

Town considers water rate hike

by Zachary White

The Thermopolis Town Council approved a contract Tuesday to have Carr Coatings of Lovell do painting repairs to the Cedar Ridge tank at a cost of \$98,925.

Town engineer Heath Overfield recommended the company following their in-state bid rate being lower than the competition.

"I've never worked with them, but based on their resume they can do it," Overfield said.

Carl Leyba was appointed to the Travel and Tourism Board following a discussion about four applicants for the position.

The applicants were Angie Guyon, Rick Tudor, Carl Leyba and Bob Spain.

John Dorman Sr. voted for Rick Tudor; Tony Larson voted for Angie Guyon; Mike Mortimore voted for Carl Leyba.

The tiebreaker vote was left on the shoulders of Dusty Lewis, who thought Carl Leyba was the best candidate.

However, the council is expecting a possible Travel and Tourism resignation from Ross Rhodes, and Angie Guyon was selected for that position if Rhodes resigns.

The council also discussed possibly raising the base water rate next year due to being in the red this year.

"By law we have to be in the black," Mortimore said.

The rate is currently at \$13.20 a month before usage, and the council discussed possibly adding another \$6.80 charge to bring the base rate up to an even \$20. But council members decided to table further discussion to a later meeting.

Also, the council approved a parade route for the Fourth of July parade. The route will run from Senior Ave., west on Arapahoe Street, turn left at 5th Street, then head West on Broadway where the parade will turn around at the stop light and head back.

Additionally, Overfield said the emergency sewer project taking place on Second Street has been delayed due to rain. When the weather gets better, Wilson Brothers Construction should be finishing up the project.

Board approves one-year contract

by Zachary White

The Travel and Tourism Board approved offering a renewed one-year contract to Cowgirl Consulting to the tune of \$42,500, a five percent increase according to state park superintendent Kevin Skates.

Also, the board approved giving \$1,000 to the Smoking Waters Golf Tournament for their advertising. "They bring a lot of tourists in," Skates said.

He said the tournament brought in approximately 120 golfers last year. Amanda Moeller explained that most of these people stayed the night after the tournament, many because they decided to celebrate after golfing.

The board also approved giving the Greater Learning Foundation \$4,000 as part of their annual budget. However, the approval brought forth some questions about how hard it is to judge what events bring in tourists.

Currently, the Travel and Tourism Board has no way of finding definitive numbers on how many people are staying the night in town due to events.

"We don't know, we really don't know," board member Ernest Cummings said.

Board members discussed different ways that the board could go about collecting some type of numbers on visiting tourists.

One idea is to ask the hotel and motel owners to submit their residency data so the board can tell when events bring in tourists.

"We gotta have everyone giving us the numbers," Cummings said.

But some board members pointed out that owners might not want to share that information.

Still, Dan Moriarity said some is better than none. "If we got half of them we'd still be further ahead than we are now," Moriarity said.

If that method failed, board members also discussed pulling numbers from the state park bathhouse, Wyoming Dinosaur Center and the Chamber of Commerce.

In addition, the board discussed the 3-on-3-basketball tournament at the end of May. According to Moeller, there are currently 18 teams signed up to play.

"That's more than usual from the same time out," Moeller said, explaining that at this rate the town should have more participants than last year.

A bit of old tension took control of the room at one point as Barb Heinze asked why the Thermopolis web sites are so different.

Thermopolis.com and ThermopolisChamber.org were the sites talked about, and Heinze said the Thermopolis.com web site has information that is no longer correct. "The information on the .com site is not the same as the .org site," Heinze said.

Moeller explained that the two sites are separate because one offers every business to tourists, and the other aims to promote the chamber members.

Additionally, Moeller said the site is outdated due to a possible hacker who took over the site recently.

Still, the board said they will update the web site soon as well as work with the chamber of commerce if needed.



Turning the tassel

Tyelynn Myers grins at Ronda Freel as she moves the tassel from the right to the left side of Myers' graduation cap to show she has received her diploma. Thirty-four graduates of Hot Springs County High School were honored Sunday. -Lara Love photo

Commissioners hear HSC jail complaints

by Cindy Glasson

Tuesday's meeting of the Hot Springs County Commissioners was an eclectic mix of approvals for various items, continued discussion regarding a fueling system at the new airport, a request from the Hot Springs County Counseling Center and a room filled with folks looking for some changes at the county jail.

