter a resident's property unless there is a need for a service call. The town estimated that they are half way done installing them.

Crosby also said there is an excess surplus of equipment at the town shop. He would like to advertise for bids to get rid of the junk. There was discussion about using one of the old police cruisers as a speed deterrent. Also there was a question on what to do with all the extra light bars and squad car cages. A motion was made to advertise for bids to get rid of excess equipment. It was passed.

London Jenks, a Hot Springs County High School teacher, requested to do a deer survey as a study for a class. The Wyoming Game and Fish warned that if the deer was baited the town will lose its hunting permit to thin the deer. A motion was passed that Jenks cannot bait the deer.

Barton Stam from the U.W. Extension Service looked at two pine trees downtown, one to the west and one to the east of the flag pole. The trees are dying and need to be removed. It is a rough environment for spruce trees. They need to be replaced with something harder.

The final bit of business was the water rate increase. Councilmen Tony Larson was concerned that this is still not going to solve future needs. Larson stated, "We have done just enough to get us by." He voiced that the town was coming in to low and that we will just have to keep increasing every year, why not build a surplus by charging a bit more.

Mayor Mortimore brought up that this is just the beginning of the process; we need to focus on raw water in the next couple of years. The mayor stated, "All residents and users are sharing the burden across the board."

The council reiterated that is the start, it is a change. The plan will be presented at the next Town Council meeting October 6.



photo by Lara Love

## Parachute play time

Students and family members enjoyed games and ice cream at the Head Start social Sept. 10. Left to right, Briar, Vinnie, Abigail and James take their turn playing with a parachute.

## Final Hot Springs State Park Master Plan public meeting sparks passionate debate

by Chandler Smith

The third and final public meeting regarding the upcoming Hot Springs State Park Master Plan Draft sparked passionate debate between Thermopolis residents on Monday night.

The meeting, held at the Thermopolis Fire Hall, was attended by tens of Hot Springs County residents and was the last public forum in which invested members of the community could gather to voice their opinion regarding the formation of the first Hot Springs Master Plan in nearly three decades.

This Master Plan, when eventually presented to the State Parks Commission on November 2, will dictate a "grand vision" for 20 years for Hot Springs State Park, including the preservation of cultural and historic resources, developing new recreational opportunities for families and active adults, improving individual facilities and streamlining park operations.

Possibly the most important aspect of the forthcoming Master Plan is the protection of what one Hot Springs State Park (HSSP) calls the "lifeblood of the park and region": the hot mineral waters.

The meeting began with Tina Bishop of Mundus Bishop landscape architectural firm from Denver, Colo., giving an overview of the results of the last two public meetings. Among the provisions listed above, the draft calls for the reestablishment of the cultural and natural legacy of the HSSP by restoring the park core, natural river corridor, and key social and historical features; building upon the aesthetics of the HSSP's historical and iconic features; following a sustainable approach to the improvement and management of park space and facilities; and creating opportunities for research throughout the park, whether archeological, historical, or natural.

The most important details of the draft after the steering committee and public input include both preservation of mineral water in the area and the development of the west bank of the Bighorn River.

Bishop noted that studies of the mineral water aquifer that feed the state bathhouse and other concessionaire attractions in the park must be completed

to determine future water usage as well as the substitution of potable water for future water-related attractions such as a possible 'lazy river' or additional 'play areas'.

The development of the banks of the Bighorn River, which Bishop called the "central spine" of the HSSP, was also a high priority for the steering committee, the general public and Bishop Mundus. Additional recreational space along the north east side of the Bighorn, including a riverwalk and river overlooks, will be complemented by development of "natural, open space" on the west side of the river, which could possibly feature a visitor orientation center and expanded walking and hiking trails.

After Bishop's presentation wrapped up, the open house portion of the meeting allowed community members to voice their concerns about the project in the form of written notes as well as addressing their concerns directly with figures involved in the formation of the plan itself.

Almost as soon as the open house portion of the meeting began, Bishop was approached by local business owner Paul Galovich with a concern that formed the basis of both positive and negative feedback about the plan thus far: money.

Galovich was concerned that cost analysis of the project and a budgetary plan of proposed changes have not been carried out. "You don't come up with grandiose plans unless you know how much money you have to work with," he said.

Galovich added that his experience as a local business owner taught him that, "it is difficult to give an opinion without cost analysis." Galovich would have liked to see a structured plan with a budget before planning commenced, and was displeased that a budgetary plan and cost analysis would only be available later in the planning process.

Another local business owner who asked not to be named in this article was also worried about money. However, he was worried that without new development of HSSP, local business owners would not have enough of it to stay afloat.

"I've been here since 1956," he said. "All this town has is tourists. You have to put money in [to the park] to stay afloat." Noting the number of tourists that pass through Thermopolis on the way to or from Yellowstone National Park, he said the park needs new attraction to draw in the money necessary to get tourists to stop and spend money in town. "You got to have people from the tourists," he concluded.

Some members of the audience, however, were more moderate in their opinions. Still concerned with state money, one anonymous community member wrote, "Fix what has to be fixed, keep up all existing facilities, and then stop." Another anonymous community member added an "amen" below the comment in agreement.

"Wyoming is the best democracy in the world," said Dudley Gardner, State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails commissioner from Rock Springs after witnessing discussion during the open house. "They would never do anything that everyone was opposed to."

