



# School district addresses safety

by Cindy Glasson

Parents and members of the community were invited to a public informational meeting at the auditorium on Monday to hear about the safety measures that are in place and the next steps in the process.

“We built these buildings so the students could learn,” Superintendent Dustin Hunt said. “We need to keep students and staff safe while they’re in here.”

The purpose of the meeting was to primarily deal with active shooter situations and what the district has done to be prepared.

The first line of defense is the ALICE (alert,

lockdown, inform, counter, evacuate) training the employees have gone through, followed by building changes and district priorities.

“Our worst enemy is denial,” Hunt said. “It is unbelievable and unfortunate. The Columbine shooting seemed so isolated, but we absolutely need to be prepared. We have a moral obligation to keep our students safe.”

Just as there are layers of safety measures with fire – fire drills, rendezvous spots – we will have layers of safety for students in an active shooter situation.

All of the school personell have been through the ALICE training and there are currently

four certified trainers in the district who can not only train new-hires, but continue with regular training of all employees.

Hunt said they have been doing not only the physical drills themselves, but mental drills with different situations as well.

“We sit down and create scenarios,” Hunt said. “Then we say ‘if this happens, what do we do?’ We have crisis teams five deep with plans as well as an emergency medical team and a team to get students to their parents (recovery team).”

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courtesy photo

## No shoes, no struggle

Kansas fugitive Jeremy Breeden was arrested off north 12th Street near an old stone water tower last Friday. Breeden was apprehended without incident and had socks but no shoes on.

# Captured

## Kansas fugitive arrested in Thermopolis

by Mark Dykes

Though it was the Thermopolis Police Department that made the collar on Jeremy Breeden Friday afternoon, it really was a community effort that helped to capture the fugitive.

The hunt for Breeden began on Monday, April 23, when local law enforcement were notified he could be in the area. Along with his brother, Cody, and a third unidentified subject, Breeden was wanted in connection with the attempted murder of 19-year-old Trenton Penn of Minneapolis, Kan., who was found a hotel in Junction City, Kan. on March 29. According to the Junction City Police Department, Cody was arrested by U.S. Marshals in Fremont County.

Jeremy, however, remained on the run for nearly a week. Thermopolis Police provided regular information as the search continued, though as days passed with no official word of whether Jeremy was located, tension seemed to build and questions came about as to whether the man would actually be located or if he was even still in town. Residents made sure to keep their homes and vehicles locked, and that they had something to protect themselves if the need arose.

Thermopolis Police Chief Steve Shay said they were advised by the U.S. Marshals that a subject wanted in Kansas was in the community in a particular home. The occupant, Shay said, was arrested and gave consent for police, the marshals and Hot Springs County Sheriff’s Office to search the home but there was no sign of Breeden. However, during a subsequent search of the home stolen weapons and drugs were located and an individual was subsequently arrested.

Shay did not disclose who was arrested or who the homeowner was, as those matters are still under active investigation.

As the week continued, Shay said the department received multiple reports of people seeing Breeden and officers searched several homes, businesses and areas around town. On Friday morning, they received word of an individual matching the description of the fugitive had been sighted by someone, that he approached a person at their home and asked to use their phone, and the person threatened to call the police.

The subject left and was last seen heading west in the direction of the Cody loop highway. Members of the Thermopolis Police Department, Hot Springs County Search and Rescue, Hot Springs

County Sheriff’s Office and the Thermopolis Volunteer Fire Department began a search of the area and went door to door checking homes. Among the tools used in the search was thermal imaging equipment from the fire department.

Meanwhile, those with scanners listened intently to the traffic coming across for any word as to what was happening. Some of those listening kept their eyes on the western horizon for any signs of movement, while others kept their fire-arms close at hand.

Shay said in searching nearby homes they found many doors that were unsecured, and while there were reports of subjects found in homes it was not who they were looking for.

Hot Springs County School District No. 1 also did its part, putting school buildings on low-level lockdowns to ensure students and staff were safe and sending out messages so parents knew where they could pick up their kids.

Finally, at about 3:50 p.m. Friday, Breeden was spotted near an old stone water tank off North 12th Street. Officers responded and took him into custody without incident. Shay noted Breeden was provided water, and though he looked worse for wear he didn’t have any injuries that required hospitalization.

As of Wednesday Breeden was still in custody at Hot Springs County Jail. County Attorney Jerry Williams reported Breeden has waived extradition and Shay said he was not doing any further investigation of him and he had no business asking questions of Breeden. The police chief further added he wants the fugitive gone and is not pressing charges as anything that could be put on him locally would “pale in comparison” to what he’s facing in Kansas.

It was a very long week, Shay and Police Sergeant Pat Cornwell agreed, as they both were up for over 27 hours from Monday into Tuesday when the first advisories from the U.S. Marshals came in. Shay noted they remained vigilant until they knew for sure he was caught, and at one time they had to let the pressure up to bring Breeden out of hiding.

