

Prosecutorial misconduct added to motion

by Mark Dykes

An addendum to a motion for a new trial in a case against Matthew Schwan was filed March 30. Schwan was found guilty on March 15 of aggravated homicide by vehicle, in the death of Reilly Schwan.

The addendum calls for a new trial because of prosecutorial misconduct. According to the document, during the trial the prosecutor was examining a witness and the witness was asked what the deceased might have said. The events counsel objected as hearsay, and the prosecutor said in a loud voice, “She is unavailable to testify because he killed her.”

At the next break, counsel for the defen-

dant requested a meeting in chambers, where he moved for mistrial based on the prosecutor’s statement and there was discussion about a curative jury instruction which was not requested by defense counsel because it would bring more emphasis on the prosecutor’s statement.

According to the document, the chief of police testified about arriving on the scene of the incident and mentioned he spoke with a fireman. On cross-examination the chief was asked who the fireman was and said “Jerry Williams,” who was the prosecutor at trial. Because the jury knew the prosecutor was a witness to the accident and the one who filed

charges, it gave more credibility to the statement by the prosecutor that “he killed her.”

Prior to trial counsel for the defendant had a conference with the judge and prosecutor regarding a conflict of interest on behalf of the prosecutor, because he was a potential witness. However, the court felt he was not needed as a witness.

A request for change of venue was previously filed with the court due to the witnesses and their relationship with people in the community, the large amount of posts on social media and newspaper coverage which would cause an issue with getting an impartial jury. That motion was denied.



photo by Mark Dykes

Drum solo

Kyle Mosser teaches Jason Capelle a simple drum beat Thursday morning at the auditorium. Students from Ralph Witters Elementary were treated to a concert from band and choir students. Following the performance, the elementary students were invited to explore and ask questions about the instruments.

Grant funding cut for two programs

Budget cuts with just about everything in the country is affecting Hot Springs County as well, as shown during the county commissioners meeting on Tuesday.

Nate Messenger, FBO for the Hot Springs County Airport, informed the commissioners they have been awarded the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) Department of Aeronautics grant for the annual fly-in in August.

Unfortunately, what has generally been a \$5,000 grant to defray expenses for the event has been cut literally in half, getting just \$2,500 this year.

A firm date has not been set for the fly-in, but Messenger said now that they know how much they have to work with he can begin firming up plans.

In regards to the old airport, WYDOT has agreed to paint the necessary “X’s” on the tarmac surface, officially closing it to any further landings. A specific date has not been set, however, once the markings are put on the strip planes may leave the airport but will not be able to return.

Another drastic cut that took the commissioners by surprise came from Barb Rice, Youth Alternatives Coordinator.

Grant funding has been the major source of income for the program that keeps youth offenders out of jail through a diversion program, a program that has been very successful since its inception a few years ago.

Rice informed the commissioners that this year her grant funding will amount to just \$8,453, an enormous cut from the \$25,242 in funding received for 2016. She will be going through her budget thoroughly in order to figure out where she can make cuts and will report back to the commissioners at their April 21 meeting.

Bids were opened during the meeting for a series of automatic door closers for offices in the courthouse, including the treasurer’s office, clerk, assessor, Clerk of District Court and the county attorney’s office.

The automatic closers would be in

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Council looks at sewer, sanitation rates

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday night, the Thermopolis Town Council looked at the water, sewer and sanitation rates. According to the financial statement of February 2017, water revenues were \$932,172.44 and expenditures were \$718,080.95, for an end result of \$214,091.49.

Taking into account a \$29,455.06 payment to the drinking water SRF loan — which is the town’s match for the water line going up Broadway when the state put the new highway in — results in a total of \$184,636.43.

As for sewer, there was \$459,677.80 in revenues and \$401,156.89 in expenditures for a

profit of \$58,520.91. A \$115,908.31 payment for the clean water SRF loan — for the sewer lagoons — results in a loss of \$57,387.40.

For sanitation, revenues are \$424,067.62. Expenditures are \$212,191.88 and landfill expenditures are 227,527.61, for a loss of \$15,651.87. With \$33,174.86 in receivables, that brings it to a positive \$17,522.99.

It was noted during the meeting that the rates would have to go up at some point, though Mayor Mike Mortimore said he would like to wait a full year to see the profit or loss. Options available include raising rates now or waiting until the year is over on June 30 and evaluate.

Should the council raise sewer and sanitation rates, it could be done by resolution in one meeting, though it would be a five percent maximum or about one dollar. Council could also raise rates by ordinance, which would require three meetings but allow the rates to go up by any amount.

