

Voters will have the final say

by April S. Kelley
Hot Springs County Commissioners approved the Specific Purpose Tax Imposition Ballot Initiative and the Formation of a Hospital District and Board of Directors Ballot Initiative on Tuesday after a public hearing was held regarding both issues.

Residents on both sides of the issue were allowed to speak for two minutes on the issue before the County Commissioners made their decision.

Joseph Casciato shared his reasons for not wanting the Specific Purpose Tax Imposition on the Nov. 8 ballot.

“I think it’s premature to be on the ballot because the scope that we have seen, in my opinion, is setting our county up for a competitive model instead of a collaborative model,” he said. “We’re going to double the square footage over here and I think the scope is way too large for what Hot Springs County needs. You want to get a tax on a hospital that we’re going to expand to double the size of what it is now. I think that’s not warranted at this time because we haven’t managed what we have now. I’m asking us to think with some common sense.”

Fourteen-year resident of Thermopolis

Stephanie Richert said this decision should be up to the people of Hot Springs County.

“The thing I’ve liked most about living in Thermopolis is that we take care of ourselves,” she said. “If you don’t at least put the initiatives on the ballot, you’re taking away our ability to take care of ourselves and to make that decision for ourselves.”

Chairman of the Citizens for Common Sense Healthcare PAC Harry Hughes said that now is not the right time for the special tax to be put on the ballot.

“We can certainly support a tax in the future

See Voters on page A6

THERMOPOLIS INDEPENDENT RECORD

YEAR 117, WEEK 25, Sections: 2, June 23, 2016

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

75¢



photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

Airborne

There was a variety of grinding, ollies and half-pipe tricks Friday at the Thermopolis skate park during the Skateboard, Scooter and BMX show. Participants wowed viewers with some incredible tricks and all around fun. Zach Hurley shows off some of his skateboarding skills.

Council approves fireworks use in designated area

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday evening, the Thermopolis Town Council, with Mayor Mike Mortimore absent and Mark Nelson voting “no,” approved a request from Derek Burrows for designation of an area near the skate park to allow people to set off their fireworks. The approval comes with a couple strong suggestions, such as having designated parking and the hours of 7-11 p.m. to set off the fireworks.

Prior to the approval of Burrows’ request, Mayor’s Assistant Fred Crosby noted Burrows had been approved to do so last year. Nelson pointed out it was a bit loose last year, and there wasn’t really anyone monitoring it. Other issues noted during last night’s meeting included the danger of cars parking close to the designated firing area and driving through it.

Mayor Pro Tem Dusty Lewis also suggested coordination and organization amongst those who choose to light off fireworks.

Another issue addressed at the meeting was in regard to handicapped parking spots. Hanes Hall brought forth a complaint, explaining his wife has spinal stenosis, which can cause extreme pressure on the spinal cord and nerves. She had back surgery in 2010 and a heart attack in 2014, Hall said, and is on disability.

Two years ago, at the health fair at the middle school, Hall said, the handicapped parking spaces were blocked off to allow room for a helicopter; the next year, it was the same thing.

Hall said he has no problem with the helicopter itself; his issue is with the blocking of the handicapped spaces. “A lot of people in this country fought long and hard for handicapped parking,” he said, noting people should not simply take them away. He understands the spots might be occupied in an emergency, but having a helicopter at a health fair once a year is not an emergency.

Police Chief Steve Shay said he spoke with some Kiwanis members, who stated there were some alternative handicapped parking spaces, though they might not have been well signed. They’re looking at some better designation, Shay said, and the possibility of using golf carts to transport people.

Also during the meeting, the council approved Resolution 524, meaning they approved the town budget upon third reading. A public hearing was held prior to the board’s decision, during which there was no comment.

Three catering permits were approved for Debra Lackey/Shorty’s for: the 100-year anniversary of the Swinging Bridge July 4 at Hot Springs State Park, the fair/pig wrestling Aug. 2 at the fairgrounds and Arts in the Park Aug. 15 at the state park.

Town Engineer Anthony Barnett said the treated water project is nearing completion, though there are just a few items to finish. He expects the work to be finished by the end of the week. Council approved bidding out the chip seal project and the painting of the million-gallon tank beginning July 7. Barnett said, with regard to the chip seal, there has been some selection of streets they couldn’t get to last year, including 10th, 11th, Johnson and Odell.

