

# County commission reorganizes for 2018

by Mark Dykes

There were some changes in leadership during the Hot Springs County Commissioners meeting Tuesday. John Lumley stepped down and Tom Ryan was newly elected the chair of the Hot Springs County Commission going into 2018 with Phillip Scheel as the new vice chair. Ryan was not in attendance at the meeting, so Scheel chaired it.

The change in roles comes as part of the commission's reorganization for 2018. Among other reorganization items were keeping the dates of the first Tuesday of the month at 9 a.m. and the third Tuesday at 4 p.m. for commission.

Holidays were kept largely the same, and in-

clude President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Scheel noted this year Christmas Eve falls on a Monday. While typically Dec. 24 would be a half-day off, because of where it falls it will be a full day.

As for committee appointments, Scheel said they will remain the same. Lumley will be the liaison for Town Properties, the Senior Center, Town of Thermopolis, BLM Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan Revision, Tribal Liaison with the Wind River Indian Reservation, Shoshone Forest Proposal and the Wyoming County Commissioners Association Board of Directors.

Ryan will cover Town Properties, Town of Thermopolis, Hot Springs County Library, Road and Bridge, BLM Bighorn Basin Resource Management Plan Revision, Tribal Liaison with the Wind River Indian Reservation, Big Horn Basin Nature and Discovery Center and the Hot Springs County Airport.

Scheel will be part of Town Properties, Town of Thermopolis, Search and Rescue, Thermopolis Hot Springs Economic Development Company, Basin Authority Child Support Enforcement, Land Use Planning Board, Chamber of Commerce, Hot Springs County Museum, the Fair

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photo by Mark Dykes

## Balloon drop

Erin Garlinghouse pulls a string to release the balloons during the Hot Springs County Senior Center's annual "Ring in the Noon Year" last Friday. Mandi Reynolds drops a large balloon, representing the ball in New York, as Trena Moore reads the countdown.

# 2017 Year in Review

Rock slides in the canyon, plenty of awards, changes to school staff and local businesses and a total solar eclipse were among the Thermopolis activities that made the news in 2017.

## January

**January 5:** Florence "Toots" Daugherty reflects on her time in Thermopolis. The 95-year-old resident has lived here since she was 68, and helped at the Hot Springs County Senior Center for more than 20 years.

Daugherty is also a masterful music player, able to play a tune quite easily after hearing it or seeing it played only once. She spoke about her time here, working at the senior center and the musical performances she gives at the Pioneer Home and Thermopolis Rehabilitation and Wellness.

"This is about the best place to live, in my notion," she said. "I wouldn't trade it for anything."

**January 12:** Thermopolis Middle School Principal Breez Longwell Daniels has been selected as Wyoming's 2017 National Distinguished Principal (NDP).

Kenny Jones, Wyoming Association of Elementary and Middle School Principals (WAEMSP) executive director, and Mitch Craft, Wyoming's 2016 NDP, made the announcement Monday morning in the commons in front of TMS staff and students.

"This award is possible because of all of us," said Daniels as she accepted the honor. She reminded staff and

students that their hard work made it all possible.

**January 19:** A wide variety of agencies are gearing up for what promises to be a major event for Thermopolis and Hot Springs County – the solar eclipse on Monday, Aug. 21.

Monthly meetings are being held to prepare for the influx of 6,000 or more people, many of whom are going to be from foreign countries, into the county to view the total solar eclipse, more people than actually live in Hot Springs County.

Every hotel and RV space available is already booked for that weekend since Thermopolis has been touted as an excellent place to view the celestial event due to our elevation.

**January 26:** The Thermopolis Independent Record staff brought home several awards from the annual Wyoming Press Association (WPA) Convention Jan. 20-21 in Cheyenne. The IR competes in the small weekly category along with 24 other Wyoming newspapers.

The IR won first place for Photographic Excellence and second place for Best Use of Photographs. With a total of 14 individual Pacemaker Awards, the IR also earned the WPA Foundation's Sweepstakes award.

**February**

**February 2:** In the United States District Court of Wyoming, Darrel Demas and Justin Dvorak, formerly of Thermopolis, were sentenced to prison terms for providing heroin which re-

sulted in the death of Alexander Herdt.

According to court documents, Demas was sentenced to 48 months and Dvorak was sentenced to 24 months on individual charges of distribution of heroin resulting in death. The two were also charged with conspiracy to distribute heroin resulting in death, though the charges were dismissed as part of their plea agreements — Dvorak pled guilty on Oct. 26, 2016, while Demas pled guilty nine days later, Nov. 4.

According to documents, on or about June 25 and 27, 2014, Dvorak and Demas knowingly, intentionally and unlawfully distributed a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of heroin, the use of which resulted in Herdt's death.

**February 9:** 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.

**February 16:** Thermopolis resident Randy Baker spoke about his journey to Nepal in 2016. Along the way, he learned of the need for medical and

other basic services in the area he was visiting.

Baker spent the next several years working with people and organizations around the world to help bring medical services, clean water and electricity to the Kumari region of Nepal. Though the hospital was completed in 2013, it was destroyed in an earthquake in 2015. Baker again sought help worldwide to rebuild the hospital, and he was honored at the formal re-opening in 2017.

**February 23:** The Hot Springs County Commissioners considered a draft resolution that would be in effect from Aug. 15 to Aug. 31, 2017 only, covering the timeline for the upcoming solar eclipse.

The draft, which may be amended before approval in March, would allow for short-term rentals, such as private homes, apartments, bedrooms and similar residential units during the listed time frame.

In addition it would allow for short-term rental of recreational vehicle sites for self contained RV's and allow for overflow areas for tent camping as long as access to toilet facilities is provided.

County Planner, Bo Bowman, created the draft, noting there is nothing in the county's land use plan at this time that covers short-term rentals, something the planning commission will be addressing over the next few months.

**March**

**March 2:** According to the 2016 report from the Wyoming Division of

State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, Hot Springs State Park saw the most visitors among the sites listed for the calendar year, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2016.

The park saw a total 1,928,083 visitors for the year; the next closest was Glendo State Park at 343,453. Though HSSP's visitation was actually down compared to 2015 — which had five percent more, or 2,022,365 — it's up compared to the 2011-15 average of 1,660,031.

As for other popular sites in the area, Boysen had 114,608 visitors for 2016, up slightly from 2015's 114,314 and 11 percent over the five-year average of 103,366. Legend Rock saw 14,177, up 10 percent from 12,913 in 2015 and 32 percent over the five-year average of 10,741.

**March 9:** Mary McGillivray, music educator at Ralph Witters Elementary (RWE) and high school drama director, was recently awarded the Outstanding Young Music Educator for the North Big Horn Basin.

Nominated by her colleagues, McGillivray has spent a lifetime in music and theatre, attending Casper College where she was deeply involved in the music and theatre departments before moving on to Black Hills State University where she received a Bachelors in Vocal Music Performance, a Bachelors in Music Education and a minor in

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