In other action, council approved suspending codes related to parking campers in town and on streets for Aug. 16-24.

Mayor’s Assistant Fred Crosby said several calls have come in with people wanting to

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Five coaching positions eliminated

by Cindy Glasson

Parents, students and boosters have been very concerned about the future status of various activities at both the middle school and high school.

A meeting last Wednesday afternoon with the entire coaching staff from both schools, activities director Brandon Deromedi and superintendent Dustin Hunt outlined cuts that will go into effect for the coming school year.

Five coaching positions have been eliminated including freshman volleyball, freshman boys and girls basketball, an assistant cheer coach and an assistant activities director.

These programs have not been eliminated nor have the coaches’ regular teaching positions, but the freshman teams will be absorbed into the JV and varsity programs with those coaches taking on the additional responsibility of coaching the freshman teams as well.

The hours will also be adjusted for the athletic trainer. The school will no longer be paying for meals on any road trips for athletics or activities. Instead, “T” account funds will have to be used for meals if their balance allows.

In addition, overnight trips for athletics and activities are being eliminated with the exception of two. Regional and state overnight trips are not being cut and will remain paid for by the school.

Departments are allowed to travel as much as they want, however, again, the “T” account funds will have to be used for any hotel stays or meals.

For those who are unfamiliar with the “T” account, each athletic team and activity has an account separate from their general budget that holds donations or fundraising monies that those teams may use for incidental items.

“T” account funds can be used to help defray the cost of camps for students or special tournaments outside the official school year.

This will mean fundraising efforts for athletics and activities will have to increase. Athletics has the backing of the Bobcat Booster Club, however activities such as drama, music or speech are not included in the Booster Club and will have to have their own fundraising events to help defray costs.

Volunteers needed for dispensing exercise

by Mark Dykes

Volunteers are needed to help with a Hot Springs County mass dispensing exercise hosted by Hot Springs County Public Health. The exercise is scheduled for the morning of Thursday, April 13 at the county fair building. The scenario is a release of weaponized Anthrax.

Volunteers can choose to be staff or role-players during. Staff volunteers who want to help at the Point of Dispensing (POD) should arrive at the building by 8 a.m. to receive a short training before the POD opens at 9 a.m. Staff volunteers should plan on being at the exercise until noon.

Those who want to be “players” only need about 5-10 minutes and can come any time 9-11 a.m. There is no need to sign up before hand, and players are welcome to bring their children. Anyone can be a player and will take the role of people who were exposed. As part of the exercise, they will fill out a

short form using fake names and fake health information.

Players fill out the form and go through the stations set up in the fair building. For the purpose of the exercise, candy will be given out instead of actual pill bottles.

This is entirely a Public Health exercise. Public Health is the lead agency for the mass dispensing operations in any US county, and all counties are required by the Centers for Disease Control to have thorough and viable mass dispensing plans, and the volunteers to support their mission, which is to dispense medication to the entire population within 48 hours of an outbreak or release of a dangerous agent.

Mary Gordon with Hot Springs County Public Health explained the CDC’s Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) is national repository of medical supplies, with caches stationed all over the country to allow for quick deployment in the event of a health emergency, ter-

rorist attack or manmade incident.

Twelve-hour Push Packages containing pharmaceuticals, antidotes and medical equipment are the first deployment of supplies. The packages are positioned in strategically located, secure warehouses ready for immediate release within 12 hours of the federal decision to deploy SNS assets.

A major part of SNS planning is mass dispensing of medical countermeasures, a task taken on by local County Public Health offices. A POD site is a federally instituted best practice model designed to provide medications, vaccines or medical supplies to a large community of healthy people during a health emergency.

The POD sites are locations familiar and easily accessible to the community, and are designed to serve as a place for the public to receive medications, vaccines and medical supplies. The ultimate goal of a POD is to quickly provide such items to a large number of

people in a short amount of time.

The SNS was deployed during the 2009 swine flu pandemic, as well as the Zika virus outbreak last year, the Ebola and botulism outbreak of 2014 and 2015, hurricanes during the past 12 years and the World Trade Center and Anthrax attacks of 2001.

During next week’s exercise, Gordon said, the candy given out will be treated as real antibiotics, and as if this were an actual Anthrax release, with people who are healthy but exposed. In the 2001 attacks, she noted, people were unaware Anthrax been weaponized so many were showing up in hospitals with flu-like symptoms and pneumonia before being diagnosed with an Anthrax infection. Today, we know preventative antibiotics are key in stopping the infection.

Those interested in being staff volunteers can contact Gordon at the Public Health Office, 864-3311 or 864-8074, or email mary.gordon@wyo.gov