Commissioners discuss courthouse security

by April S. Kelley

The Hot Springs County Commissioners discussed courthouse security, signed a Maternal Child Health Contract with Public Health and approved a lease with Legion Town and Country Club at a meeting on Tuesday.

County Commissioners discussed courthouse security updates.

Road and Bridge supervisor Dave Schlager said the courthouse will have new signage next month and they are looking into prices for panic bars that will be placed in the courtroom.

Judge E. Robert Skar said they want to make the courthouse safer for everyone.

“We’re just trying to make it a safer place for everyone,” he said.

The County Commissioners said they plan to attend the next meeting to further discuss possible measures to increase courtroom security.

The National Center for State Courts has been visiting courthouses throughout Wyoming. They intend to visit Thermopolis in October for an assessment. The organization may be able to supply some funds for updated security after the assessment.

Hot Springs County Public Health Nurse Marie McDougall met with County Commissioners to discuss a Maternal Child Health Contract. The MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) is to provide funding to the County to assist with home visitation services through the Healthy Baby Home Visitation Program and other maternal and child health services. Commissioners signed the contract.

Commissioners signed a lease with Legion Town and Country Club for use of the green hangar, located at 158 Airport Road, at the former Hot Springs County Airport site.

The lease agreement states that Legion Town and Country Club will pay \$100 per month for use of the green hangar on a month-to-month basis, and that they will also cover all electric costs incurred while they occupy the building.

Donnie Bjorhus intends to use the facility to protect equipment, such as golf carts.

County Commissioners also accepted the resignation, with regret, of Hot Springs County Health Officer Howard T. Wilson, M.D.

The Hot Springs County 4-H Extension Educator 2017 Contract was also approved, meaning the county will pay 50 percent of their salary.

They also reallocated SLIB funds for the SRE building to the Joint Law Enforcement Communications Dispatch in the amount of \$18,000. The reallocation has already been approved by the Town of Thermopolis and Mayor Mike Mortimore.

Public hearing planned for review of Travel and Tourism budget

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday at the meeting of the Travel and Tourism Board, Director Amanda Moeller reported the budget has been sent in to the State, and it was returned with no comments or issues. By state statute, she noted, there has to be a public hearing — advertised three weeks in advance — regarding the budget. The hearing is scheduled for 12:30 p.m. July 19, prior to the board’s regular meeting, at the Quality Inn.

The total budget for the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2016 is \$220,120, which includes:

- \$114,300 for advertising. This includes: 19 billboards — 10 traditional and nine digital — and re-facing six boards this year and a partnership with the Smokin’ Waters Art Guild to repaint three west of town, print publications, television, radio and other ads like the winter campaign, the German in-language video, Wyo-Movie trivia ads, the sticker program, the tourism app, multi-language website cooperative and FCA high school sports program.
- \$39,260 in special event grants — 15 local community events funded in fiscal year 2016.
- \$54,050 in administration and consulting — Chamber of Commerce weekend and holiday staff, postage for mailing visitor guides, website hosting and maintenance and a marketing consultant.
- \$12,150 for additional budget items — accounting, insurance, conferences, travel and contingency.

Moeller further noted at the Tuesday meeting that the carry over from the previous fiscal year would be between \$55,000 and \$56,000.

Looking specifically at a yearly comparison of lodging tax receipts, Moeller pointed out the current fiscal year is nearly \$20,000 higher than two years ago, and four percent higher than last year. “I’m pretty pleased about that,” she said. She doesn’t expect any major budget adjustments, and noted there would be some money to encumber, which she will have by the July meeting.

Chairman Carl Leyba questioned why there was a decrease, from May 2016 over 2015, in tourism packets — from eight to four — and relocation packets — from five to three — and it was suggested the accessibility of such information online could be a factor.

Approved at the meeting was a contract with the Chamber of Commerce, as Travel and Tourism pays for the weekend and holiday staff. Updating of the Pinnacle Bank signature cards were also approved, to add new board member Brianna Mead, who filled an empty seat, and remove anyone not on the board. Originally from Minnesota, Mead is the manager and tourism director at Wyoming Whiskey, as well as the manager of the whiskey shop.

Moeller also reported there has been distribution of stickers, and advertising in print and on-

See Budget on page A6