



Community input sought by EDC

by Mark Dykes

In the coming weeks, people are invited to share what they think are some of the best attributes of Thermopolis and Hot Springs County, as well as areas that need improvement. Amanda Moeller, CEO for the Thermopolis-Hot Springs County Economic Development Company (EDC), explained the EDC Board had a retreat back in April. The organization's mission statement, she said, "is to create growth and promote a stable and diversified economy, which is consistent with the needs, desires and values of the people of Hot Springs County." She posed to the board the question, "How do

we know what the people want?"

While the seven-member board provides a good cross-section of the community, Moeller said, they need to make sure they are holding true to their mission. To that end, a survey was released over a week ago, with a closing date scheduled for Sept. 30. Moeller said in that time they want to get as many responses as possible.

As of Aug. 25, Moeller said, the survey showed a majority who believe Hot Springs State Park is one of the biggest strengths. Other high results were for the Big Horn River and the small town feeling. On the reverse, many

think one of the challenges facing the community is the difficulty for people to stay due to lack of opportunities. As for what people would like to preserve in the community, many were in favor of historic downtown buildings.

Moeller said the overall feeling is people want to see the downtown revitalized, and to see the community shine. The EDC is also co-sponsoring an upcoming brownfields workshop, and Moeller is hopeful people attend and glean the information they need to make educated decisions about their buildings.

Other results from the survey, as of Aug.

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photo by April S. Kelley

Smiles, hugs and a few tears

Rilynn Pinkston is ready for her first day of kindergarten at Ralph Witters Elementary as her mom, Ashly, says 'Goodbye.'

Seven file for school board

by April S. Kelley

Hot Springs County Clerk Nina Webber released the names of several individuals running for board positions.

Seven will be running for the four open trustee positions for the Hot Springs County School District. Those elected will serve four-year terms. Voting for the board positions are Nichole Weyer, Clay Van Antwerp, Beth Lewis, Joe Martinez, Nikki Slagle, W. Travis Bomengen and Tonya L. Petty.

The Hot Springs Rural Fire Protection District has an opening for a district director to serve a four-year term. Ken Smith and Linda Cowger are running for the position.

The Hot Springs County Conservation District has three open board positions — one district supervisor at large to serve a four-year term, one rural district supervisor to serve a four-year term and one urban district supervisor to serve a two-year unexpired term. Lee Campbell is running for the at-large district supervisor, Jim Andreen is running for the urban district supervisor and Sonja Becker and Larry Bentley are running for the rural district supervisor position.

There are three openings for three district directors to serve four-year terms for the Hot Springs County Cemetery District. Those running are Cindy DeVries, Jeanie Love, Linda Berry, Rose Watkins and Julie M. Lehman.

Write-in candidate William "Bill" Malloy accepted the invitation to be added to the Nov. 8 ballot for the Thermopolis Town Council. Jessica Slagle, another write-in candidate, has also accepted the invitation to be placed on the ballot for the Kirby Town Council. The last write-in candidate, Irene Hurlley, has not yet accepted to be placed on the ballot for the two open Kirby council positions.

All board positions and write-in candidates will be placed on the Nov. 8 ballot.

Draft mitigation plan available for review, comment

Those who would like to learn more about what Hot Springs, Park, Washakie and Big Horn counties are doing to minimize impacts of floods, dam failure, wildfires, hazardous materials and other incidents are welcome to check out the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan being made available for public review and comment.

The plan assesses risks posed by natural and man-made hazards, identifies ways to reduce those risks and allows each county to be eligible for mitigation grant funding from FEMA. County planning teams, including representatives from all municipalities, developed the plan over the past six months with assistance from consultant Amec Foster Wheeler.

The plan identifies hazard mitigation goals and mitigation projects for the counties, with the intent of reducing losses from hazard events before they occur again. A series of public workshops were held during the planning process to solicit input on the hazards and ideas for mitigation projects. The counties in the Region are now soliciting public comment the plan before it is finalized and submitted for FEMA review and approval.

The comment period will be Aug. 30-Sept. 7, and the plan draft is available online at www.hscounty.com. A hard copy is also available upon request. For more information, contact Bill Gordon at 864-4649 or bgordon@hscounty.com

Couple attends state fair for over 50 years

by April S. Kelley

Duane and Rose Watkins have been attending the State Fair for over 50 years.

Duane said he is the goat superintendent.

"That means all the goats are my responsibility — putting them in classes and making sure they are properly stalled and handling all the showing," he said.

Rose said she announces the goat shows now.

"I announce five goats shows over the loud speaker," she said. "I used to announce horse shows. I've also announced beef shows and sheep shows."

At this year's state fair, Duane said a little girl came up and shook his hand after the show.

"That's the biggest part of it," he said. "Children come to respect you. I like to see kids identify that respect and say 'Thank you.'"

"She came up and shook his hand and said, 'Thank you very much for taking care of our show,'" Rose said. "It makes your heart feel good."

Rose said she enjoys going to the State Fair because she gets to see old friends.

"I enjoy the State Fair because I get to see people we haven't seen for a year that I've been seeing for 25 or 30 years," she said.

"You get to see generations," Duane said. "You get to see grandparents, their children and their

grandchildren over the years. It comes as quickly as it goes out."

"Because of the fair, we have lots of kids," Rose said.

sions and become better members of the community," she said.

A love for livestock and fairs runs in the family, Rose said.

"All three of our children were in the 4-H and FFA programs," she said. "They showed dairy cattle, sheep, pigs and beef cattle."

Though he is retired now, Duane has a long history in working with agriculture, Rose said.

"He was the dairy herdsman at the University of Wyoming Dairy Farm and he was taking cattle to the State Fair for the FFA judging contest," she said. "Then they asked him to be the Registration Paper Reader for the Open Dairy Show."

Rose said they wanted him to be the Superintendent of the Dairy Cattle Show. Then in 1992 or 1993, they said they had some goats that they needed him to take care of too.

"He started being the Dairy Cattle Superintendent plus the Goat Superintendent," she said. "Then they closed the dairy show and he is just the Goat Superintendent now."

Duane also was the FFA Advisor in the Hot Springs County School District for about 20 years, where he took kids to the fair to exhibit their animals, Rose said.

Rose said Duane went through the offices for the State Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association, as well as the national offices.

Duane said he is retired now, but he continues to ranch. Rose, on the other hand, acts as Chair of the Cemetery Board and the Secretary of two Irrigation Districts. She also has been a school bus driver for the Hot Springs County School District for 45 years.



Duane and Rose Watkins enjoy themselves at the 104th annual State Fair. They have been participating in the Wyoming State Fair for over 50 years.

Duane said he has always liked livestock and going to fairs.

"I've been around fairs all my life," he said. "I'm just going to keep doing it every year until I can't do it, but I'm not there yet."

Rose said it is all about teaching children.

"We are helping young children learn to take care of animals, to be responsible, to make deci-