



Chamber announces nominees

by Lara Love
The Annual Chamber of Commerce Banquet for 2016 has been set for Saturday, March 19 at the Hot Springs County Fair Building.

Voting on the Business of the Year, Non-Profit Organization of the Year and Citizen of the Year has taken place and recipients will be announced at the banquet.

Business of the Year nominees include: A Cut Above, Bank of Thermopolis, Black Bear Café, Broadway Bygones, Finishing Touches, Martin's Appliance Repair & Sales, Merlin's Hide Out, New York Life,

One Eyed Buffalo Brewing Company, RT Communications, Thermopolis EyeCare, Thermopolis Petro & Tire and Wyoming Dinosaur Center.

Non-Profit Organization of the Year nominees are: Big Horn Basin Children's Center, Big Horn Basin Foundation, Big Horn Basin Riders, Gift of the Waters Pageant, Gottsche Rehab Center, H.O.P.E. Agency, Hot Springs State Park, HSC 4-H Council, HSC Commissioners, HS Greater Learning Foundation, HSC Senior Citizen Center, Relay for Life HSC, Thermopolis Kiwanis and Thermopolis Rotary.

Citizen of the Year nominees are: Barb Heinze, Bev Koerwitz, Brad Basse, Carl Leyba, Ellen Reed, Greg Willson, Martin Andreen, Jacky Wright, Jeannette Titmus, Phil Scheel and Stefanie Gilbert.

The theme for the banquet this year will be "Casino Royale." Doors will open at 5:30 p.m. with a social hour featuring casino like gaming.

An Italian buffet style dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. with an auction and awards presentations beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the chamber office.

Local company wins gravel bid

by Lara Love
The Hot Springs County Commissioners met Feb. 16 for their second monthly meeting in February.

Bids were opened for the contract to supply 25,000 tons of crushed gravel to the HSC Road and Bridge Department. Big Horn Redi-Mix, Inc. out of Thermopolis was awarded the contract with a low bid of \$122,250. The highest bidder was out of Buffalo at \$283,750. A total of seven bids were received from around the state and Idaho. The bids were checked by the engineer and Road and Bridge supervisor Dave Schlager. Contracts were signed on Feb. 24 between the commission and Big Horn Redi-Mix, Inc. for the work to begin March 1 and be completed by March 31.

National Association of County Officials (NACO) and Western Interstate Region (WIR) is holding their 2016 conference in Jackson. Commission chairman John Lumley plans to attend. This is the spring meeting for the County Commissioners Association. "There is going to be a lot of public land discussions at that meeting by those committees, which makes it really interesting. Here in the west WIR was formed because we have a number of things unique to us the rest of the country does not deal with," said Lumley. "If you go down from Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico everything east of those states per the U.S. Constitution, they were all given the land to manage by the states. Here, and all the states to the west coast, Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service do the management," he added.

The Hot Springs County Economic Development Company has paid back a \$42,000 loan to the county from 2008 they used to build the Red Rock Commercial Center south of Thermopolis. With the sale of the commercial center to the Wyoming Dinosaur Center, the loan has been paid in full and the money went into the county's general fund.

"That location will benefit WDC so well with the visibility," said Lumley.

When asked about the county budget outlook, Lumley said he has set a special meeting for elected officials to hear from the county assessor and treasurer regarding where the county is sitting financially. According to Lumley, the county valuation is currently at \$230 million. County Assessor Shelly Deromedi said the 2016 valuation, which is based on 2015 production values, is expected to be around \$142 million. That number is based on severance tax reports from the Department of Revenue with the first three quarters of 2015 reporting.

"The majority of our county valuation is from mineral revenue. Of the 2015 valuation of \$230 million, \$166 million was mineral revenue," said Deromedi.



photo by Duward D. Jones

Talented musicians

Encore Talent Show performers McCoy Longwell and Ruthanne Johnson (background) showed off their musical talents during the Saturday evening show. Winners included Ty Simeral, Fab Four Orchestra, Zoe Stone, Grace Whitt and Ruthanne Johnson.

Board changes school start times for 2016-17

by Cindy Glasson
The Hot Springs County School District No. 1 Board of Directors agreed to change the start times for school for the upcoming 2016-2017 school

year at their February meeting.

Monday through Thursday, Ralph Witters Elementary (RWE) and Thermopolis Middle School (TMS) will begin classes at 8:30 a.m. The high school will convene at 8:20 a.m.

Release time, Monday through Thursday for RWE will be at 3:50, TMS will let out at 3:45 and the high school will end their day at 4 p.m.

The schedule changes a bit on Fridays, with the same start times, however, RWE will dismiss at 12:35 with TMS and the high school dismissing at 12:30.

The time changes are to allow for vertical as well as horizontal collaboration between the three schools and the teachers.

The board tabled a vote on the staff laptop stipend, requesting further review.

Currently, some staff receive a stipend for cell phone use and the board wanted to en-

sure the laptop stipend is thoroughly reviewed, including frequency of the stipend as well as the dollar amount, before voting.

Three key contracts for the upcoming year were approved by the board after returning from a 90-minute executive session.

Scott Shoop will be retained as high school principal, Breez Daniels will continue as middle school principal and Jim Lash will remain in his position as special services director.

The school calendar for the 2017-2018 year was sent back to committee for further discussion.

The question revolves around making Martin Luther King, Jr. Day a vacation day while Veterans Day is not listed as a vacation day. The recommendation was originally made by the calendar committee, based on the request of the students.

The board discussed holding a ceremony similar to the Veterans Day ceremony for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day in order to make sure all cultures are honored. They questioned whether they are forcing students to observe the way the board wants them to rather than the way the students wish.

More information will be gathered regarding holding an extended assembly for student education and community involvement rather than dismissing classes for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

A new bus is on the horizon for the district as the board approved replacing a 2002 Blue Bird All American 77-passenger bus with a new, 2017 Blue Bird All American 44-passenger activity bus for the coming year.

Purchase price of the new bus will be \$181,480, which will be purchased through a five-year lease agreement.

