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Commissioners to decide on
new clerk at March 14 meeting

by Cindy Glasson

With the recent resignation of Hot Springs County Clerk Hans Odde, a replacement will need to be put in place within the next couple of weeks.

To that end, the Hot Springs County Commissioners discussed the procedure for choosing the next county clerk during their meeting Tuesday.

The Hot Springs County Republican Central Committee will be selecting three candidates for the commissioners to choose from at a public meeting to be held at the County Annex next Wednesday night, March 12. The meeting will begin at 6 p.m.

Once the committee chooses the final three candidates, the commissioners will hold closed-door interviews Friday, March 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

At 2 p.m. the commissioners will publicly announce their choice and hope to have the new clerk sworn in that afternoon.

County Road and Bridge Superin-

tendent Dave Schlager reported to the commissioners about recent flooding in the county when temperatures finally managed to get out of the single digits.

The majority of the flooding was around the Lane 7 area south of Thermopolis.

According to Schlager, the issue is primarily a problem with the Wyoming Department of Transportation's (WYDOT) drainage system in the area. Culverts that would normally take flood waters under the highway and down to the river were frozen and clogged with debris, preventing the water from flowing out of the area.

Schlager has been in contact with WYDOT regarding the issue and hopes a solution can be reached soon – before spring rains begin.

It was also noted that some larger piping is going to be needed in the area as well. Some new approaches and driveways have been constructed that do not have big enough culverts to carry

the water away from the properties.

Plumbing issues during trial
Maintenance supervisor Chuck Carver filled the commissioners in on a situation that occurred during the recent murder trial held at the courthouse.

Carver told the commissioners about a plumbing problem on the first day of the trial, when jury selection was in full swing.

Apparently the sewer system at the courthouse could not handle the amount of activity and backed up, something he said had been a problem off and on for a couple of years.

Carver said the problem has occurred in a different place each time, but it appears the blockage has been taken care of – for the time being. He did say he did not see a reason to spend approximately \$400 to have a plumber's camera brought in to further investigate the issue.

State wrestling supremacy



Thermopolis' Ryan Bradshaw, above, and fellow junior Vinchinzo Castle captured individual Class 2A state wrestling championships Saturday. Senior Zack Larson won a second-place medal and senior Jon Burrows finished fifth. A state recap and more photos are on page 6 of this issue of the Independent Record. – Tony Larson photo

Senate File calling for special session dies in state legislature

by Cindy Glasson

With the final days of the 2014 Wyoming State Legislature's Budget Session coming to a close, bills are dying one after the other due to a variety of reasons, including inaction.

One of those bills was Senate File (SF) 106, the bill that would have called for a special session to look at the Superintendent of Public Instruction po-

sition again.

According to Hot Springs County's Rep. Nathan Winters, the Wyoming Supreme Court gave its final ruling on the appeal of its previous ruling that last year's SF 104 was unconstitutional.

"That caused some in the House to consider bringing the issue back up," Winters said. "I disagreed. The Supreme Court's

ruling stated: 'Efforts should be made to achieve constitutional compliance as quickly as possible.' This is a very blunt statement for the Supreme Court and seems to say, 'return the duties of the superintendent to pre-SF104 days as quickly as possible.'"

Winters went on to say, "In the future, if there is a push to change the duties of one of the

constitutional offices, it would be better to bring a constitutional amendment and allow the people to make such sweeping changes.

"From the beginning, I said that it is ill-advised to step between the elected and the electorate."

State budget update

The legislature has been looking at a \$3.3 billion budget over

the last few weeks, trying to figure out where cuts can be made and how best to balance the funds available to the Cowboy State.

Winters indicated not everything needed to complete the budget has come through yet, but overall, they have managed to maintain a flat budget this year.

"I fought for funding for our senior centers," Winters said. "Last year they were shorted money

in their budget due to an error in state administration. We restored that funding and brought them into line with their recommended budget."

That will be good news to the Hot Springs County Senior Citizens Center that has been running on a shoestring budget while still trying to provide quality services to the many seniors in the county.

Early childhood intervention funded for one year

by Karla Pomeroy
Basin Republican-Rustler

This past week's hot topic for constituents of Senate District 20 has been early childhood intervention funding.

