



Town splash park still in the works

by Durward D. Jones
Thermopolis Town Council member Dusty Lewis took over the Tuesday meeting in place of a absent Mayor Mike Mortimore. He and his assistant Fred Crosby were away on business. The long awaited opening of the new Pizza Hut was announced during the meeting. Representatives from the restaurant were present as the council voted on their dispensing change. The change was just a formality for the new building. Town engineer Heath Overfield spoke to the council per request from the Mayor. Overfield gave brief history on the idea of the splash park in the down town area, starting

with the previous administration up to the current. Overfield had crunched the numbers in the past and the amount was several hundred thousand. With in the current administration Overfield was asked to whittle down the size and see if the numbers would get smaller. After several attempts to minimize the water feature Overfield announced a number of \$130,000 just for the fountain, this did not include doing any of the site work or extras. Overfield estimated that it would take \$10,000 to \$15,000 to operate the feature a year. On average after much reevaluation it was looking like the town would have to

come up with \$175,000 to \$200,000 to make the splash park happen. Councilman John Dorman asked about a feature that no one can play in, something decorative, Councilman Lewis brought up selling sections to local businesses to help finance the feature. In other news Anthony Barnett said that Wilson Brothers Construction had a method to fix a leaky sewer line that has been plaguing the town since last year. The line had a crack in it and when the river would rise the raw water would leak into the cracked line. The company has proposed a method of using a two-part epoxy; with a three year warranty from the time the repair is made.



photos by Durward D. Jones

Slow and steady

The crew from Specialty Towing slowly pulled the wrecked semi-truck up the embankment. It took two large recovery vehicles to pull it up safely. Traffic was stopped for several hours as the crew worked Friday and Saturday.

Wrecked truck retrieval causes traffic delays

by Durward D. Jones
On the night of Thursday, Jan. 14 John Cannon, 43, of Clearfield, Utah, had the scare of his life. Cannon was driving a semi-truck on U.S. 20/Wyoming 789. The semi began to slid on the slick roadway and Cannon found himself inside his semi, with the trailer and pup still attached, clinging to the bank of the river in Wind River Canyon. Cannon

was hauling bulk sugar, as he rounded a corner known as Big Windy inside the canyon. Cannon's trailing pup lost traction and slid into the guard rail. Momentum ended up pulling the rest of his rig over the side taking out several hundred feet of guard rail. Wyoming State trooper Brandon Kidgell responded to the wreck. Kidgell was in the Big Horn Mountains in the Deer Haven area when

he received the call. It took him over an hour to get to the scene. Trooper Kidgell said Cannon was uninjured and refused any medical treatment. On Friday crews from Specialty Towing arrived on scene to recover the wrecked rig. Owner Dennis Leonhardt hoped to have the canyon shut down during the recovery due to the lengthy time it would take. State officials recommended that they close

one lane of traffic if possible or only keep the traffic closed off an hour at a time. Once the recovery process began there was no turning back. Due to the large size of the recovery vehicles and the intense operation to recovery, traffic was stopped for several long delays. The recovery crew used ropes to repel down the cliff side and hook up to the rigs then attached chains to tow the

semi and its trailers up the bank. The recovery of just the semi truck took almost four hours to bring it up over the edge. Recovery crews continued working on Saturday to remove the wreck from the canyon. Cannon received a citation for driving too fast for conditions. Trooper Kidgell warned of dangerous roads this time of year, reminding drivers to slow down and be cautious.

