

Christmas Tree Festival Dec. 4

by Zachary White

The Thermopolis Christmas Tree and Wreath Festival is quickly approaching at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center.

Red Rock Family Practice and the dinosaur center have partnered up to do the event this year and the proceeds are going to the Community Fund.

Wreath pickups have started already and tree decoration starts Friday and trees can be decorated until Dec. 1.

The wreaths and trees will be on display in the dinosaur center until the

dinner and auction Dec. 4.

For more information about the festival, contact Red Rock Family Practice at 864-5534.

Hand-crafted dollhouse

The Rotary Club will be selling a large hand-crafted dollhouse during the Christmas Tree and Wreath Festival at the Wyoming Dinosaur Center Dec. 4.

The dollhouse was a heavily sought after item the last time it was bid on at the tree festival when rotary won it, and Karen Sinclair, of Thermopolis

Hardware, said she hopes the same energy comes into the auction this year.

The reason for her hope stems from the fact that money raised by selling the dollhouse will go towards a fund she believes in.

"That money (will) be used for the new fetal heart monitor for the hospital," Sinclair said.

The fetal heart monitor costs \$30,000 but the hospital board agreed that they would pay a matching grant of up to \$15,000. That means for every dollar that the town raises for the heart monitor,

the hospital will pay a dollar.

Originally the dollhouse was donated to the rotary club when it was only half finished. Since it was first donated, rotary has completed putting the dollhouse together. Sinclair said it took a long time to finish the project.

"Hundreds of man hours went into building it," she said.

Rotary ended up winning the dollhouse the last time it went up for auction, but the hope is to raise even more money this year to pay for the heart monitor.



Hand-painted magic

Jacqueline Polson decorates one of the ornaments Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital Foundation members were selling at the Holiday Affair Saturday at Thermopolis Middle School. —Zachary White photo

Supper Club approval goes to commissioners

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs Land Use Planning Commission met last week to discuss a "fast track" proposal for a home based business.

Linda Hughes is proposing a members only supper club off Bar None Road south of Thermopolis.

Hughes indicates there would be no limit to the number of memberships that will be available, there would be Friday and Saturday night dinners for between 40 and 60 members, a traditional "high tea" on Sunday's for the ladies and occasional events such as wedding receptions on the property.

What she is proposing is not a full service restaurant or bar, but if that should change in the future, additional approval would be required.

The road to the property could be a problem as it comes directly off the highway. Sight distance, especially from the south could be an issue with additional traffic in and out of the property.

Hughes has an access easement to her property down Bar None Road that was granted by road owners, Harvey and Lois Seidel, but it is for residential use, not commercial use.

The impetus behind the supper club is to raise donations for Hot Springs Hospice, something Hughes believes is of vital importance in our aging community.

She indicated she had been in contact with members of Hospice to tell them about her proposal, hoping to

have a hospice house built within two years.

According to Hughes, starting a hospice house would run in the area of a million dollars to start with costs going forward in the half-million dollars per year range.

In order to continue her donations to the cause, Hughes said the membership monies would be donated to hospice and hopes to be able to donate at least half of the cost of each meal to the program.

Opposition

Seidel's spoke in opposition to the plan and included letters for the commission to review.

There was also a letter from the Hot Springs Conservation District asking the commission not approve the proposal.

Seidel's concerns are the impact the business would have on the land, the road and the significant increase in traffic past his home.

"With the new information that is added by Mr. Bowman (Hot Springs County Planner) tonight of an English High Tea on Sundays, in our opinion this is getting way beyond an acceptable home business venture," Seidel said.

Hughes said she had been in contact with the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), Russ Dowdy specifically, regarding the possibility of creating another entrance to the property and said she was told there was a

chance she could build her own road.

In an interview with Clint Huckfeldt with WYDOT after the meeting, Huckfeldt said Hughes had been put in touch with the WYDOT office in Basin for paperwork specific to building an alternate entrance to the property.

According to Huckfeldt, he said he is not sure they can create a commercial entrance there because of the limited sight distance, but improvements could be made to the current entrance that might be acceptable to WYDOT's requirements.

Seidel is also concerned with the entrance to the property, indicating the highway merges from two lanes to a single lane where the turn into the property is, which could create, in essence, an "accident waiting to happen" with limited sight distance and the possibility of impaired drivers.

Seidel also pointed out to the commission that Bowman's report stated the requirements shall be in place before operations commence, yet Hughes had already held one event with a second planned for Thanksgiving.

During a recent county commissioners meeting where Hughes asked for a 24-hour liquor permit for Thanksgiving and was denied, county attorney Jerry Williams said the "sneak peek" event she had held the previous week was illegal because none of the necessary permits for the business were in place.

Seidel also takes issue with the possible sale of alcohol on the premises, pointing out that "bring your own

bottle" was used as an alternative, but still promotes drinking and driving from the venue.

Hughes said she intends to use a designated driver, designated drinker practice that, in theory, would eliminate the drinking and driving issue.

"I don't think the noise is conducive to our own privacy," Seidel continued. "I object to an alcohol permit that close to our house. This does not mingle well with the surrounding area."

In her defense, Hughes said as far as a liquor permit is concerned, the "bring your own bottle" idea eliminates the need for a permit since it is like, "you are bringing your own as if you are coming to my home to visit," she said.

She added that she does not see an issue with the privacy for Seidels as they cannot see the barn from their home.

"I think they would actually enjoy it," she said. "I'm promoting something nice, not something tacky and I've invested a lot of money into it."

Board action

At the close of the public meeting portion of the night, commission member Steve Medvigy said he had been in contact with the State Fire Marshal's office and there were some items that would need to be taken care of to bring the barn into compliance with state fire codes.

Medvigy said the fire marshal had indicated once the barn is open to the public it is no longer a private residence and Hughes would need to in-

stall items like a kitchen hood and automatic sprinklers.

Hughes said she does not consider it a public space, but rather a private club as it will be by membership only.

She also told the commission there will be no limit to the number of memberships offered as she wants to be able to provide as much funding to hospice as possible. With nearly 13 acres to work with, Hughes doesn't see any issues with the number of people she will be able to serve at various functions.

Hughes added she had been in contact with local health inspector, Joe Martinez, and he had approved her concept.

In speaking with Martinez after the meeting, he said if Hughes' venture were non-profit like the V.F.W. or FFA for example, she would then fall under the Food Freedom Act, allowing her to serve meals without an inspection from his office.

Eventually, the board moved to pass the decision on to the County Commissioners for final approval, but not before placing more than 10 conditions on the approval.

Included in those conditions are limited seating capacity, limited special events or private parties, no operations after 10 p.m., a commercial easement from the Seidels for the road and bring the facility up to fire code for assembly occupancy prior to commencing operations.

The item will appear before the County Commissioners on Dec. 16.