

# Commissioners approve budget

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners held their final public meeting Monday, approving the final budget for 2017-2018.

General Fund requirements for the fiscal year amount to \$10,519,320.55, up \$412,563.50 from last year.

At the start of the budget session there was some worry that employees would have to be eliminated, but with the help of Federal PILT (payment in lieu of taxes) monies amounting to \$800,000, that threat was held off for another year.

Some lines that changed from last year

include an additional \$7,000 for the courthouse, an additional \$15,000 for the airport THP, \$33,000 less for the airport HSG, an additional \$7,100 for the fair and an additional \$17,689.50 in emergency expenditures.

A huge cost savings, \$50,000, happened due to the hospital forming its district, becoming self-sufficient.

In a breakdown of the other general accounts, most remained holding the same budget as 2016-2017.

One of the exceptions to that is the health insurance for county employees, which went up 21 percent over last year. The commis-

sioners decided to absorb the additional 21 percent rather than passing that cost on to the employees, making the budget go from \$512,632 to \$660,073.

Funding for the Alternate Emergency Operations Center, capital improvements, courthouse equipment, fair capitol projects, county road funding, search and rescue, youth alternatives and a new line, airport fuel system, all saw raises in the bottom line.

A few which received lower or no funding this year were the BLM/Shoshone Forest,

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## Council hears from residents

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday evening's Town Council meeting was certainly one of the more active in terms of citizen participation, as several voiced their opinion with regard to a couple issues in town.

A topic that received much discussion was the road that encompasses 14th Street and Canyon Hills Road. Beverly Ward first brought up the issue, though by the end of discussion the council would also hear from Karen Slocum, Sam Starnes, Mark Collins, Linda Hughes and Matt Hughes among others.

Ward noted she has been coming before the council to address traffic issues along the road, noting that it's already busy with the fire department and search and rescue having operational headquarters there, as well as the school and the cemetery, yet there are still semis coming through. There is signage along the highway to notify drivers there is no truck traffic.

Ward expressed concern that the school year is starting soon and children could be in danger. Slocum said she can sit on her dad's back porch and watch cars go by, and about every one of 20 doesn't stop. Starnes said in a half-hour there were 56 cars, and at least seven going over the posted speed limit.

Ward also pointed out that when truck drivers use the Canyon Hills to 14th route, they essentially bypass the town, which has an economic impact. Shurie Scheel said when people use their GPS, it recommends that route because it is the fastest.

Mayor Mike Mortimore added he couldn't remember when the street hasn't been a busy one, and the current signage on the route was put up in the 90's to try and slow traffic down.

Councilmember Bill Malloy suggested hitting people "in the pocketbooks," essentially ticketing more drivers who are speeding or driving semis on the street. However, constant enforcement of the

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photo by Mark Dykes

### Dive on in

Ryan Williams splashes into the home plate during the opener for the MoveOpolis slip-n-slide kickball tournament last Wednesday. Play continues each Wednesday in July at Hot Springs State Park.

## County hosts Democratic Party meeting

The Hot Springs County Democratic Committee welcomed Democrats from across the state for the Wyoming Democratic Party's central meeting in Thermopolis on Saturday, July 15. The Wyoming Democratic Party meets quarterly to discuss party business and hold a fundraiser. Former Democratic presidential candidate and Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley was the keynote speaker at the Wyoming Democratic Party's fundraiser event.

A potluck dinner hosted by the Progressive Caucus kicked off festivities on Friday night in Hot Springs State Park and drew about 40 participants. There was informal conversation and networking and great food and drink.



Howie Samelson, right, visits with former Presidential candidate Martin O'Malley.

Saturday saw the formal meeting which took place at Common Ground and drew about 100 participants. The morning saw meetings of the Executive Committee of the Wyoming Democratic Party, the Women's Caucus, the Progressive Caucus and Young Democrats of Wyoming. The Democratic State Legislators moved their quarterly meeting to Thermopolis and also spoke to the central committee participants and fielded questions. The Central Committee Meeting took place in the afternoon and was led by State Chair, Joe Barbuto. Hot Springs County Chair Howie Samelson stated, "There's a sign on Shoshoni Street declaring, 'Thermopolis Welcomes You,' and that's exactly what Thermopolis did this weekend by hosting the Wyoming Democratic Party's central meeting. The Hot Springs Democratic

Party was proud to show Democratic county party leaders the beauty of Thermopolis and get to work on party business. Later that evening, we were energized by former Democratic Presidential candidate and Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley when we celebrated our gathering, in a truly Wyoming-way, in a barn with beer, our friends, and music.

