



Things are moving quickly at legislature

by Cindy Glasson

The clock is ticking down on this year's legislative session in Cheyenne and bills are passing and failing in quick succession according to the latest report from Representative Nathan Winters.

"Things are moving very quickly," he said. "We're to the point we're trying to get through as many bills as possible so time at the podium is short."

One of the bills that failed and failed miserably, was HB 0046 calling for permanent absentee voter status.

Winters said there was lengthy discussion on the bill that would allow a Wyoming resident to claim permanent absentee voter status, for instance if they were a "snow bird" living part of their time in another state.

"The big worry about this bill was the opportunity it could create for actual voter fraud," Winters said. "Someone could conceivably be registered to vote in two or more states with this and we felt it was just too big of a risk to take."

Wyoming is always on the lookout for new businesses and new industries to move here, opening up more jobs for citizens as well as helping with the tax base for the state.

HB267, a bill to raise the LLC and corporation license fees is being looked at very carefully and is expected to pass.

Currently, the cost to file for an LLC or corporation license in Wyoming is just \$50. The bill would raise that fee to \$75.

"Wyoming had 41,000 filings from 'dummy' or 'shell corporations' last year," Winters said. "By raising our fees we're hoping to cut down on the number of these fake companies filing for licenses."

"Our final goal is to move this into a full-blown study to make sure these companies aren't just using us."

A Wyoming license comes as a package unlike surrounding states. We have one fee for everything they need whereas states like Colorado charge not just the license fee, but other fees for the individual pieces needed to actually open the business.

"Comparing our fees to surrounding states is like comparing apples to oranges," Winters said. "Through our Wyoming Business Council there is a strong recruitment process to bring businesses of all types into Wyoming. Our lower taxes are a big feature."

"The governor's office has taken a big stance in recruiting. They have been going after large and small industries and it is working for us."

Commissioners warn of future budget cuts

by Cindy Glasson

Each of the elected officials for Hot Springs County met with the county commissioners on Tuesday to discuss the upcoming budget and what it may mean to each of their divisions.

"We all know what it was like last year," commission chairman John Lumley said. "We had to cut more than a million dollars. Where's it going this year? It's not looking good."

Lumley told the group a lot is going to depend on what the county assessor's numbers are for the year, but right now there is a possibility of funds being 30 percent less than they were last year because of the downturn in minerals. One of the problems Lumley sees is with

public health.

If the legislature cuts funding, there is the distinct possibility of losing a state nurse position. If that is the case, the county is going to be expected to pick it up and right now, we cannot afford to do that.

Marie McDougal, public health nurse for Hot Springs County, said Governor Mead is a big proponent of Public Health and fought last year to keep funding in place.

This year, however, she hasn't heard anything from other counties on what their agencies are expecting in the way of cuts.

Lumley said the commissioners would like to put a hold on any hiring for the time being,

until they are sure what they are looking at.

"It wouldn't be fair to offer a job and then end up having to let them go because the funding isn't there," he said. "We don't even know if we're looking at \$50,000 or \$750,000 in cuts."

Another area of concern is an increase in the insurance rates for county employees. Again, they aren't sure of amounts, but they know increases are coming.

"Please keep in mind this is all preliminary," Lumley said. "We just want all the departments to see what we're seeing."

"We want to keep things where they're at,

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photo by Cindy Glasson

Happy 100th

Kindergartner Dominic Langelier had a fabulous time counting out 100 fruit loops to make a necklace in honor of the 100th day of classes for students at Ralph Witters Elementary. Dominic is a student in Bethany Webber's class.

Agar begins House bill deliberations

by Mark Dykes

On Tuesday, Senate District 20 Representative Wyatt Agar reported he was headed again to a meeting of the Corporations Committee, with which he has been active during the 2017 Legislature.

Agar reported they have started cross over and are beginning to deliberate House bills. They are also in the first reading of the supplemental government appropriations budget, SF 01, and he wants to remind everyone budget cuts are not incurred by any particular sector but are spread across the board.

Last week, Agar noted, they worked several bills that pertained to education, the first of which was

SF 134 School Finance-class size waiver, which ultimately passed. The bill repeals the requirement of school districts to provide evidence to the state of the student to teacher ratio.

