

# Town project updates

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday night during the Thermopolis Town Council meeting, town Engineer Anthony Barnett provided several updates to projects happening around town.

Council approved a motion to approved the second pay estimate for the chip seal project n the amount of \$9,438.80. A first pay estimate of \$41,901.64 for the 12th Street sewer repair and a first estimate of \$47,673 for the airport tank painting project were approved as part of the council's approval of the bills.

Barnett provided pictures of the tank, showing what it used to look like before it was sandblasted and after. Barnett noted during the blasting a small hole was made so another piece had to be rolled and welded.

Regarding the inside of the tank, Barnett said prior to this painting the floor went for way too long as there was an abundance of pit filler. He noted some areas were worse likely due to the amount of pit filler becoming brittle and breaking as the floor flexed with the weight of the water.

Regarding the lifetime of the tank painting, Barnett said it had been about 18 years since the last painting and if the coat holds up it should last at least 17 years.

Barnett also spoke to the memorandum of understanding between the Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources and the Town of Thermopolis for funding buried utility rehabilitation in Hot Springs State Park.

Barnett explained the State and their attorneys drafted up the memo to have the town reinstall a hot water line in the state park where the treated water line is being put in between the Pioneer Home and the Days Inn. However,

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# Working to solve Title 25 problem

Cindy Glasson

Thirty-one people attended a special Title 25 meeting on Monday night to discuss the hospital's stand on Title 25 patients and what can be done to eleviate the problem.

The issue arose a couple of weeks ago when the hospital board informed the county commissioners they would no longer hold Title 25 patients at the hospital once they were medically stable due to safety concerns for staff and other patients. Once they are stable, the hospital wanted the patients moved to another facility.

Among those in attendance were the county commissioners, county clerk, hospital board and physicians, members of the town council,

sheriff's department, police department and mental health professionals.

In addition, Tom Forslund, Director of the Wyoming Department of Family Services and Stefan Johansson, Administrator of Health Policy and Evaluation came down from Cheyenne to be in attendance.

The hospital board said the concerns were brought to them by the medical staff. A lack of regular or consistent law enforcement personnel to watch the Title 25 patients was what prompted them to take action.

Dr. Travis Bomengen said mental health is not part of their standard care. They are required to get them appropriately detoxed or

medically stabilized, but they just don't have the facility to keep them safe once stabilized and without law enforcement on scene, they just cannot do it.

"If they are psychotic, its a danger for the staff and other patients," Bomengen said. "We want them where there is knowledgeable personnel and appropriate facilities."

County commission chair John Lumley stated there is \$25,000 in a fund to pay for this sort of thing and looked to the police department and sheriff's office to take care of it.

Bomengen indicated they had been told,

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photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

## Never too cold for fun

Despite the colder temperatures, Lincoln McPhie and Kayden Fredrick fly down the slide during recess Tuesday afternoon at Ralph Witters Elementary.

# Small quake felt in Thermopolis

by Mark Dykes

Last Friday at about 5:11 p.m., there was a 4.2 magnitude earthquake about 39 miles east-southeast of Thermopolis. Around town people might have felt a slight tremor, heard a strange noise or didn't even know the quake had enough force to be felt here until they saw something on the news or social media.

One of the more prominent, but false, reports that spread was that the quake had damaged or destroyed Boysen Dam.

HotSprings County Emergency Management Coordinator Bill Gordon heard an unconfirmed report that someone had a crack in their ceiling, but it was unknown if that was quake-related. Checking with dispatch on Monday afternoon, he said they had no reports of damage.

According to information from the US Geological Survey, there were some smaller quakes — less than 3.0 magnitude — on Sunday as well. Gordon said there is always potential for aftershocks, but once we get into the realm of 4.2 magnitude quakes he wouldn't be surprised if we don't see aftershocks.

We live in an area where we need to be aware that we can have an earthquake, Gordon said, and preparedness is up to individual residents. In those areas more prone to earthquakes or heavier earthquakes, people are encouraged to strap things such as tall cabinets, furnaces or water heaters

to a wall. Gordon concurred that's a good idea, but we're not in a really strong earthquake area.

As with other natural disasters, Gordon noted family plans are the best thing people can do in terms of determining how to communicate if separated during an event. Emergency kits are also a good idea, he said, and can be a simple as having a battery-operated radio and flashlights.

"If the power goes out in an earthquake or any other event," Gordon said, "you'll be in a lot better

ing to instead find a reputable, reliable source for information on disasters when they happen.

Though the dam didn't break, Gordon is still working to make sure we're prepared should it happen. He's aiming to have a full-scale exercise in the spring or summer, but there could be a smaller exercise before that. He's looking forward to getting back on track with the project, with a focus on county evacuation and flooding issues.

The intention it to come up with a date for the full-scale exercise, Gordon said, and he'd like to do it before the school year is over to get the school district involved as well.