In addition to working with local agencies, Shay and Cornwell noted they also worked with the Worland Police Department as they had learned Breeden might have contacts in that town. Both officers were appreciative of the other agencies, and Cornwell said it was nice to have so much help in apprehending Breeden.

# Town council looks over tourism reports

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday evening at the Thermopolis Town Council meeting, Travel and Tourism Director Amanda Moeller presented a report on how Hot Springs County did in 2017. The county saw 88,000 overnight visitors, which was a bit down from the 97,000 the previous year, Moeller said, a surprise considering the eclipse. Moeller said the same company does the report every year, and the method is the same.

The county did bring in \$24.7 million through direct Travel and Tourism expenditures from travel last year. That supports 280 jobs and contributed about a half million dollars in sales tax collections. If there were no travel and tourism in Hot Springs County, Moeller explained, it would cost every household an added \$658 in property taxes to make up for what tourists bring in. Unemployment, she said, would be at 15 percent rather than five.

Moeller further noted the commissioned lodging study, which shows hotel occupancy has been on a steady decline over the past several years. Travel and Tourism, Moeller said, has set a goal as to how tourism can be improved and has a continuing PR campaign to encourage people to take pride in their community. The goal is to find a way to fix our occupancy rate and become a major tourist destination. Currently Hot Springs County is ranked 20th among the 23

counties by overnight visitors, total expenditures and tax revenue.

Travel and Tourism’s budget took a 25 percent hit this coming fiscal year, and as a result funding for special events is being phased out over the next three years. The board, Moeller said, is working to maximize the efficiency of the advertising money. One of the things she hears quite a bit is that Thermopolis has so much to offer, but at the same time there’s the question of why we don’t

have more people here.

Moeller also noted in a recent community leaders survey there were several comments made about local government, and she encouraged council to read through them.

Mayor Mike Mortimore noted in his previous time as mayor there was a focus on summer tourism. “We didn’t concentrate on the winter; we knew our money

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# Commissioners approve enhanced 9-1-1 system

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners approved the leasing of a new enhanced 9-1-1 system for the county at their Tuesday morning meeting.

Dean Peranteaux who handles all the IT services for the county, estimates our current system will have a massive failure within the next six to 12 months. Peranteaux, along with a committee consisting of first responders and emergency management, reviewed several proposals for a new system before narrowing their choice down to a new Motorola system from ECW, Emergency Call Works.

The ECW system is being used in surrounding towns, and while it is not the least expensive option, it is the one with the most comprehensive package.

The 10-year lease option includes the hardware, refresh software, maintenance and upgrades, all in one set price of \$274,978.

The lease is at 5.05% interest for the 10-year period, so the commissioners are going to check into other financing options.

Another piece that could be added to the system is from a company called Comtek-CTC.

It is a text to 9-1-1 option that is prevalent in other areas and would be a good thing to have in the event a flood were to disable the phone system.

The commissioners are going to look into other financing options before making their final decision at their next meeting.

Maintenance supervisor Anthony Fruciano let the commissioners know

the museum is almost up and running like normal.

Most of the areas are open for visitors, but it will probably be two to three weeks before it arrives. There is also work going on remodeling the kitchen.

Fruciano suggested the museum needs updated fire alarms. Currently, there is a break in alarm system that goes directly to dispatch, but the smoke alarms are simply household alarms.

If they had had smoke detectors that went directly to dispatch, the fire would have been caught as soon as it started and there would have been less damage.

Fruciano has received a bid for \$13,300 for that type of system, but said it was not an immediate need, but one that definitely needs to be

discussed in the future.

Fortunately, other than the \$500 deductible, all of the damage at the museum is being covered by insurance.

Emergency Management Coordinator Bill Gordon said he is really comfortable with the run-off situation this year. He said barring any huge weather event, there is 17 1/2 feet of fillable space in the lake at this time.

Gordon said the river flows will go up as usual, perhaps as high as 5,000 cfs. He will be monitoring the small creeks and streams as he normally does, but doesn’t see any major flooding on the horizon.

The final item of business by the commissioners was setting the salaries for the elected officials. Those salaries must be set every four years.

This year, they are not asking for a raise for themselves, but would rather see a raise for their employees who have not had a raise in four years.

What they are proposing is a \$150 per month increase for the employees for the first year, a \$100 per month increase the second year, followed by \$75 and \$50 increases the third and fourth years.

For themselves, they would forego a raise this year. The second year they would like a \$150 per month raise then \$100 per month the third and fourth year.

The commissioners were not ready to discuss the employees raises at this time, but will take it up again closer to setting the budget. They did, however, accept the suggested raise scale proposed by the elected officials.