

Winters discusses budget decisions

by Mark Dykes

With last week's adjournment of the Wyoming Legislature, Representative Nathan Winters spoke Monday on decisions made concerning the state's budget.

"In a budget session," Winters said, "you're making, on average, 30 major decisions a day on various bills, some of which have millions of dollars attached."

In previous years, the budget has been combined into one large omnibus bill to include all sources of funding: the Abandoned Mine Lands (AML), the Capital Construction, the School Capital Construction funding and

General Operations.

This year, that omnibus was divided amongst four or five different bills. General Operations was separated out as one piece of Legislation, and other bills came through separately for Capital Construction, etc.

Though he agreed with much of the budget, with solid decisions to help the state of Wyoming, Winters expressed concern about General Operations, particularly an item for \$8 million for food for athletes at the University of Wyoming. "In an economic downturn," he said, "like the one we're facing right now \$8 million for food for athletes, I felt, was prob-

ably a misplacement of priorities."

Winters also chose not to vote for the Capital Construction bill, as he believes there were issues that could put the state in a difficult place, such as spending too much too quickly on the state capitol restoration. While he believes it has to continue, Winters said it does not have to at its current degree.

Another issue, he said, is the expansion of the Wyoming Life Resource Center in Lander while simultaneously pulling from the mission statement of the Retirement Center in Basin.

"I felt that it would be best if we slowed

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photo by Lara Love

Elephant March

Wearing panty hose is not just for bank robbers anymore. Zerrian Stone, left, and Kale Bloedel, pulled panty hose over their heads and gave the Elephant March game a try during the Irish Evening with Spencer Luce fundraiser Saturday night at the fair building. The event raised about \$2,000 for the family.

Republican Convention Saturday

The 2016 Hot Springs County Republican Convention will be held Saturday, March 12 at the county annex building beginning at 9 a.m.

Delegates for the Republican State and National conventions will be named and the county's Republican candidate for president will be selected.

Two delegates will be selected to attend the state convention and five alternates. Three others from Hot Springs County will attend including party chairman (Chuck Carver), state committeeman (Jim Collins) and state committeewoman (Toni Casciato).

According to Hot Springs County Republican Party chairman Chuck Carver, Wyoming has 29 delegates to the national convention; about half are elected on the county level at local conventions.

Counties throughout Wyoming are paired up. HSC is paired up with Washakie County. Counties alternate sending delegates on the presidential election years. This year we selected delegates while Washakie County selects alternates.

The remaining delegates will be elected during the Republican State Convention April 14-16 in Casper.

The Republican Caucus was held Feb. 27 at which time each precinct selected delegates to send to the county convention. Committees also go over policies and platforms during the caucus. Suggested changes will be voted on Saturday at the county convention.

If you have any questions, email them to hscgop@gmail.com. You can also send the party your email address to be added to their mailing list and receive regular updates on the HSC Republican Party.

Hospital CEO gives insight on master plan

by Mark Dykes

On March 1, 2012, current Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Chief Executive Officer Robin Roling began her career with the hospital. Upon her arrival, she explained, the hospital was wrapping up a master facility plan.

"We were fortunate in being able to make some changes in legislation that would allow us to put a district initiative on the ballot in November of 2013. The reason we wanted to start with a district initiative is, based upon findings from the master facility plan, as well as information gleaned and worked on for many years, the very first step to improving our financial base was to implement a hospital district," said Roling.

Once the district was in place it would allow them to leverage it with the State Lands and Investment Board for capital projects, including a new building.

The 2013 ballot initiative failed, and the hospital continued to have

challenges with physician and staff recruitment, infrastructure and the load-bearing capacity of the floor, among other things.

In August 2015, the hospital board made a motion to go before the county commissioners, to update the plan to include a smaller footprint in the same location. This was based around community feedback received during the 2013 district election.

The update was requested, along with funding to support it, with plans to come before the commissioners again for a ballot initiative in 2016 to support a district for ongoing operational support and a specific purpose tax to finance a new building project. The tax is solely for construction purposes, including materials related to the project.

The commissioners provided funding for the plan update, done through the Erdman group. Erdman looked at marketing data and identified there is a business case for maintaining a hospital in Thermopolis. Roling said they looked at square footage, incorporated changes they and hospital staff thought necessary, and looked at new vs. remodeled space.

A complete remodel-

el was not cost-effective, because it would have a large impact on revenues and costs were high. A second option involved building south across Arapahoe St. At a community meeting, residents expressed concern about building across a thoroughfare street, as well as the fact that north of Arapahoe is owned by the state while the southern half is owned by East Thermopolis.

Erdman then looked at building on the current site, but lengthy hallways and issues of relocating various areas were a detriment. Erdman came back with a plan for a two-story facility, but costs were higher than leaving it at one.

"I was pleased to see that," Roling said, "because I think, in terms of staff

efficiency, it's much easier to have it on one floor."

Going over the final concepts, they looked at what is needed for new space, vs. remodel. The idea is to create 10 rooms for medical surgical patients and two OB rooms, new operating rooms, central sterilization, an endoscopy room, areas for wound care, IV therapy and chemotherapy, and a new emergency department with larger trauma bays. Next, the current emergency department would be demolished, with imaging and laboratory services built in its place, within a self-contained unit. A late phase might include taking down part of the existing part of the building to provide more direct access to the hospital.

Space would also be remodeled for pharmacy, cardio-pulmonary or respiratory therapy care, and to accommodate outpatient clinics.

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