



Wyo-Ben responds to criticism of mine

by Lara Love

Wyo-Ben, Inc. proposes to amend bentonite mining and concurrent reclamation of its 108T plan of operations on public land approximately five miles northwest of Thermopolis. The proposed amendment consists of extending operations at pit 108T. The mining would be active for a period of 10 years and final concurrent reclamation for five more years, with a proposed total disturbance of 375.5 acres.

This is not a new mine. It is an extension of pit 108T meaning mining will continue at the location through the extension and new holes will be mined, thus expanding the size

of the mine overall. Wyo-Ben uses the cast back mining system. "We only have one hole open at a time that is approximately 300 feet long by 200 feet wide. We are constantly back-filling the open holes and reclaiming them as we move along. We don't have a giant, large open pit," said Matt Call, environmental supervisor for Wyo-Ben.

Citizens of Hot Springs County have voiced concerns about the affects the extension of operations at pit 108T may have on the environment and the view from Highway 120, along with the proposed relocation of the access road to the pit.

A new access road will be built which will allow trucks to come directly out onto Highway 120. The current access road goes onto Missouri Flat Road with trucks then turning onto the highway from there. "Bentonite is very sensitive to commodity and pricing so wherever we can, we take advantage of a shorter haul," said Rick Magstade, Wyo-Ben vice president of manufacturing.

For safety reasons, "Trucks entering highway" signs will be placed along Highway 120. According to both Magstade and Call, the

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photos by Cindy Glasson

Spectacular Sunrise

Thermopolis residents, June Litizzette (waving) and Bev Adams had the unique opportunity to take a fabulous hot air balloon ride over the terraces last Saturday morning. For Litizzette, it was the thrill of a lifetime and one more thing checked off her "bucket list."

Adams had a slightly different take on the experience. For her, it was like getting "back in the basket again" after crashing in a balloon in the California desert some 15 year ago. At the time, she and two other passengers were dragged a quarter of a mile after the crash in a remote area.

"I was shaking so hard as we took off," Adams said, "but I did it! I loved it and now I know what a normal landing feels like. I can't wait to go back up."



Absentee voting now open

by Cindy Glasson

Absentee ballots are now available from the County Clerk's office in the Hot Springs County Courthouse.

In order to use an absentee ballot, you first must be registered to vote. You may go to the courthouse to request the absentee ballot or call the office to request it be mailed to your residence.

If you go to the courthouse to request the ballot, you may vote at that time. If you ask to have it mailed to your home, you must return the ballot to the clerk's office by election day, Nov. 8.

Absentee ballots cannot be taken to the polls for counting, they must be returned to the clerk's office, either in person or by mail.

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on election day, but the clerk's office requests you get the absentee ballots back to the office as soon as possible after making your choices.

Town council approves landfill ordinance

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday evening, the Thermopolis Town Council approved the third and final reading for Ordinance 844, which takes effect Nov. 1, regarding fees for construction and demolition trash and the disposal of tires. The resolution includes language stating that tires shall not be deposited in town dumpsters or left abandoned in the town, and an appropriate permit must be paid for in advance. Penalty for violation includes a fine of \$750. The fee schedule for tire dumping is: \$3 for car tires, \$5 for truck, \$10 for semi and \$15 for tractor.

Later in the meeting, there was some discussion of sending tires to places where they are used to make shelters, or possibly bringing in a local operation to shred the tires and reusing the material in other ways.

Council also approved Resolution 530, which states all necessary personnel policies are amended to state Town employees traveling out of town, but not overnight, will not be reimbursed for costs of meals, unless

that travel is unanticipated and for the convenience of the Town, as approved by department heads. Meal reimbursement vouchers will be periodically audited to ensure employee compliance.

Also during the meeting, Council approved a proclamation that October 2016 is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. The proclamation further urges citizens to actively participate in scheduled activities and programs sponsored by the H.O.P.E. Agency to work towards the elimination of domestic violence.

Council heard from Linda Hughes, who brought before them concerns regarding properties she owns and harassments she has received. She said the presentation of the information was a last ditch effort to reach a solution, and warned that if the situation was not resolved she would commit an act of civil disobedience, and further pursue the matter in court. She was hopeful it would not get to that point, and apologized it has come to this.

Engineer In Training Lisa Johnson recommended

the final payment for the chip seal project, which is the release of the retainage — \$6,837.50 — on Oct. 26, and that payment was approved.

Johnson also said the paperwork is in place for the 1,000,000-gallon tank painting project, to be performed by Wyoming Power Wash Inc., and Mayor Mike Mortimore was approved to sign the notice to proceed.

Director of Public Works Ernie Slagle was approved to spend the money to fix a transmission on a track loader at the landfill. At a previous meeting, a motion to spend the money failed due concerns over costs and future breakdowns, as well as other items. During Tuesday's meeting, Councilman Dusty Lewis said further research showed they would be spending as much on repairs as they would on purchasing used equipment. Slagle said the issue appears to be a seal leak, as oil is getting into other areas, and further operation of the loader could cause the transmission to fail entirely.

Water issues discussed after heavy rainfall

by Cindy Glasson

Our recent heavy rains have caused some issues the Hot Springs County Commissioners had to deal with during their meeting on Tuesday. Thermopolis received around two inches of rain on Sunday and Monday.

Nate Messenger, FBO at the airport, let the commissioners know there were some water problems around the shop at the new airport. The rains have caused some pooling on one side of the shop so the road and bridge department brought out a load of gravel and spread it in the area to help alleviate the problem.

Messenger also said word is getting out that Thermopolis' airport now has jet fuel, too. For the month, fuel sales were up, with 723 gallons of aviation fuel being sold and nearly 550 gallons of jet fuel. There were

112 aircraft in and out of the airport for the month.

The other water issue is at the Senior Center, along the north wall. The leak is actually due to a construction issue on that wall, something maintenance supervisor Chuck Carver is going to look into.

Carver said there had been problems with water coming in the back door of the Hot Springs County Museum, too, but changing the drain appears to have helped and the sump pumps are all working well.

The Land Use Planning Commission has completed their review of the draft land use plan according to county planner, Bo Bowman.

Bowman said he is now compiling a list of all the changes and double-checking them against the draft plan to ensure everything is accurate. The plan is now more concise, but he figures it will still be early 2017

before the changes will all be in place.

The commissioners also had a visit from Dr. Vern Miller on behalf of the local medical community, asking for permission to be allowed to land the Life-Flight helicopter at the firehall on 14th Street in cases of extreme emergency.

In most instances, Life-Flight arrives via a standard plane and land at the airport. However, there are occasions when the patient needs to be flown out immediately and a helicopter is sent instead.

It was Miller's hope that the commissioners would allow the helicopter to land at the rear of the firehall in those situations.

The commissioners agreed, without hesitation, saying they were agreeable to anything that would save a life.