

Town looks at carports, landfill use

By Mark Dykes

Tuesday evening during the Thermopolis Town Council meeting, Mayor's Assistant Fred Crosby noted the majority of Board of Appeals meetings are in regard to variance for carports. He suggested the possibility of having an ordinance specifically in regard to the structures, as there are issues with regard to setbacks — the amount of space allowed from property lines to where structures can be placed.

Crosby also pointed out that people with the Insurance Service Office (ISO) are coming out on Sept. 1, and they look at whether the Town is adhering to building codes and

other regulations and determine a rating, which will reflect on what people pay for insurance. It was indicated there would be some clarification of the regulations regarding carports.

Another issue Crosby presented concerned landfill use. He recently learned a home was recently torn down, and the homeowner had someone take out 14 loads of construction and debris waste to the landfill. These were not typical pickup loads; they were using a 10-yard dump trailer.

Crosby explained people who pay the town trash bill can take out a pickup load and dump it, without charge. However, if a

contractor takes the materials out to dump for someone, they are charged, as that is part of their livelihood and they have to bill for it. Crosby said this recent incident was an instance where people are taking advantage of the dumping service a bit more than what it was meant for. He was directed to visit with Board Attorney Hope Gebes about putting together an ordinance that further outlines regulations regarding landfill dumping.

Council also approved the second reading of an ordinance regarding opening and closing of the parks which will provide for open times and penalties for vandalism.



photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

This little piggy goes in

Alayna Scheel and Mack Buckner drop their pig into the barrel, bottom first, to place in the Pig Wrestling competition Tuesday evening. The event gathered a huge crowd and featured pig wrestlers of all ages.

Candidates questioned at forum

by Mark Dykes

Monday evening, the Thermopolis Middle School Commons became a venue for people to visit with people they will be voting on in the coming election. All candidates were allowed two minutes to introduce themselves, and two minutes to respond to the questions largely put together by Farm Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce.

First up were candidates for House District 28, Nathan Winters and Howard Samelson.

The candidates were asked what the biggest two challenges are in the district, and how to address them. Winters noted one of the biggest issues is economic diversification. Several different ideas have been proposed with regard to this topic, he said. However, he noted helping businesses should be approached from the ground up rather than the top down.

The second issue to address is health care, Winters said, as proposed Medicaid expansion has been devastating to the economy of many different states that have adopted it.

As for addressing the issue, Winters said Republicans have advocated for a better methodology regarding Medicaid, including block granting it to the states.

Samelson said he and Winters agree what the big issues are, though the approach to solving them might differ. He noted he and Winters were in agreement as far as economic development. With regard to Medicaid, Samelson said the potential to get the expansion done would benefit the community, the state and those who are underserved.

"Do I have, right now, a plan on how I would approach that? The answer is no. I'm new to the process. There's a lot I have to learn about how the Legislature works in the state." But, as he has that information he can provide answers.

Next up were Senate District 20 candidates Mary Jane Norskog, Bob Bayuk, Ron Harvey and Wyatt Agar. They were asked what the biggest district challenges are, and how to address them.

Harvey said the budget is key, and he doesn't feel the Legislature spends enough time working on it. "I think we need to spend more time allowing the public to have input on our budget," he said.

"I think every interim committee's number one topic should be budget considerations . . . that's what we really need to start to working on." Harvey also pointed out economic diversification is a subject that needs addressed.

Norskog said, "There is a huge workforce out there." She hears of job opportunities coming to states all around us, but doesn't understand why they aren't coming here, and she is concerned industries in the state are not helping out the workforce.

Another concern, Norskog said, is human services such as those for mental health and domestic violence. She noted her work with the H.O.P.E. Agency, and has seen some scaling back. "I understand there needs to be cuts," she said, "but there is some funding out there."

Agar spoke of going beyond budget balancing. "We have to live fiscally responsibly within our budgetary means, so we have to look at how we are balancing that budget."

As to the current state budgetary situation, Agar said it's the result of the overregulation of the private sector, and it needs to be peeled back to get people back to work.

Bayuk said economic diversity is critical to success. He further added he works in every community, and he sees stores closing and folding up. "That has to stop. We can educate our kids, and we do a fantastic job . . . but if there are no jobs it doesn't matter how dressed up you can be. If there's no place to go you're out of luck and you move out of the state."

"One of the things I believe we can do is take a look, one more time, at how we pay the taxes. When we talk about federal taxes, we talk about state taxes, this is your money. It ought to come back to Thermopolis . . . let us determine how we spend those dollars."

Those vying for County Commissioner — Joseph Casciato, Mike Chimenti, Joe Martinez, Phillip Scheel and Hub Whitt — were also present. They were first asked about what the best use of the old airport would be.

