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Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

VOLUME 111, No. 29, July 29, 2010

THERMOPOLIS, WY 82443

USPS 627-300

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Yes, this is rocket science



4-H rocket scientist Jonathon Mitchell, 8, explains the intricacies of air pressure that relate to his straw rocket to a group of judges Tuesday at the Hot Springs County Fair exhibit hall. The ingenuity behind the rocket earned Mitchell a blue ribbon.
— J.D. Stetson photo

Lower mill levy for schools means cut in property tax

by Joe Sovo

Patrons in Hot Springs County School District 1 will be seeing a decrease in their property taxes, at least from a school mill levy perspective.

Reduction in debt service, part of the school district's annual budget, was the reason for the lower mill levy. The district will make final payment of \$573,790 on the high school in January, leaving it with no debt on the elementary, middle and high schools. The middle school building was paid off last year.

The district had levied 2.03 mills for the 2009-10 school year and that will change to zero mills for 2010-11.

What it means to taxpayers is that they'll see a reduction of 1.78 mills. That computes to \$178 less in property taxes on a property valued at \$100,000. Each mill costs \$1 for each \$1,000 in assessed value of property. Residential and commercial property is assessed at 9.5 percent of market value.

The bond levies are completed, according to district business manager Lisa Pearce. "We're debt free," she said during the July 21 regular meeting of the board of trustees.

A budget hearing was held before trustees took action on the mill levies. The levies were endorsed by district superintendent Marty Kobza.

The mill levies that will remain unchanged are: 25 mills for the special district tax; 6 mills for the county school tax; .500 mills for Northwest Board

of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES); .250 for CWC Board of Cooperative Higher Educational Services (BOCHES); and 1 mill for the recreation district.

The mill levy for Fremont BOCES goes to the maximum allowed .500 mills; it was .250 mills for the 2009-10 school year.

Board clerk and board member Belenda Willson voted against the .250 hike in the Fremont BOCES levy. Trustees Liz Mahoney, Karen Leyba, Clay VanAntwerp, Hub Whitt, Dr. Travis Bomengen and Joe Martinez supported the increase.

While NW BOCES has been part of mill levies for quite some time, this is the second year for Fremont BOCES and the fourth year for CWC BOCHES.

Total mill levy is 33.250 for 2010-11 compared to 35.03 for 2009-10, a decrease of 1.78 mills.

Student enrollment in the district has gone down a bit over the last six years, from just over 700 in 2003-04 to about 650 in 2009-10. In the meantime, assessed valuation went from \$97.9 million for school year '03-04 purposes to more than \$282 million in '09-10. Valuation is expected to plummet to about \$194 million for 2010-11; that valuation has not been certified by the county.

Partly due to inflation, the cost to educate a student in the district went from \$10,075 in '03-04 to a projected \$16,244 for '10-11.

Gift of the Waters Pageant events

The 60th Gift of the Waters Historical Indian Pageant is in the spotlight next weekend, Aug. 7 and 8 at Hot Springs State Park. The play at Big Spring that commemorates the deed of land to the people of Wyoming begins at 7 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

There is no admission charge to any of the weekend events.

Here held in conjunction with the Gift of the Waters Pageant, with time and location:

Saturday, Aug. 7
• 7 a.m. – 5K and 10K run/walk, State Park. Contact Kara

Hulse at (319) 404-0549 for information.

• 9:45 a.m. – Kiddie parade, line-up at Bicentennial Park at 9:15 a.m.

• 10 a.m. – Pageant parade. Theme is "Gift of the Waters – 60 Years." Parade entry forms at Chamber of Commerce.

• After parade – Indian dancing at flagpole, Broadway and Fifth streets.

• After parade – Open house at fire department; rides for kids.

• 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Kiwanis Arts & Crafts Fair, State Park.

• 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. – Kiwanis

buffalo burger and brat sale, Kiwanis Shelter, State Park. Cost: \$7 for full meal.

• 7 p.m. – Gift of the Waters Pageant, Big Spring, State Park.

• 8:30 p.m. – 1 a.m. – Country rock band Undecided plays at State Park pavilion, sponsored by Mac's Bar. Beer garden available.

Sunday, Aug. 8

• 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. – Kiwanis Arts & Crafts Fair, State Park.

• 7 p.m. – Gift of the Waters Pageant, Big Spring, State Park.

Weed septic permit approved

by Cindy Glasson

Hot Springs County Commissioners held a public hearing July 20 regarding an appeal of a septic permit in Red Lane filed by Carol Pickett.

A permit to construct a septic tank on Weed Way in Red Lane was granted by county planner Lee Campbell to Elizabeth Weed on April 27.

According to Weed, construction on the tank began a couple of weeks later and was finished within two to three days.

On May 25, Campbell received a letter from Pickett appealing the decision to allow the septic tank to be built, stating she was not advised of her right to appeal the decision within seven days of the granting of the permit.

The letter went on to express Pickett's concerns that there were now three septic systems for four families on one and a half acres of land.

Pickett said her understanding of state law indicates an allowance of just one septic system per acre and she was concerned about groundwater contamination in the area due to the number of septic systems currently on the property.

In addition to concerns about groundwater contamination, Pickett stated in her letter the structure was intended for tenants, not the owner, and quoted section G-2 of the system disposal regulations that states "engineering plans will not be required... unless the structure serves persons not living with in the associated single family residential unit..."

At the onset of the public hearing July 20, county attorney Jerry Williams said other items included in the letter would not be allowed as a basis of the appeal as they were items of a civil nature that should be addressed landowner to landowner.

Campbell's appeal process

As a matter of procedure, Pickett addressed the commissioners first, restating her contention that she was not advised of the appeal process by Camp-

bell, even though they had had several conversations regarding the septic system.

"I'm concerned there are too many septic systems out there," Pickett said. "We have a very high water table. I've hit water at four feet."

Pickett went on to say there were a total of about 10 septic systems in a 12-acre area in Red Lane and felt the commissioners needed to curtail further permitting.

"We need some way to prevent others from bringing out all kinds of trailers and digging more septic systems," she said.

Williams stopped Pickett at this point, reminding the commissioners that the information she was discussing was "improper to consider" in making their decision on whether or not the septic permit should have been granted.

Pickett then said the regulations stated engineering had to be done in this instance and wanted to know if an engineer had been involved in putting the plans together.

The commissioners asked Pickett why she felt she was an affected party in this matter.

"I live less than a quarter-mile downstream from this property," she replied.

Commissioner Brad Basse said one thing that needed to be determined was if the system was already completed before the appeal was filed.

Pickett said she discovered the system was being built after the hole was already being dug and had attempted to call both Campbell, who was out of town, and commission chairman John Lumley, who was in a meeting at the time.

"I watched the construction," she said. "I did talk with Lee (Campbell) and he said he had OK'd the permit, but made no mention of an appeal process."

"The work was finished the next week."

The commissioners asked if she had any documentation to prove she'd made the aforementioned phone calls, and Pickett said she did not.

"It took me a while to find out there was something I could do," she said.

Pickett's second contention
Regarding her second contention
Continued on page 8

Cool drink on a warm day



Three-year-old Rosalie Willson needed no help getting a refreshing drink from the fountain in Bicentennial Park last Friday. She made a stop at the park with her brother Jean-Luc and their grandmother, Francine Hauser, who lives in Switzerland. Greg and Isabelle Willson are the children's parents.
— Joe Sovo photo