"The Governor spoke to the needs of rural, hardworking folks who still believe in the American dream and that means investing in solutions we know work. He also sang and played guitar to the group of over 100. Wyoming Democrats are standing up and fighting back. To rebuild our party we're focusing on local elections and engaging the grassroots on issues like healthcare, public lands and jobs that keep young people here in Wyoming. We are proud the Wyoming Democratic Party's Chair Joe Barbuto and our state central members recognize the change is us, the change is in Thermopolis, it's in all the rural towns and cities that make our great state."

For further information, contact Samelson Howie@samelsonfamily.net

## Exercise caution on the Bighorn river

by Mark Dykes

Earlier this year, increased runoff resulted in higher flows from Boysen Reservoir, reaching 9,000 cubic feet per second (cfs). Though the runoff and flows have since gone down, the river can still be hazardous for those attempting to float it, evidenced by several needing rescue the past couple weekends.

Hot Springs County Emergency Management Coordinator Bill Gordon said he would not recom-

mend anyone float the river until it reaches around 3,000 cfs, and when floating it's important for all people to wear life vests, not have them attached to the float or stowed somewhere. Any kids should also be under adult supervision.

Sheriff Lou Falgoust also recommended people not try to float the river at this time.

Boysen Lake has about nine inches to drop before it's at the normal level of 4,275 feet. Once

it reaches that elevation, it's considered full. However, Gordon said, that doesn't mean the Bureau of Reclamation will turn down the release to the summer level. The release has to correspond with the inflow until the proposed level of 2,000 cfs is reached.

The flow was expected to be 6,000 cfs Tuesday afternoon.

Gordon said there are hidden dangers under the water, such as Russian Olive, trees and other

brush that can easily get a person tangled or knocked off their floats. He said waiting until the level is lower can help ensure everyone enjoys the ride.

If you should find yourself stranded on the river, Gordon recommends calling 911 if you have a working cell phone. Otherwise, yell or try to catch people's attention another way. There is also the adage of remaining in the water, facing downstream

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## County, BLM issue fire restrictions

Hot Springs County Commissioners, based on the recommendations of the County Fire Warden, have implemented a fire ban, effective immediately.

Any open fire or discharge of fireworks is prohibited on all unimproved State and private land, including all land owners in Hot Springs County.

Trash or refuse burning must be done between 6 p.m. and 8 a.m. inside containers equipped with spark arrestors in a cleared area at least 10 feet in radius.

Other exceptions include camp fires contained within an established fire ring at an established campground, charcoal fires within enclosed grills, welding done within a cleared area of at least 10 feet in radius, branding activities and chainsaws with properly installed and working spark arrestors.

The decision was based on the amount of dry, consumable fuels throughout the county.

The Bureau of Land Management Worland Field Office is also implementing fire restrictions for all BLM-administered public lands within the boundaries of Washakie, Hot Springs Bighorn and Park counties.

Fire managers base decisions about fire restrictions on current and projected weather conditions, amount of dry vegetation, and other risk factors.

"These fire restrictions are a result of our continued coordinated relationships with our fellow wildfire cooperators within the Bighorn and Wind River basins," said Assistant Fire Management Officer Aaron Thompson.

Under fire restrictions the following acts are prohibited:

- Building, maintaining, attending or using a fire or campfire except within agency-provided fire grates at developed recreation sites, or within fully enclosed stoves with a ¼" spark arrester type screen, or within fully enclosed grills, or in stoves using pressurized liquid or gas.
- Smoking, except in an enclosed vehicle or building, a developed recreation site, or while stopped in an area at least three feet in diameter that is barren or cleared of all flammable materials.

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