Scheel said the airport is owned by the county, and it's bordered by city property and state park land. There's been talk of turning it into a private

airport, he said, and having one here would be an added way Thermopolis could stand out. Scheel also suggested a land swap between the city, the county and the state park.

Martinez said one of the best things to do is to get the community involved, asking people what they want to do with the space, what would be beneficial and what could be utilized. Whether people utilize the space is their decision, he noted, but they should have that opportunity.

Casciato said it would be wise for the county to give the airport to an investor who has the money for the creation of a private airport.

The airport is still costing money, he said, with the decommissioning of the fuel tanks. As a result, money is not available for other projects. "If you can get a private citizen to invest his money and take it off your rolls, I think it would be a wonderful thing."

Whitt has thought about a fly-in airport, pointing out they work well if they are done right. Whether a land swap is done, or it's made into a private enterprise, he said, it will take someone with some vision. He would also like to see what the community wants to do with it.

Chimenti pointed out there is already a restaurant out near the old airport, and suggested inviting small businesses to the area to determine if they could utilize the land. Bringing in such a business would also increase the tax base. He further noted there are already services such as water and sewer on the property, and the county would not have to put money into development.

Another question was to how they might balance the budget.

Casciato noted with the recent budget there were no cuts from the core government budgets. While he's not recommending drastic cuts, he noted in order to practice austerity to balance the budget, everyone has to get used to the idea of budget cuts.

Whitt believes the commissioners did the best they could with what they had. While there are some other spots that he might have cut, he wasn't sitting in that position.

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Commissioners sign resolution for fire restrictions

by April S. Kelley

Hot Springs County Commissions signed a resolution establishing fire restrictions for Hot Springs County on Tuesday.

Thermopolis Volunteer Fire Department Lieutenant Clint Huckfeldt explained the resolution stating that the commissioners are empowered by the state of Wyoming to close areas to fire when fire danger in the County is extreme because of the presence of any excessive amount of flammable material or for any other sufficient reason and drought. The fire danger is aggravated by open burning and the use of incendiary devices.

On Aug. 12, the resolution for a partial fire restriction will go into effect, meaning until further notice any open fire or discharge of any class A, B and/or C fireworks is prohibited on all unimproved private and state land including but not limited to land owners in Hot Springs County. Land in which Hot Springs County holds or owns interest such as county roads, right-of-ways and easements.

The prohibition, however, is subject to a few exceptions. Trash or refuse can be burned between the hours of 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. inside containers that are equipped with spark arrestors and are located within a cleared area — at least a 10 foot radius — and complies with all other laws and requirements.

Contained campfires are also allowed within an established fire ring at an established campground provided the fire is in compliance with Forest Service, National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management regulations in effect at the time. Charcoal fires within enclosed grills are also allowed.

The use of acetylene cutting torches or electric arc welders as well as propane or open fire branding are allowed, provided the torches or welders are used within a cleared area and the branding activities are also conducted within a cleared area — both within at least a 10 foot radius.

The use of chain saws is permitted, provided the saws have spark arrestors properly installed and functioning.

Federal, state or local fire or law enforcement officers participating in fire, emergency and law enforcement activities are permitted to do what is necessary without restriction.

Public-sponsored fireworks displays that are coordinated with the Hot Springs County Fire Warden or his designee are also permitted.

Penalties may be imposed for violations of the partial fire restriction, a fine not to exceed \$100 or imprisonment not to exceed 30 days or both, to which may be added the cost of restitution.

Hot Springs County Emergency Management Coordinator Bill Gordon presented commissioners with the Fire District's Memorandum of Understanding regarding the installation and housing of computer equipment owned and maintained by Hot Springs County. This will provide a safe and secure off-site backup location for county data. Access to the use of pre-designated areas of the firehall for county offices to access their computer records and carry on business should it become necessary for one or more of them to vacate their offices elsewhere.

Chairman John Lumley suggested that Gordon get a signature from the fire chief as well as the signatures of the commissioners for the MOU.

Hot Springs County Nurse Manager Marie McDougall presented commissioners with two contracts — an infectious diseases contract and a county health officer contract. Commissioners signed both contracts.

The infectious diseases contract is to set forth terms and conditions to accelerate public health preparedness planning for Ebola Virus disease, the Zika virus and other infectious diseases through implementation of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Preparedness Capabilities.

The county health officer contract is to set forth terms and conditions to ensure the appointed CHO provides additional support to the County and County Public Health Nursing Office in relation to public health emergency preparedness and response.

Hot Springs County Sheriff Lou Falgoust and Sergeant Jerimie Kraushaar presented vehicle quotes to commissioners from Fremont Motor Company and Veto Enterprises Incorporated. The commissioners approved the quote from Fremont Motor Company in the amount of \$13,457. County Clerk Nina Webber mentioned that they had only budgeted \$12,500. Chairman Lumley said they would work it into the budget at a later time.