

by Mark Dykes

According to a report released last Thursday by the Economic Analysis Division of the Wyoming Department of Administration and Information, Hot Springs County experienced a 12.3 percent increase in taxable sales from the second quarter of 2017 to the second quarter of 2018. The figures are based on sales and use tax collections.

According to a Department of Revenue report on monthly sales and use taxes by county and industry, Hot Springs County's highest number was in retail trade, at \$192,534. Other totals were: \$51,610 in mining; \$65,639 in utilities; \$5,907 in construction; \$10,155 in manufacturing; \$18,956 in wholesale trade; \$2,383

in transportation and warehousing; \$10,943 in information; \$216 in finance and insurance; \$9,116 in real estate and rental and leasing; \$649 in professional, scientific and technical services; \$671 in administrative and support and waste; \$77 in educational services; \$68 in health care and social assistance; \$13,150 in arts, entertainment and recreation; \$99,379 in accommodation and food services; \$17,014 in other services except public administration; and \$70,307 in public administration.

For the state, total taxable sales grew 17.9 percent to \$3.9 billion in the first quarter of 2018. Increases occurred in most economic industries, with the largest boost in mining — including oil and gas extraction — which

accounted for over one-third of the total increase. The mining sector experienced a year-over-year expansion of 45.1 percent due to increased sales of equipment, supplies, and services from new energy exploration and production activity.

However, the first quarter amount was still 45.3 percent less than the figures for the fourth quarter of 2014, before the energy downturn. Traditionally, over one-sixth of collections are from the mining industry, therefore the changes in total sales and use tax collections in Wyoming have been greatly affected by the fluctuation in mineral activities. Construction and information were the only industries that experienced declines.



photo by Mark Dykes

Octobrewfest sees some sunshine

by Mark Dykes

The weather was certainly a factor in the fifth annual Oktobrewfest being a popular event this past Saturday.

Though recent years have seen cold and rain for the event, this year had warmer temperatures and at least a bit of sunshine.

Main Street President Suzanne Samelson said based on the amount of mugs, drink tickets and food sold it's estimated about 400 people attended the event.

While beer certainly is a big part of Oktobrewfest — as three different distributors and more than 20 craft beers were present — activities such as the cornhole tournament, bounce house, giant checkers and tic-tac-toe, a colorable mural provided by the Smoking Waters Art Guild and dance performance from Hot Springs Dance LLC are reminders that the event is also geared toward family fun.

Samelson said it's also great to see such collaboration among different entities and individuals, and noted Oktobrewfest also provided an opportunity to show off the clean-up work in Bicentennial Park.

While this work is related to Main Street, Samelson said it actually sprang from a recent place making workshop.

Main Street Treasurer Meri Ann Rush said Oktobrewfest went really well this year, and she heard comments that the music was great and people enjoyed the activities available for children.

Though a date has not been set, Samelson looks forward to doing Oktobrewfest again next year.

Oktobrewfest fun

Kris Mull takes aim while Mel Kress waits for a turn at the Cornhole tournament during Oktobrewfest. In addition to several vendors, the festival had plenty of music and family friendly activities. Though typically cursed by inclement weather, some Saturday warmth made the event much more enjoyable.

Candidates talk issues at forum

by Cindy Glasson and Mark Dykes
Monday night saw a candidates forum at the Thermopolis Middle School Commons, with general election candidates at the federal, state, county and town level provided two minutes to speak about themselves, though there was also time before and after the forum to visit with each individual.

Hot Springs County Attorney

Two attorneys are vying for the Hot Springs County Attorney's seat, incumbent Jerry Williams and newcomer, Jill Logan.

Jill Logan - A University of Wyoming graduate with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration as well as her law degree, Logan has been in Hot Springs County for 10 years.

Her parents were farmers and ranchers and while she is a stay at home mom most of the time and her family is a priority, Logan felt like she needed to do this.

"It's a thankless job," she said. "I don't have near the experience Jerry (Williams) has, but I will make this a priority. Campaigning is not my style, but I felt you deserve to have a choice and I am giving you one."

Jerry Williams - Williams has a private practice in Thermopolis as well as his duties as the current county attorney.

"I have done hundreds and hundreds of jury trials," Williams said. "I have seen thousands of cases over the years. This can be a tough job."