Hot Springs County Airport

One item that is going to be a necessity at the new airport is a fueling system, both for local traffic and for those planes that come in and out of the airport for business or pleasure.

GDA Engineering has looked at various funding options for a fueling system after finding the fueling system at the current airport cannot be moved to the new location per the State Fire Marshall's office.

Those options include a direct loan from the Wyoming Department of Transportation, a grant from the Wyoming Business Council, State Lands and Investment Board funding or a loan from the USDA, to name a few.

The commissioners agree having fuel at the new airport from day one is essential and will be going through all the funding options to find the one best for the county.

Another issue is to decide whether

or not to include fuel for jet engines in addition to regular aircraft fuel, something that is not readily available in the area.

Having fuel for jet propulsion engines could make Hot Springs County a viable stop for corporate and private small jets to refuel.

Counseling center

Al Braaten with the Hot Springs County Counseling Center approached the commissioners with an issue he has been having with the State Department of Health, something he referred to as a "witch hunt."

In March, the state sent a group to the counseling center to look over a number of patient files looking for co-occurring diagnoses, according to Braaten.

Because the Hot Springs center was not supposed to be covering substance abuse cases, the state apparently felt files where a patient has not only a mental health issue but a substance abuse issue were being handled inaccurately.

The counseling center in Basin had previously held the contract for the Big Horn Basin to handle substance abuse cases, but when the time came to bid on the contract again, Basin declined to apply.

The Hot Springs County Counsel-

ing Center, however, did apply for the contract.

According to Braaten, the state told him they would be awarding the contract to the Hot Springs center, but in spite of writing and re-writing an action plan several times, the contract had still not been approved.

One of the counselors at the center has already resigned because of the state issue and another may as well, leaving the center in a predicament.

Braaten told the commissioners he has not seen any other center in the state go through this type of scrutiny and it concerns him that even if they get a contract from the state will it be in the county's best interest to sign it.

He asked the commissioners to step in on the Counselin Center's behalf with the state.

They agreed to talk with the interim committee in June to find out what is going on as it makes no sense to the commissioners to "try to destroy the substance abuse program in Hot Springs County."

Jail issue

Frank Robbins, representing the Set Free Church in Thermopolis, approached the commissioners along with a room full of parishioners to ask them to step in with the Sheriff's department regarding visitation with

prisoners to provide spiritual counseling and ministering.

Robbins has been going to the jail for some time to work with the inmates, giving them drug and alcohol intervention ministry.

His list of concerns with the jail and how it is run includes having to wait sometimes two or three hours to see an inmate, being denied additional access to the jail during different visiting hours and no longer being able to hold Bible studies with the inmates.

Robbins said not only is it difficult for him to see inmates who have specifically asked to see him, but many times the families of the inmates are also made to wait for hours to see their loved ones.

"They're punishing not only those in jail, but everyone that's coming to visit," Robbins said. "I cannot even walk up to the front counter and ask that a Bible be given to a particular inmate. I have to mail it. That means it goes from here to Cheyenne and back at a cost of \$15."

"Facility improvements are needed up there, too. People are having to sit two or three hours with no bathrooms available. Some of these family members are coming from out of town, some from across the state.

"Its not right. Its not fair." Robbins said his church and his

ministering is free to the county, something he gladly does to try to control the revolving door of drugs, alcohol and jail.

Two parishioners also spoke to the commissioners, one telling his story of salvation from drugs and alcohol through Robbins' ministry, and the mother of an inmate who feels her daughter would benefit from being able to receive spiritual counseling.

Unfortunately, there isn't much the county commissioners can do about the situation.

"I want to make it clear, the delineation of duties," commission chair Brad Basse said. "By coming to us, you didn't go over the Sheriff's head. Our only control over the jail and how it is run is purely financial."

"We can help with the facilities, but we have no say over the way the office is run or the jail is run. I appreciate your feelings, I appreciate your work and I respect it."

"Please, continue the dialogue," Basse said.