

Grandmother finds new meaning in her Mother's Day **3**

Final home track meet here on Friday afternoon **6**

Dinosaur Center to open a new outlet in Cody **7**

Precipitation total highest since 2005 **11**

Thermopolis Hot Springs

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Voters OK one tax, reject other

by Pat Schmidt

The 4% lodging tax was overwhelmingly reinstated and the one-fourth penny sales tax for economic development failed miserably in the special election on Tuesday.

The lodging tax passed 748-390 unofficially, with 66% in favor.

The sales tax to assist efforts by the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Economic Development Company (EDC) failed 209-929, with 81% opposed.

The voter turnout was very low, just 1,141 voters of 2,663 registered, 43%. That compares to 2,563 in the November general election and 1,517 in the August primary election.

Motels and campgrounds will be able to resume charging the lodging tax in October. It will not be collected from July through September due to officials failing to get the question on the general election ballots last November and in 2006.

The lodging tax question will again be on the ballot in the 2012 general election.

It raised approximately \$170,000 last year. The lodging tax board composed of people appointed by the county commissioners and town council members decides where to spend the money in an effort to attract more visitors.

The EDC had hoped to decrease its reliance on

funding from the county and Town of Thermopolis. Past funding has also come from the chamber of commerce, individuals and businesses, as well as grants.

Lodging tax vote

The lodging tax vote by precinct, votes for and against, people voting, registered voters and percent of registered people voting:

Prec.	Yes	No	Tot.	Reg.	%
Thermop 1	257	104	361	879	41
Thermop 2	201	120	324	733	44
East 3	250	140	390	892	44
West 4	40	26	66	159	42
Total	748	390	1,141	2,663	43

Precincts 1 and 2 are in Thermopolis. Precinct 3 includes East Thermopolis, Kirby and roughly the east side of the county. Precinct 4 is the west side of the county.

Sales tax vote

The EDC one-fourth penny sale tax vote by precinct:

Prec.	Yes	No	Tot.	Reg.	%
Thermop 1	86	275	361	879	41
Thermop 2	62	261	324	733	44
East 3	52	336	390	892	44
West 4	9	57	66	159	42
Total	209	929	1,141	2,663	43



Hot Springs County High School senior Haeley Dorman proudly points to the 3-on-3 basketball championship she and Jade Gonsalez and Brittney and Jannel Scheuerman of Worland captured on Saturday. For more on the annual Thermopolis event, turn to page 7. —Pat Schmidt photo

Canyon vandals nabbed

by Jonathan Green

"Hot under the collar," was how Wyoming Highway Patrol trooper Sam Donahue described a motorist who tipped him off to vandalism in Wind River Canyon.

Donahue was fueling his patrol vehicle at the Wyoming Department of Transportation shop south of Thermopolis April 19. A little before 4 p.m. the motorist barreled out of his car to report of youths spray painting rocks near the north mouth of the canyon.

Donahue quickly found the car at the first pullout south of the Wedding of the Waters, he said. The youngsters had gone into hiding, but he called them out.

It was not clear whether the vandals were inside or outside the boundaries of the Wind River Indian Reservation, although Donahue did know they were not on the highway right-of-way, so he called out Hot Springs County sheriff's deputy A.J. Helm.

Several of them were from the Worland area.

They had been painting their names on rocks near the river, Donahue said.

The children were detained and their parents were asked to pick them up.

The incident has been referred to Hot Springs County attorney Jerry Williams to resolve the jurisdictional question before proceeding with formal charges.

RT unveils details of its four-year plan to link all of Thermopolis with fiber optic communications

by Jonathan Green

The installation of fiber optic lines to homes and businesses in Thermopolis will take about four years, according to RT Communications engineering manager Jim Jackson.

He addressed the Thermopolis Town Council Tuesday evening after learning federal officials had approved the company's federal financing earlier that day. Jackson said the installation should be unobtrusive in business areas along the

Broadway corridor because the company already has heavy conduit running from its building in the 300 block of Broadway to 14th Street.

The first portion of work should be completed in about a year and will encompass the central business district west along Broadway to 14th Street. He said work will radiate from there until all of Thermopolis is connected.

He said RT plans to do similar conversions in rural parts of

the county over the next decade. Fiber lines have been laid to the Red Rock Commercial Center and a project to lay fiber to Black Mountain is starting.

Residential installation should cause minimal fuss, he said. With utility lines in the alleys, a "godsend," front streets will not be damaged. Jackson is writing the bid request to minimize trench work, instead focusing on boring under streets, etc.