Gordon said he'd like to get the group he had back together and re-focused. He further explained he had a group of 30-35 people representing, among others, themselves, businesses, law enforcement and the fire department who initially met to begin discussion regarding dam failure. They soon realized they needed to first focus on evacuation, and about 10 volunteered to look at just evacuation topics.

"We made some pretty good progress," Gordon said, "and we also found how difficult and complex the issue is." He wants to get the larger group together to share where things are in terms of evacuation and determine a direction for broadening the process. He noted Mary Gordon, the public health response coordinator is taking the lead role in assisting mass care facilities to complete their planning.

# Fraud workshop

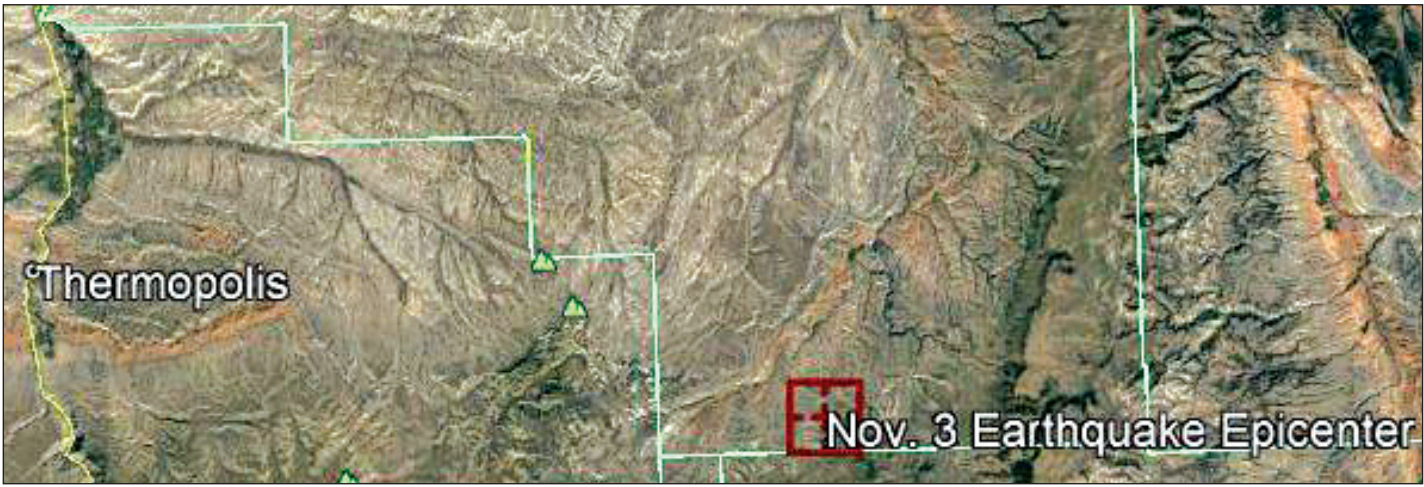
Whether it involves people posing as agents from the IRS or Social Security, stating there are warrants out for one's arrest, or stealing vital information it seems nearly every day there is someone out there trying to perpetrate a new scam or tool to get their hands on people's money. On Friday, Nov. 17, the Hot Springs County Senior Center will have a public presentation on how to avoid fraud, presented by Brett Lapham.

Lapham has been a law enforcement officer in Montana for the past 18 years. He began his career as a patrol officer in Sidney, Mont. in 1999, moving to Billings to join the police department in 2002. While employed with the Billings Police Department, he has been a patrol officer, the department's policy and training officer, and in 2007 was transferred to the Investigations division where he continues to work to this day.

During that time, Lapham has participated in some 1,500 certified law enforcement training hours. He also holds Bachelor degrees from the University of Montana in Political Science and Criminology, and has completed two years of post-graduate study at UM studying Criminology.

Since moving to investigations, he has specialized in working all types of financial crime. He has become very interested in fraud prevention and spent countless hours participating in committee meetings, networking with other federal, state and local professionals and working with various fraud prevention programs.

The public presentation is scheduled for Nov. 17 at 4 p.m. Everyone is welcome.



The location of a 4.2 magnitude earthquake about 39 miles east-southeast of Thermopolis.

shape if it's the middle of the night and you can see what's going on." He added flashlights these days are inexpensive, with brighter bulbs, and the batteries can last for days.

Wyoming is, historically, within an earthquake area, Gordon said. He didn't find it unusual to have a 4.2 magnitude quake. "We see them occurring around us all the time. Montana, Idaho, Utah, wherever it might be, there's these shifts that occur." Had the quake been closer, he added, it was still not powerful enough to damage the dam. Other minor things might happen, such as items falling of shelves.

Gordon cautioned about reading reports from satire news sites and taking them as fact, advis-