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Thermopolis
Hot Springs

Independent Record

SPECIAL INTERNET PREVIEW

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Community/rec center letter in voters' hands

by Joe Sovo

Registered voters in Hot Springs County are receiving a letter this week from George K. Baum and Company of Denver, Colo., explaining an upcoming survey pertaining to the proposed community/recreation center in Thermopolis.

George K. Baum is the bonding company retained by the Hot Springs County Recreation District Board to determine community support for a bond issue in either May or August to build the \$11.5 million facility.

"The letter is letting people know what the proposed building is," Recreation Director Donnie Bjorhus said Tuesday morning. He has learned the actual survey to gauge community input would be sent by Baum around the middle of January 2012.

Bjorhus said the letter is accompanied by preliminary drawings of the interior and exterior of the proposed community/recreation center.

In order to get the bond issue on the May 1 ballot, the filing must be made with the Wyoming Secretary of State's office by March 1. Before that, the county commissioners and municipalities have to "sign off" on the bond issue. School trustees would also have to endorse the bond issue at their Feb. 16 board meeting.

Therefore, the time element

could prevent the issue from making the May ballot. In that case, it could be on the August primary election ballot — if there is enough support from voters in the county, based on survey results.

Registered voters will be asked to complete the survey and return it to Baum in a timely manner.

Bjorhus said the recreation board members are aware of the time element, discussing the issue during Monday night's monthly meeting. "They're mulling it over on whether we want to look at the August ballot or sprint to the May ballot," he said.

During last Thursday's board meeting, Hot Springs County School District No. 1 Business Manager Lisa Pearce told trustees that she, Bjorhus and Mary Keating-Scott, senior vice president of George K. Baum, held a conference call to talk about the informational letter, upcoming survey and timeline involved. A concern was the commissioners would not make a decision on giving the bond issue a go-ahead until their mid-February meeting — that decision made after the survey results were compiled and evaluated.

Bjorhus said the recreation board would receive a draft of the survey early in January and give Baum the go-ahead at the board's Jan. 16 meeting.



A&W Lanes has the perfect combination of Christmas lights and music this season to be the winner of the Christmas Lighting Contest. For the effort, A&W will receive \$75 in Chamber Bucks from the Chamber of Commerce.

Hessenthaler, A&W Lanes win Lighting Contest

The ballots have been tallied and the winners of the Christmas Lighting Contest sponsored by the Thermopolis-Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce are ready to be announced.

In the residential category, Kyle Hessenthaler at 220 Lane 10 takes first-place honors with his extravagant display that includes a tractor headed to the cornfield.

Second place went to Kevin Kolar at 1028 Amoretti. His whimsical display features not just Santa, but a toy train and snowmen as well.

Dale Beyette placed third with his display at 202 Highway 20 South. Beyette used every possible inch of his property, filling it with bright lights strung through the trees, highlighting a manger scene.

A&W Lanes took first place in the commercial category with their musical montage of Christmas music and lights. Santa can be found on the top of the restaurant along with a manger scene, assorted snowmen and presents. To get the total effect, park across the street from A&W and tune your radio 101.5 FM.

Days Inn in the State Park claimed the second-place spot with their inflatable scenes, Christmas trees and holiday-attired bunnies at their entrance.

Coming in third in the commercial category was Thermopolis EyeCare, with windows filled with teddy bears and presents.

Prizes in both categories are \$75 in Chamber Bucks for first place, \$50 for second place, and \$25 for third.

Commissioners to set hearing regarding Nakamura Trust road

by Cindy Glasson

The Hot Springs County Commissioners discussed the need for a hearing officer for the upcoming public hearing on a road proposed by the Nakamura Trust, looked over the timeline for construction on Lane 3 and had another presentation on energy efficiency for the county buildings during their meeting Tuesday afternoon.

The commissioners will be having a public hearing soon regarding a proposed road north of Thermopolis on land owned by the Nakamura Trust.

It has been suggested a hearing officer be

hired to keep the meeting running smoothly, allowing the commissioners to concentrate on the facts at hand rather than splitting their time between the testimony and keeping control of the proceedings.

"I feel pretty strongly we should have a hearing officer," commissioner Brad Basse said. "I think we owe it to those involved in the process to do the professional thing."

The commissioners agreed, voting to require a bond or surety of \$5,000 from the Nakamura Trust with the understanding any additional expenses over that amount will also be reimbursed to the county.

County Attorney Jerry Williams will be making the inquiries and final decision as to the hiring of the hearing officer.

Lane 3 progress

A set of bid documents is about to be sent to the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) for its final approval on the Lane 3 construction project.

Previous bid documents have been returned to Engineering Associates asking for changes to meet WYDOT specifics, causing delays in the start of the project.

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IR office closed Monday

In order for our employees to spend time with their families during this holiday season, the Thermopolis Independent Record office will be closed Monday, Dec. 26 and Monday, Jan. 2.

Our deadline for legal advertising for the Dec. 29 issue is 5 p.m. Friday. The deadline for the Jan. 5 issue is 5 p.m. Friday, Dec. 30. The deadlines for classified and display advertising as well as editorial content will not change over this period.

Regular office hours will resume Tuesday, Jan. 3, 2012. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Independent Record staff!

Ambulance crews respond and care

by J.D. Stetson

It doesn't matter what the conditions are, if someone needs to be taken to the hospital, Mortimore Ambulance Service responds.

With the onset of winter, the ambulance service becomes increasingly busy as more people trip on the ice, get into accidents or become sick.

But accidents aren't the only places to see the men and women whose job it is to stabilize and transport patients to the hospital.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are seen regularly in the community as they respond to calls in town and around the county, or take care of an injured player at a sporting event.

