

Former airport planning session scheduled

by Cindy Glasson

GDA Engineers met with the Hot Springs County Commissioners on Tuesday to talk about the short term and long term plans for the former airport.

Dusty Spomer with GDA said the short term items are mostly demolition and improvements whereas many of the long term items should be included in a prospectus that could be offered to potential developers.

Spomer suggested a 3D rendering or conceptual drawing of what could be done with the area would be something to visually catch a potential developer's eye. He has begun researching various companies across the coun-

try that do this kind of development in communities and the the 3D rendering could give the county a leg-up, sparking interest in the area.

As the commissioners have agreed they do not want this plan to just sit on a shelf for years, never coming to fruition, a planning session is being scheduled for the first part of February between the commissioners and GDA to keep things moving along.

Discussion continued with GDA regarding a drainage issue at the new airport.

When built, there was a drainage problem around the terminal building due to having to use the landscaping funds elsewhere on the project. With no landscaping, the water is run-

ning off faster than anticipated, causing it to pool since it has nowhere to go.

They have requested some additional funding from the Department of Transportation to alleviate the problem and DOT is asking for a memo of justification from the county that will explain the situation and the plan for remediation in more detail.

Along with landscaping, GDA will be providing a couple of other alternatives that would include storm drains or pipe to send the water to other areas.

Keeping with the airport theme, county

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photo by Mark Dykes

Christmas cheer

There was plenty of action on the auditorium stage Thursday, Dec. 14, for the annual Ralph Witters Elementary Christmas program. Grades K-4 sang several traditional songs as well as some that are lesser known and a few silly numbers. All students took the stage at the end of the program for a rousing rendition of "We Wish You A Merry Christmas." From left, Peyton Reese, Taylin Birdsley, Dayton Basse, Billie Jo Macie, Briar Lahoe, Kaydence Larson and Misty Flowers.

Town approves annual audit

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday night, the Thermopolis Town Council approved its audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2017. Prior to the town's approval of the audit, Mayor Mike Mortimore noted council had received the audit previously and had time to look it over. Mortimore also commended the work done by Koerwitz, Michel, Wright and Associates in completing the audit.

Michael Wright reported to council regarding the audit, noting one finding that has shown up in the past and will continue to in the future. He further explained some things the council does prevent and protect potential errors in the county.

"If you look at the budget vs. actual as well as the expenditures in detail and apply knowledge of what should be happening to what you see happening in financial transactions," Wright said, "you are mitigating that risk of that lack of segregation."

Wright further noted there was no reported material noncompliance with laws, statutes and regulations. There were no further observance of weaknesses with regard to internal control.

In other action, council approved Mayor Mortimore to sign the certificate of substantial completion concerning the airport tank painting project. Town Engineer Anthony Barnett reported the painting was

completed and the tank is back online.

Barnett also reported the DEQ permit, for the tank vents on the Cedar Ridge and state park tanks, is being completed under the contract for the tank painting project. There was the hope to get the vents on the tank by the end of the month to meet the EPA deadline, but due to the bad weather an extension until the end of January was requested.

Council also approved a two-year contract with insurance consultant, Brad Johnson, at \$6,000 per year. The rate is an increase from \$4,500, which Johnson had provided for the council for at least 15 years.

Help available for victims of crime

by Mark Dykes

For those who find themselves the victims of any crime, it can be hard to know what to do next.

The Hot Springs County Attorney's Office Victim Witness Program can provide assistance in those cases.

Victim witness coordinator, Ranae Baldes said the program, which began around 1990, is for the victim of any crime in Hot Springs County, but also can be used by victims outside the county. It can help those victims navigate the judicial system, she said, to make sure of their victims' rights. "We're the liaison with the prosecuting attorney and the courts, and law enforcement." The program is also a point of contact to Victims Compensation, which is run by the Division of Victim Services in the Attorney General's Office.

There is no cost for the program, and state and federal funds for it are managed by the Division of Victim Services. Baldes

said they have to put in for grants, and the county matches the federal funding, provided through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA).

The program has to be in compliance with standards with regard to the federal and state funding, Baldes explained this involves things such as making sure the money is used for what they say it will be, being ADA compliant, having a violence-free workplace and maintaining victim confidentiality. Full compliance checks are done during even years – the last was in 2014 – and in odd years there are "desk reviews" done over the phone and through paperwork sent in by Baldes. There is also information which has to be sent in on a monthly basis.

Baldes said she sees a lot of use of the program, pointing out it's not number-based at all. Some people might come in and get some information and handouts,

while others go through the court system and have more contact. "If we only serve one person," Baldes said, "we're serving our purpose. The main purpose of it is to make sure the victims of a crime don't slip through the cracks of the system. It's there to hold the offender accountable and we want to make sure they have a process in that, and they are part of that process."

Baldes pointed out the program is victim-driven and based on how much the victims want to be involved. Some want to go through the entire court process, while others might decided at a certain point they no longer want to be involved.

For more information on the program, contact the Hot Springs County Attorney's Office. If it is after hours, contact the dispatch office to get ahold of someone with the program. Baldes said it's not a typical "8 to 5" program and someone might need something in the middle of the night.

Area Christmas church services

The Christmas season with special church programs and services has arrived. The area schedule includes:

Community Federated Church, Sixth and Big Horn – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service, 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.; Candlelight service, 5 p.m.

First Baptist Church, 310 S. Sixth – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service combined with a Christmas musical, 10:30 a.m.

Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 642 Arapahoe – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service, 9 a.m.; Candlelight service, 10 p.m.

Living Waters Assembly of God, 318 N. Eighth – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service, 10:30 a.m.; Candlelight service, 6 p.m.

Risen Son Southern Baptist Church, 342 Amoretti – Dec. 24, 10:45 a.m., Christmas Eve Service.

Set Free Church, 810 Park Street – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service, 9:30 a.m. and worship, 11 a.m.

St. Francis Catholic Church, Eighth and Arapahoe – Dec. 24, Mass, 6 p.m.; Dec. 25, Mass, 9 a.m.

St. Paul Lutheran Church, 288 Highway 20 S. – Dec. 24, regular Sunday service, 9 a.m.; Candlelight service, 7 p.m.; Dec. 25, Christmas service, 9 a.m.