Sen. (R-Worland) said he has received a lot of emails encouraging the funding. In the original budget approved by the Senate there was funding for two years. He said it was an issue that had to go to conference committee. He was informed by Sen. Eli Bebout that the compromise was to split the funding and fund for one year and revisit the line item next year in the supplemental budget bill.

"People want me to vote against that, but I can't do it since it's in the budget and we have to pass the budget bill," Geis said.

Another budget item he is concerned with is leaving the power up to the governor on Medicaid expansion. "It's in his power now. I'd've just as soon held it and taken a closer look at it next year. We have time but people are concerned about the federal funding," Geis said.

As last week, Geis said he felt the state spent a lot of money in this year's budget, including providing more funding to the University of Wyoming beyond what had been recommended.

UW funding

According to the University of Wyoming, the state budget bill approved by the Wyoming State Legislature Monday provides funding for UW employee pay raises, upgrades in the College of Engineering and Applied Science, facilities

improvement and maintenance, and matching dollars for a variety of projects.

The Legislature appropriated a total of \$12.5 million in ongoing dollars for UW employee pay raises over the next two years, the first such increase since 2009. That equates to an overall 2.35 increase in the 2014-15 fiscal year and a 2.35 percent boost in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Partially offsetting the effects of the salary adjustments is the fact that the Legislature did not appropriate money to cover mandatory increases in employees' share of contributions to the state retirement system. Those contributions will increase .375 percent over the next two years, meaning that the actual average pay increase for UW employees in the state retirement system will be about 2 percent each of the next two

years, instead of 2.35 percent.

UW President Dick McGinity noted that a \$22.7 million reduction in state funding to UW for the current biennium has pinched units across the university, including the elimination of 54 faculty and staff positions through attrition.

There is \$27.5 million allocated on one-time projects, in addition to other ongoing costs.

Speed limit on interstates

In other legislation, Geis said he opposes House Bill 12 that sets a maximum speed limit on interstate highways at 80 mph instead of the current 75. "You can do 80 right now (with law enforcement usually giving a 5 mph cushion before making a traffic stop), with this people are going to want to go 85, where do you

stop," he said.

Geis said he supports HB48, which would allow the use of artificial light while fishing on certain lakes. He said there are a few lakes in Wyoming where you can't catch the fish during daylight hours. The Game and Fish will have the authority to specify which lakes and streams artificial light can be used for the taking of fish.

According to Geis, the legislative leadership is expecting to be able to adjourn by noon today (Thursday).

Geis said House Bills are moving quickly through the Senate. "The House Majority Leader did us a big favor. He left 50 bills in the House. This is the first time I remember the Senate passing more bills to the House. It saved us a lot of time and wear and tear."

Dr. Seuss' birthday



Ralph Witters Elementary kindergartners Alexis Hamlin, Cody Bomengen and Celeste Nelson took part in the "Hats Off to Dr. Seuss" assembly Friday at RWE. Dr. Se-

uss' 110th birthday was Saturday, but the elementary school celebrated it early with readings, presentations and lots of "Cat in the Hat" hats. – Drew Foster photo

Deannexation request
rejected by council via
3-2 vote Tuesday night

by Drew Foster

The Thermopolis Town Council on Tuesday night rejected a local man's request for de-

annexation from town limits. One of the sticking points was Steve Jellis' desire to fire guns on his property in northwest Thermopolis.

The council voted 3-2, denying the request. Mayor Bill Malloy and councilmen Dusty Lewis and Tony Larson voted no.

The councilmen Mike Mortimore and Mark Nelson voted in favor of approving the deannexation.

"The only problem I have in this is the...firearms being shot off that close to town," Larson said. "That's why I'm voting no."

After the vote, Jellis, who requested in February that the council deannex his 119.5 acres from Thermopolis town limits,

sought clarification on the vote.

"Am I still in (town) limits?" he asked the council.

Yes, Malloy said.

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The only problem I have is firearms being shot off that close to town.

Town councilman
Tony Larson

"Then I'll be running for mayor," Jellis declared.

"Well, you have to do what you have to do," Malloy said.

Outside the meeting, Jellis didn't stand by the remark.

Jellis had approached the council Feb. 4 ask-

ing to have his property deannexed from town limits. He said at the time that his daughter wanted to raise a steer, and he wanted to shoot guns and light fireworks on his property. Thermopolis ordinance forbids lighting fireworks within five miles of town limits, so even if his request were approved that still likely would not have been a possibility.