"It breaks down into three categories — the simple crimes like speeding or parking tickets. Then there are the addicts, drugs and alcohol, which we see a majority of, and then the really serious crimes. Those are the ones we

work hardest on. "We always strive for justice, whether its popular or not."

Hot Springs County Commissioners

There are two open seats on the board of Hot Springs County Commissioners this election and three residents looking to fill those seats — Tom Ryan, Jr., Jack Baird and Sonja Becker.

Tom Ryan, Jr. — Ryan is the incumbent seeking re-election and is the current chairman for the commissioners. A University of Wyoming graduate, Ryan, who was born and raised in Thermopolis, moved home in 1985.

"I am committed to serving Hot Springs County," he said. "Its important to give back. One of my high school teachers, Karl Allen, taught me that."

"I am looking forward to some change and some positive things with the county moving forward."

Jack Baird — A lifelong resident of Hot Springs County and rancher for most of his life, Baird is concerned with water issues facing the county.

"I look forward to working on that," he said "And roads are always a big issue. I want to bring my conservative thinking to the board."

Sonja Becker — Becker grew up in Hot Springs County, and even though she is running on the Democratic ticket, she has a lot of conservative values.

"I am here to serve the community," she said. "I could sell my products for more somewhere else, Jackson, for instance, but I want to serve here."

"You can find my resume at the back of the room if you'd like to look at it and it will be at the library, too, if you'd rath-

er look at it there. This really is like a job interview and any job interview I've had, you had to have a resume, so mine is available.

"I do things a little differently and look at things from a different perspective."

Hot Springs County Sheriff

Jeremie Kraushaar will appear on the ballot November 6 as a candidate for sheriff.

Jeremie Kraushaar — This year marks Kraushaar's 15th year with the sheriff's office, having worked his way up to patrol sergeant, the equivalent of undersheriff.

"I will be a working sheriff," Kraushaar said. "I am unbiased and fair as well as fiscally responsible."

"I am one of only 60 drug recognition specialists in the State of Wyoming as well as a child forensics interviewer. We handle a lot of drug cases in the county and I have worked a great deal of them."

"I intend to have a transparent office and am really looking forward to working with a new chief of police."

Hot Springs County School Board

Four candidates of the seven running for the school board were on hand at the forum to introduce themselves and their reasons for running for one of the three open seats.

Jennifer Axtell — A current board member, Axtell is a graduate of Hot Springs County High School as well as a University of Wyoming Graduate and has worked the family ranch for as long as she can remember.

"This (being on the board) has been

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Farm Bureau holds annual meeting

by Mark Dykes

The Hot Springs County Farm Bureau had its annual fall meeting on Saturday at the VFW. Ray Shaffer said the meetings are where they elect officers and meet with their regular members to review resolutions and propose what will go on to the lobbyists for them to work with at the state and national level.

Officers elected include President Paul Ward, Vice President Carl Dockery, Treasurer Carl Shaffer and Secretary Carol Dockery.

The local bureau agreed to move three resolutions forward, Shaffer said. The first is the belief of the Hot Springs County Farm Bureau that Wyoming should be a closed primary system so that people can't change their party affiliation in order to sway elections.

The second resolution addresses the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Shaffer explained when one leases with the BLM he or she is allotted a certain number of animal units (AUMs). However, he pointed out the BLM also manages wild horses and continues to cut back the number of AUMs for domesticated animals. Wild horses, he noted, demolish the land through overgrazing and knocking down fences, among other activities. Under the resolution, Shaffer said, the BLM

would be accountable for damages done by the animals.

The third resolution addresses special interest groups and their shopping for courts, as the Farm Bureau believes the issues need to be adjudicated where they are raised. He gave the example of a special interest group going to Montana to overturn the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to remove grizzly bears in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem from the endangered species list — bringing them under federal management — as a recent case of shopping for courts.

Shaffer said lobbyist Brett Moline, who is also the director of public and governmental affairs for the Wyoming Farm Bureau was also, present at the meeting and provided an idea of what's coming in the next election. Ken Hamilton, executive vice president of the bureau, is also a lobbyist, Shaffer noted.

Saturday's meeting saw about 30-40 people, Shaffer said, and the Wyoming Farm Bureau's annual meeting in Sheridan is coming up Nov. 7-9 in Sheridan. The farm bureau has a grass roots foundation which, Shaffer said, gives people a real feel for what is going on in this country. He added the bureau is not too right wing or left wing but more right down the middle.