They work alongside firefighters, police officers, sheriff's deputies, highway patrol troopers, dispatchers and emergency room staff to ensure patients are delivered safely and promptly for treatment.

In the winter time, the job of the EMT doesn't get easy due to the environmental conditions. Icy roads are a big hurdle when it comes to helping people in the winter because the ambulance has to slow down for safety.

"It's a hard thing to go slow and to wait, but sometimes you have to do that," said EMT supervisor Russ Pearce. "We're not doing the patient any good if we don't make it."

EMTs

Currently, the ambulance service has 18 EMTs working for the service.

Pearce has worked as an EMT for about six years and he is new to the position of supervising, coordinating and directing the continued training of the EMTs.

He replaces Griff Hodson, who is leaving the service to take a position at Hot Springs County

Memorial Hospital as Director of Environmental Services. Hodson has 24 years of experience as an EMT and six years as supervisor.

The service is owned and operated by the Mortimore family — father Clark and his two sons, Mark and Mike.

It provides ambulance coverage to Thermopolis and Hot Springs County pursuant to a contract with the hospital. The service also works to maintain good relationships with all other emergency personnel to ensure smooth operations while on calls, Mark said.

So far in 2011, EMTs have responded to more than 400 calls, which are classified as medical, trauma or false alarms.

The majority of the calls, 60 percent, are medical calls involving people who suffer from an illness, while about 40 percent of the calls involve trauma issues such as accidents, vehicle crashes or other incidents causing bodily injury.

This year, the service so far has had 54 false alarm calls where either the ambulance was called back or the subject refused transport.

The statistics are actually opposite of most other communities in Wyoming because of the large elderly population in Thermopolis. Most other communities have larger amounts of trauma calls versus medical, Mark said.

Trauma vs. medical

EMTs are taught to handle a myriad of situations ranging from minor traumatic injuries, such as an ankle sprain or bruise, to more serious injuries involving blood loss or breathing impediment.

Their goal is to keep an eye on those vital statistics, airway, breathing and circulation, to en-

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Griff Hodson, Mark Mortimore and Russ Pearce show the inside of one of three ambulances at Mortimore Ambulance Service. Pearce is in the process of replacing Hodson as EMT supervisor as Hodson moves to Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital.

Respond

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sure the patient is stable enough to be transported.

When it comes to medical issues, such as disease, poison or other issues not involving trauma, the EMTs sometimes have the choice of whether to take their time or immediately load and transport the patient.

If the patient is conscious, they can sometimes assist in the proper course of action allowing the EMTs to transfer them to the emergency room more safely.

“You can kind of get a good impression on how they’re doing just by visiting with them,” Pearce said. “Medical is probably the hardest, trauma is pretty obvious.”

In a trauma call, the EMTs can see obvious injuries to treat in the field, whereas they rely on their vital statistics more with the medical calls. The vital statistics are important regardless of what type of call it is.

Pearce added that trauma calls also require additional training because EMTs have to be mentally trained to handle the visual side of the call.

“For EMTs it’s not the medical that gets to them, it’s the trauma,” Pearce said. “They see something and they actually visualize something.”

The EMTs are prepared to perform trauma interventions to help each other when there is a highly traumatic event bothering one or more of the EMTs. They also have available mental health resources from the hospital to help when it is required.

False alarms

Many times the ambulance is called to respond before there is a confirmed injury at either an auto accident or other incident.

When vague calls come in, they will request additional information from dispatch but they never

question whether the call is serious and they prepare for the worst possible scenario.

However, there is still a feeling of frustration after getting ready for the call and finding out after arrival that the service isn’t required.

“You don’t want anyone to be hurt and you don’t want anyone to be sick,” Pearce said. “But you can’t let that bother you.”

Another aspect of going out on false alarm calls is the operational cost for gasoline and personnel for the ambulance that cannot be recouped, Hodson said.

Many times, accident calls are reported by people who drive by a vehicle that may or may not be in distress, but do not stop to check on the occupants because they are too busy, Mark said.

For many instances where it is not clear if it is an accident or not, the caller can call the dispatch first, but then call back if there is

no need for an ambulance.

“We’d rather go out and get turned around instead of not getting called at all,” Pearce said.

Public stage

Perhaps the place where EMTs are most on the public stage is when they stand by during a football game, rodeo or other sporting event.

When they are called into action, their first concern is the scene safety of the event. In a rodeo situation, they would wait for the bull or horse to be removed before going in to help the injured participant.

If EMTs do need to remove clothes to stabilize an injury, they will do their best to protect the patient’s privacy by covering them with a blanket, Mark said.

Although there may be an entire stadium of fans watching them do their job, they always focus on being professionals and block out

what’s going on around them.

“What’s going on around us, you got to just block that out because the patient is our number one priority,” Pearce said

EMTs care

Included in the hospital’s recent review for certification as a community trauma hospital, the reviewers noted the genuine care the EMTs, emergency staff and others involved in the trauma program have for positive patient outcomes.

From the EMT perspective, their job is to stabilize and transfer the patient to the hospital, but they go beyond that by helping to protect the dignity of the patient on scene, protect them from the cold or other environmental factors, and help to provide the doctors with the necessary information to save the patient’s life.

“A negative outcome is hard. We all want to help that patient

and we all want him to have positive outcome,” Pearce said.

Currently the EMTs continue training with bimonthly meetings in the winter, monthly meetings in the summer and at least one disaster drill working with the hospital each year.

The EMTs have to become recertified every two years to maintain their positions. They are required to have a specified number of patient contacts and to continue their education through conferences and other opportunities.

Pearce shared that he learned at a recent conference of a study saying that the biggest fear of an EMT is to look stupid while doing their job. He added, in his experience the thought of “looking stupid” doesn’t really go through his mind.

It’s the patient who he’s concerned about, and the only thing that really matters is the care the patient receives.