

State parks meeting tonight

Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources Director Milward Simpson returns to Thermopolis Thursday, September 18, as he continues a series of monthly town hall meetings to discuss issues concerning Hot Springs State Park.

The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. at the Hot Springs County Museum.

Keeping with the pattern of focusing each meeting on a relevant theme, Simp-

son and other members of the Division of State Parks, Historic Sites and Trails plan to discuss community economic development during the meeting. The meeting will feature a panel of regional experts on economic development and tourism.

Any groups or members of the public who wish to meet with Mr. Simpson during this visit or during visits in subsequent months are asked to call (307) 777-7496.



Paving under way at new HSC airport

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners met Tuesday afternoon and received an update on the airport, granted a bid for a new road grader, and approved a subdivision as well as a well permit.

It has been a long time coming, but GDA Engineers informed the commissioners the first strip of test pavement was laid at the new Hot Springs County airport west of Thermopolis on Monday. The strip passed all the testing required by the Federal Aviation Administration and the Wyoming Department of Transportation's Aeronautics Division, so full blown paving of the apron area began on Wednesday morning.

The apron area will be followed by paving of the runway, the taxi-ways will be next and finally access roads. Paving should be complete in the next two weeks.

Dave Schlager, director of the road and bridge department, has taken the last few weeks to look over the bids provided for a new road grader for the county.

At the meeting, the commissioners took Schlager's advice and awarded the bid to John Deere for a 770GP grader in the amount of \$211,275.

Half of the cost will be paid up front with the remainder to be financed through Bank of Thermopolis who provided the best offer to the county.

The commissioners also approved a land use change for a single lot subdivision on a 6.1-acre parcel of land at the intersection of Black Mountain Road and East River Road owned by Dee Hillberry.

The land use change would take the property from agricultural to residential.

The commissioners also approved a preliminary plat of the subdivision.

Jack and Ellen Baird were granted a well permit by the commissioners during the meeting.

"Ellen and Jack #1" will be located on the Baird's property on Buffalo Creek Road and will be dug no more than 50 feet deep.

Gretchen Hurley, who has reviewed well permits for the county for many years, will no longer be able to do so. The commissioners plan to contact other engineers in the area in an effort to replace her.



Cindy Hart enjoys a game of Plinko during the Friends of the NRA banquet Saturday.

-Cindy Glasson photo

Fun at the Friends of the NRA banquet

by Lara Love

Attendance numbers may have been down at the Friends of the NRA Banquet Saturday but spirits were high. Ninety-nine people bought tickets to the event.

The banquet raised a gross total of just over

\$33,000. Figures for net were not available.

The event had 23 firearms that were available to be auctioned, raffled or won as prizes during the evening.

There was a bucket of .22 bullets available to be won that was surprise item.

Six members of 4-H shooting sports helped out during the event by running the Plinko game and more. A supporter from Green River donated a Savage 93 in 17HMR which he won back to be raffled off to attendees under the age of 16. Destiny Harris won the rifle.

Arrest not a simple process, takes time

by Cindy Glasson

At a recent meeting of the Prevention Coalition it was generally agreed that there is a problem with drugs and alcohol in Hot Springs County. Education is the key to getting the information out to the public about what the process is from investigation to incarceration, so the following is the first in a series of articles that will take the public from beginning to end, from arrest to sentencing.

It all starts with a phone call. It may take months of investigation. There may be months of gathering evidence. There will be countless hours of filling out reports – pages and pages of reports. But it all starts with a phone call.

You've noticed something unusual going on at a neighbor's house and you're afraid there may be drug use going on or drugs being sold from the house. You call the police department and report what you've seen, hoping to see police cruisers flying up to their front door any minute to haul them off to jail.

Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work that way. After all, this isn't television and it's definitely not "COPS."

According to Thermopolis Police Chief, Mike Chimenti, that phone call is very important in getting the process started.

"This is a community problem," Chimenti said. "We have to gather and evaluate information from citizens and anyone else we can get it from."

What the police department does with that information is critical and there is a big difference between in-

formation and actual evidence.

Chimenti said the department has to evaluate the reliability of every tip they get. Is the information reliable? Is the person providing the information credible?

Just checking the veracity of a resource can be an exhausting process taking months to evaluate. The department gets in a great deal of information on any given case and while some of the information is useful, some will be irrelevant, also.

In either case, though, it all has to be checked out.

The department has to look into the availability of witnesses, the name and location of the subject, a physical description, identification of the subject and their comings and goings.

Is there traceable property; eg: drugs going from the subject to another person? Is there a pattern developing? Is there significant, useful physical evidence?

When all the "i's" are dotted and all the "t's" crossed, the information goes to the county attorney, Jerry Williams, who determines if there is enough evidence for a search warrant.

"You scratch my back..."

Even with all the help from the community, the police still cannot do the job all on their own. That's where other agencies in Wyoming and across the US come into play.

"Information sharing sometimes helps us pull it all together," Chimenti said. "It can really become like a ring, trading information we have about a subject they're looking for and they give us information on a subject we're looking at."

Chimenti said none of this happens overnight, largely in part because unlike CSI on television, we don't have a full crime lab in town where they can work around the clock on just our

local cases.

Evidence that needs any kind of processing, from fingerprints to DNA samples, must be packaged and sent to the crime lab in Cheyenne.

"And that's not a fast process either," he said. "Say there's a homicide in Fremont County and a burglary in Hot Springs County. We gather all our evidence, fingerprints and whatnot, and send it all to Cheyenne."

"The homicide investigation will take precedence over our burglary, sending us down to the bottom of the pile. That's why things take so long sometimes."

Cheyenne cannot always handle the lab work either and it has to be sent out of state to a specialized lab.

And then you wait on the paperwork.

Every piece of evidence has to be processed in some way and not all the evidence gathered in a case is going to be significant or even relevant. In some cases they find nothing in the evidence that would lead to a conviction, slowing or even stopping the case entirely.

Again, the reports and the evidence are all presented to the county attorney to determine whether or not an arrest warrant will be issued.

Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork
The questions asked

most often by locals are, "Why does this all take so long? Can't you just arrest them and get them off the street?"

It's a little more complicated than that.

In addition to all the evidence gathering and processing, the search warrants and investigation there is a mountain of paperwork that has to go with every case that comes through the department.

The paperwork can be literally several inches thick in the file before the arrest warrant is issued.

With just six officers on the force, they cannot be everywhere at once and part of that problem is the required paperwork that must be completed before a subject is, in fact, taken to jail.

"It's not like it used to be," Chimenti said. "Do you know it takes four hours to process all the paperwork for a DUI? (Driving Under the Influence) The officer that makes the stop has to complete that paperwork before heading out on the street again."

"There are new techniques we're learning all the time. We just don't do things the same way anymore."

And then there is the education portion of the job that officers must complete.

Initially, they are required to complete 13 weeks of basic training. Beyond that, officers must complete 40 hours of additional training every two years in areas such as assault investigations, evidence packaging and handling, interview and interrogation techniques and courtroom testimony.

That takes officers off the streets again according to Chimenti.

