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Thermopolis
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Local Pamida to become Shopko Hometown store

by J.D. Stetson

Within the next year, Pamida will become Shopko Hometown store.

Green Bay, Wisc.-based Shopko announced via press release the impending merger of the two companies to unite Pamida's 193 stores under the Shopko brand.

Omaha, Neb.-based Pamida currently operates within 17 states in the Mountain, North Central and Midwest regions of the country. Its annual revenues total about \$1 billion.

Shopko operates in 13 states, has a total of 149 stores and about \$2 billion in annual revenues. Combined with Pamida, Shopko will operate in 22 states with 350 stores.

The merger is expected to close in February and financial details of the merger were not disclosed.

The company currently does not have specific plans for individual stores, said Shopko spokeswoman Tara Powers.

She said about 10 Pamida stores are likely to close, but it will likely only be the stores near an existing Shopko. She did not believe the Thermopolis store's proximity to Worland's Pamida would necessitate a reason to close either store.

Variety, national brands

With the merger, residents can expect a new emphasis on bringing more variety and national brands to merchandise in various categories including apparel, consumer electronics, toys, lawn and garden products and seasonal items.

While there may be some changes in the floor plan of Pamida, there are currently no plans to

expand or add more floor space to current buildings, Powers said.

Additionally, the merger is not anticipated to create additional jobs at the local level. The merger may create one or two new positions at some locations, but no significant job growth is expected, Powers said.

Shopko will invest about \$80 million in the next year to convert Pamida stores into Shopko Hometown stores.

The various Pamida stores to be converted range in size from 15,000 to about 35,000 square feet. The Thermopolis Pamida is 31,760 square feet, according to Hot Springs County officials.

Shopko will continue to be led by Shopko CEO W. Paul Jones, and Pamida CEO John Harlow will work on the leadership team and direct the integration process, according to the release.

Complementary strengths

"Merging Pamida and Shopko is a great move for our businesses and our customers given our complementary strengths, store networks and consumer-centric retail models," Jones said. "The Shopko Hometown Store format, featuring our unique merchandising strategy and improved store design, is an ideal fit for the smaller communities that Pamida serves with its exceptional service and community-minded approach. We intend to be the leader in this category by combining the best of Shopko and Pamida in our aggressive new store growth plans."

Both Shopko and Pamida are owned by affiliates of Sun Capital Partners, a private investment firm investing in 285 companies worldwide.



Customers exit the Thermopolis Pamida Store Monday morning. Green Bay, Wisc.-based Shopko Stores recently announced a merger of the two companies, which will re-brand all Pamida stores as Shopko Hometown stores. — J.D. Stetson photo

Council hears reports on deer harvest, McDonald's expansion

by J.D. Stetson

The Thermopolis Town Council heard various reports from departments during its first meeting of the year Jan. 3, including updates on deer control, a business expansion and building codes.

Prior to the end of the year, the Thermopolis Police Department harvested 20 deer in town pursuant to the department's wildlife management plan, said Police Chief Mark Nelson.

Deer counts performed in October revealed about 150 deer in town. Nelson said he had applied to the Wyoming Game & Fish Department for a permit to take 60 deer in 2012, which would allow the department to dispatch about 20 more this winter and 40 next fall/winter.

Officers have harvested the deer from areas on the fringes of town where they can safely shoot them, Nelson said.

In a later interview, Nelson added the department also has dispatched five deer since the start of the harvest because the deer were in distress or had been hit by vehicles and needed put down. He also added there have been several deer in town that died without law enforcement intervention after receiving direct hits from vehicles.

Of the 20 deer harvested, two tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD) and were disposed of at the town landfill. The meat of the other 18 deer was processed and was to be given away to people in need.

The department has started a waitlist for people interested in the meat. For more information, contact Nelson at the department, 864-3114.

McDonald's expansion

Mayor's Assistant and Town Codes Administrator Fred Crosby reported

McDonald's plans to expand its existing building during the next year.

He said the business had finished the necessary paperwork with the town and could start construction of the 1,200 square-foot expansion project at any time.

McDonald's has been located at 611 Shoshoni St. since 1994, according to building records.

A call made Friday to a McDonald's area supervisor was not returned.

Insurance audit/ building permits

Crosby also reported the results of a recent insurance audit performed by Insurance Services Office, Inc., which rates the town's building code effectiveness as a tool for insurers.

The town retained its rating of 5 on a scale of 10 for both residential property and commercial property. Crosby

said the town received the same ratings in 2007.

The primary purpose of the audit is to analyze the building codes and how they are enforced for the purpose of underwriting and rating the information for insurers.

The audit does not analyze all aspects of a comprehensive building code enforcement program and it is not for the purpose of compliance with state or local law or for making recommendations for property/casualty loss prevention or life safety, according to a letter the agency delivered to the town.

Crosby included in the council's packet a building permit report detailing the number of building permits issued in 2011. The town issued 114 permits, with a total new building valuation of \$755,019. The town collected \$10,850 in fees from permits.

Out of all the permits, 36 were for

plumbing, 32 for new buildings, 16 for excavation, 16 for fences and 11 were for mechanical (HVAC). The town issued one permit each for demolition, mobile home and right-of-way.

Building permits were significantly down from 2010.

In 2010, the town issued 181 total permits and had a new building valuation of \$3,447,252. The town collected \$28,801.59 in fees.

The town had issued 61 plumbing permits, 47 building permits, 24 fence permits, 16 mechanical permits, 13 excavation permits, 11 mobile home permits, five demolition permits and four right-of-way permits.

The town also had two major commercial building projects, the Family Dollar and the Blair's Super Market expansion, in town during the summer of 2010 that contributed to the large valuation.

Fifth-grade swim lessons



Fifth grader Chandra Jo Taylor works on her kicking style while participating in swim lessons through the Thermopolis Middle School. The classes are being held at the TePee Pool for grades five through eight as part of the P.E. curriculum. — Cindy Glasson photo

Deal for Holden land falls through

by Cindy Glasson

A deal between Hot Springs County and landowner Joe Holden for the purchase of property for a new airport has fallen through, according to County Attorney Jerry Williams.

Papers were filed Tuesday to begin condemnation proceedings on the 481.86 acres owned by Holden on Owl Creek Road west of Thermopolis.

A deal had been reached on Dec. 7, 2011 between the county commissioners and Holden, however, when it came time to sign the contract for the sale, the two parties apparently had differing opinions on the terms.

"When it came time to sign, we found we were unable to agree on exact terms of purchase," Williams said.

That prompted the filing of condemnation proceedings.

Holden has hired a new attorney, Renee Coppock, from Billings, Mont., replacing attorney John Davis from Worland whom Holden had worked with from the start of negotiations.

The commissioners did not want to pursue eminent domain proceedings, wishing instead to come to an amiable agreement

regarding the purchase of the property and various buildings for which they had offered more than \$1.1 million.

The appraisals for the property were very specific as per Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) rules, and included an amount for an administrative settlement or extra enticement to agree to a negotiated settlement.

"We're still hopeful a negotiated settlement can occur," said commission chair Brad Basse, "but we have to move on."

Basse said there were two agreements involved, one for a smaller piece of property owned by Holden and a second agreement for a larger section of land. Holden and the commissioners signed off on one of the contracts, but could not come to agreement on the terms of the second contract.

The legal filing made by attorney Larry Jones on behalf of the county commissioners asks the court to grant \$888,000, effectively eliminating the administrative settlement.

Since Holden and his attorney are both out of state, they will have 40 days to answer the filing.

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