Commissioners face county budget cuts

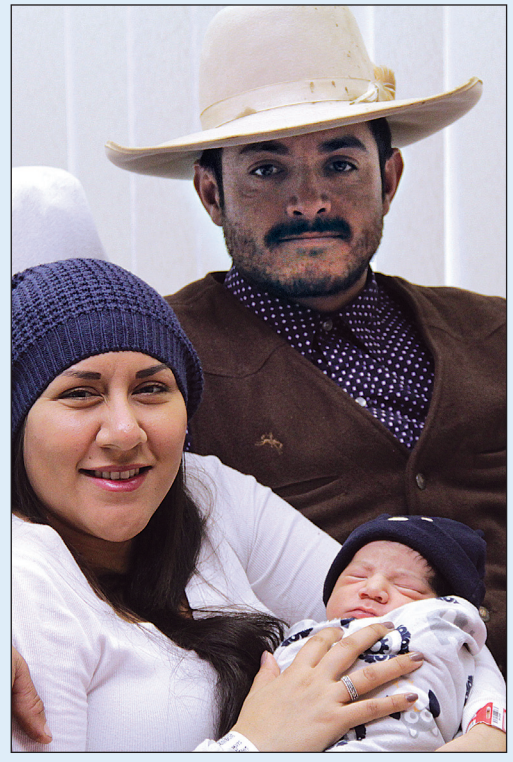
by Chandler Smith
With substantial county budget cuts on the horizon, the Hot Springs County Commissioners began the difficult job of discussing budget cuts during their afternoon meeting Tuesday. "I think we all agree there's concern about where we're going this next budget year," said commissioner John Lumley to open the discussion of budget cuts. The commissioners, alongside County Attorney Jerry Williams, then discussed the possibility of certain groups overspending their allotted budgets. "My concern was that... just because we pass a budget, what is our ability to hold a department to that budget?" said commissioner Tom Ryan. Williams noted this problem has occurred in the past and gave brief examples, but also said there was no black and white answer. "It's realistic that our assessed value will be down \$100 million," said Basse. "We have to find a way to cut 1.2 million," he added. "I'm not going to sugar coat it. There's going to be cuts. There will be a reduction in force." Williams noted a number of infrastructure costs, such as removing

phones from offices, have already been made. The attorney noted that this will both make cutting budgets easier and harder; easier because the county knows where to make small cuts, and harder because a number of those cuts have already been made. Basse suggested a sit-down with the county commissioners and all of the county's elected officials to discuss the upcoming year's budget. "You have to make budget cuts on informed decisions," he said. The county currently has to pay unemployed claims, a decision reached "years ago", which will make job cuts less effective in cutting costs. The commissioners plan to conclude their discussions after meeting with elected officials to discuss concerns. Brad Johnson presented the County's "performance review" for insurance, predicting a "very good year" for the county. Johnson noted the county currently has a 33 percent loss ratio, adding that this is a good sign and should not create a rate increase this June. The county is currently three years into a five-year contract with the Wyoming Health Fair. Board members voted to extend the contract for another year.

Peter Fox gave a brief presentation to the board over the digitalization of the records of the County Clerk's office via ArcaSearch, a company that specializes in records digitalization. Nina Weber noted that the process has reached through the 1970s, and records are being compiled on the Historical Records Research Site. Although the site is currently restricted, and access can only be granted through the County Clerk's office, the digitalization of the records from 1911 will certainly have a great impact on the work of not only the clerk, but of the commissioners as a whole. Fox gave the commissioners a brief tour of the current site in its present form, first going through commissioners' minutes from 1913. The files shown were archive-quality PDF files, which allow viewing but do not allow editing. Fox then noted that all scanned documents are searchable, and as an example took the phrase "Emory Hotel" from the 1913 minutes and found 40 other documents throughout the decades that mentioned the hotel. Weber estimated that the digitalization process was about 40 percent complete.

First baby of 2016

by Durward D. Jones
Lucas Manuel Cruz was born early in the evening of Friday, Jan. 15, 2016, taking the title of the first baby born in Hot Springs County for the new year. He is the first child of Gisselle and Hector Cruz of Thermopolis. The family received a gift basket from merchandise the Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Auxiliary collected from local businesses. Gisselle explained she and Hector wanted a name that can be pronounced in Spanish as well as English. Both parents of Mexican decent wanted Lucas's name to be able to bridge the two cultures. In the end, they chose to use Hector's middle name and his father's first name. Hector brought his family here from San Diego, Calif. to work as a cowboy. Gisselle said that there just was not that kind of work in California. Hector currently works at the Arapahoe Ranch.



Lucas Manuel Cruz with his proud parents Gisselle and Hector.