Agar said the bill has two benefits. It saves around 109 hours of staff time, and it is the first step in allowing schools that are over built to make the decisions on adjusting classroom population at the local level.

The second bill worked was SF 171, Civics Proficiency, which failed. The bill required that students pass an examination on the principles of the Constitution before graduation.

"While it is a great idea," Agar stated, "the bill had been amended to say the 'essentials of the Constitution.' That worried me; who gets to decide what is essentials? Also at a time of budget cuts I don't believe that we should be sending more mandates to our teachers."

Also deliberated was SF 153, regarding employment nondiscrimination, which also failed. Agar stated his worries with the bill were simple — it sought to establish a definition for freedom of religion. As the definition read a group has the right to exercise religious beliefs, but individuals did not, which would not survive a court room challenge.

Public begins learning about August eclipse

by Cindy Glasson

More than 60 people attended the public meeting Tuesday night to hear more about the upcoming solar eclipse on Aug. 21.

Chamber Director MeriAnn Rush led the meeting that included information on what locals should expect in the days leading up to the celestial event such as the 6,000 visitors that are expected.

Emergency Management Coordinator Bill Gordon talked about some of the things his department along with entities such as the National Weather Service, NASA, local first responders and others are doing to get prepared for the influx of people.

Even though the eclipse will not be happening for several months yet, Gordon has been in touch with others who have gone through an event like this and compiled a list of items we need to be ready for. Meetings are being held

monthly with a variety of town and county departments and local volunteers to make sure all the bases are covered.

A few of the items those in attendance were wondering about included allowing people to park their campers on their property, whether or not they could rent out rooms in their homes or spaces for dry camping, since most hotel rooms are already booked and the commercial RV campgrounds are full.

Currently, if family members are camping or parking their trailers on your property you do not need a permit. However, if you are going to rent out space, say in an open field, you may need a permit and you will need to collect lodging tax from the people parking there. If you have space within the city limits, you will need to contact the Town to find out what the specifics are related to renting out space in your yard

or on your property.

Some of the things Gordon suggested was people do their grocery shopping on Monday or Tuesday as most of the visitors are expected to hit town on Thursday or Friday. Also, it would be a good idea to gas up your vehicles early in the week as it is unknown what the gas situation may be like during that weekend.

Folks were also reminded it is Demolition Derby weekend, so there will also be an influx of derby enthusiasts as well.

Tuesday night's public meeting is just the first of what is sure to be many more public meetings to keep everyone informed as the date grows closer. Those dates will be advertised well in advance so people can make plans to attend.

Interpreters needed

In preparation for the solar eclipse,

a call is going out to anyone who may speak a foreign language.

Catherine Crumpler with Wisdom Tree is spearheading a search for locals who may speak any foreign language as we are expecting as many as 6,000 visitors, many of whom may not speak fluent English.

Crumpler would like to put together a list of volunteers willing to interpret in any number of situations, from medical emergencies to someone being separated from their family.

The list will remain private and shared only with local emergency management for use during the eclipse.

If you or someone you know speaks any foreign language, please call Crumpler at 921-3667.

Please feel free to leave a message with your name, phone number and the language you speak and Crumpler will return your call.

Haire appeal under advisement

by Mark Dykes

An appeal in a case against Anthony Haire is being taken under advisement in the Wyoming Supreme Court, with a written decision expected at a later date. Oral arguments have been heard by Supreme Court justices, as well as counsel for Haire and the State of Wyoming.

Following a four-day trial in December 2015, Haire was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter and reckless endangerment. On May 4, 2016, he was sentenced to eight to 10 years with the Wyoming Department of Corrections.

Haire shot and killed Jamye Don SoRelle on April 13, 2015, on property they shared, following an argument. Both previously lived in Thermopolis.

According to statements of facts, on April 13 Haire was grilling in front of his trailer for his family and a friend. When the friend attempted to leave, she found her vehicle was blocked by a truck owned by SoRelle. Attempts were made to get SoRelle to move the truck, and in a phone conversation SoRelle seemed upset the friend's vehicle was blocking one he typically used and he retaliated by moving another to prevent her leaving. When SoRelle appeared in person he had a handgun and fired a shot between Haire's wife and friend.

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