He told the council except for

the heaviest internet users, customers should not expect big differences immediately after the network installation. Instead, he said RT considers the move "keeping up with the Joneses" and an infrastructure upgrade to support new technologies.

He said internet speeds will be in the range of 15-30 megabits per second (Mbps). The current RT DSL offering is 1.5 Mbps, while Bresnan offers cable internet at 8 and 15 Mbps.

Jackson said the infrastruc-

ture would support up to 100 Mbps.

The 15 Mbps is the speed from each individual house or business into RT's "backbone," or main network line connecting users to computers outside the state. Jackson said RT owns a sturdy backbone in Wyoming and is working on upgrading links to out-of-state operators.

RT will not rewire homes or businesses, he said. The company will provide a single port at each service point with a jack.

Valuation to climb here: \$268 million

An estimated Hot Springs County valuation of \$268.7 million was presented by assessor Shelley Deromedi at the county commission meeting Tuesday.

Deromedi made the estimate for the 2009-10 fiscal year based on production numbers for 2008 from four of the top seven oil producers in the county. Final figures will not be available until after July 1.

The county valuation for the current year is \$194.9 million. If the estimate holds, a tax levy of one mill that raised approximately \$195,000 this year will raise \$269,000 next year.

The estimates by category:
• Current locally assessed, \$43.1 million
• State assessed-utilities, railroad \$7.9 million
• Hard minerals, \$85,966
• Oil production during 2007, \$216.6 million
• Gas production during 2007, \$1 million

INTERESTINGLY in early March, former county commissioner Tom Sullivan, who operates Cork Petroleum here, estimated the valuation would be at least \$260 million.

His figures, just \$8 million low, were reported in the March 12 Independent Record.

Sullivan also issued an early warning that the county valuation would plummet the following fiscal year, based on the drastic drop in the price of oil produced here. This week, almost two months later, state officials issued the same warning.

County officials will be figuring their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year with the knowledge the county valuation could be closer to \$100 million than \$200 million in fiscal year 2010-11.



A Casper College player prepares to slam the basketball through the hoop during the annual 3-on-3 dunk contest on Saturday. The tournament, which attracted 280 teams and over 1,000 players, drew rave reviews for being better organized. —Pat Schmidt photo

S&R wants land from school, near fire hall

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County commissioners voted Tuesday to offer \$75,000 to the Hot Springs County School District for land to build a new search and rescue facility.

The eight-tenths of an acre is directly south of the new fire hall on 14th Street. When the fire hall was built, the school board turned down a fire district proposal to acquire the land.

After finding out the county was looking at the land for a search and rescue building, the fire district decided to support the search and rescue project, according to commission chairman Brad Basse.

County attorney Jerry Williams, a fireman, said a zoning variance will be needed to change the land use.

Highway projects

Shelly Carlson, District 5 engineer for the Wyoming Department of Transportation, presented a review of projects for the coming years.

Three specific items will need addressed, including the radius' on the high school approaches to improve bus' ability to enter and exit, separating the through traffic to the State Park from the parking lot atmosphere in front of the school and the chamber of commerce and aligning parking approaches on the east end of the

high school to make movement in and out of the school and on to the highway easier.

No WYDOT highway projects are slated for the county this year.

Runway cracks

Basse said more cracks have appeared in the airport runway since its last repair 18 months ago, according to a report from GDA Engineers and the state. The cracks must be sealed before going ahead with the planned seal coat.

The county would have to pay 20% of the costs, an additional \$12,760 for the crack seal.

The county commissioners voted to move ahead with the project.

College scholarships

Three winners were selected from among six Hot Springs County High School applicants for \$1,000 county commissioner college scholarships. The winners will be announced at the senior awards program.

Other business included:

• Signing a mutual aid agreement for wildland fire management.

• Approved the WyoLink membership agreement for emergency communications management.

• Approved an election equipment maintenance contract totaling \$12,945.

Prayer service Thursday

A public prayer service will be held Thursday in Bicentennial Park as part of National Day of Prayer from 12:15-12:30 p.m.

The event was started with a proclamation on April 21, 2008. President George W. Bush said, in part, "The Congress, by

Public Law 100-37, as amended, has called on our Nation to reaffirm the role of prayer in our society by recognizing each year a 'National Day of Prayer.'" For details, call Risen Son Baptist Church, 864-4287, or St. Francis Catholic Church, 864-2674.