



# Council approves payment reconsideration

by Mark Dykes

Tuesday night, the Thermopolis Town Council voted, with Councilman John Dorman Sr. voting “no,” to reconsider covering a portion of an overage for work on the communications area at the Law Enforcement Center.

At the council’s last meeting, they voted to approve splitting an overage on the project with the county. Brad Basse originally bid the project at \$3,324, but unforeseen complications put the final amount at \$11,7760.60; the town agreed to pay half of the overage, or \$4,226.30.

However, during last night’s meeting, John Zupan brought concerns about the precedence

the town and county are setting, as in the future people might purposely bid projects low with the intent of having high final costs for which they will be reimbursed. The communications project final cost was 3.5 times more expensive than originally bid, Zupan noted, and this could open the door for future low-bidders.

Mayor Mike Mortimore said such things would not be allowed to happen in the future. Several councilmembers noted Basse was likely unaware of the issues that caused the additional costs, but concern was expressed as to how he handled the matter and the high final cost.

Zupan was also concerned there was evi-

dence Basse knew of complications with the project and moved forward without any contact with the county commission, or a change order or addendum. He pointed out when the project began Basse was a sitting commissioner and knows how the system works. Additionally, Zupan said, paying for half the overage means the taxpayers have to assume Basse’s liability, and he wanted the town and county to do right by the taxpayers.

While Zupan requested the town review and reverse its decision to split the overage, the council voted to reconsider it and table further

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photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

## PAWS seashell-abration

Thermopolis Middle School students were in for a show during their voices assembly Friday, when a presentation about personal hygiene transformed into a PAWS celebration focused under and around the sea. Above, Nicole Reid, Brenda Cornwell and Hannah Brooks dance to Katy Perry’s “Firework”.

## Courthouse security plans discussed

by Cindy Glasson

In this day and age security is a major concern on many fronts, from schools to businesses and places like our own Hot Springs County Courthouse.

Department heads at the courthouse have been meeting over the last few months to review their offices and come up with a plan for creating a safer environment for themselves and the citizens visiting their offices.

They presented their plan to the county commissioners at their Tuesday meeting.

The group evaluated each of the offices as well as the various vaults within the building, looking to possibly make the vaults “safe rooms” for employees and visitors in the event of an active shooter incident.

There were three priorities on the security list, the first being door locks and mirrors for offices

and the museum.

Second priority were electric, magnetic door holders for the same areas, and the third priority would be the installation of new doors in a couple of the offices that would give employees and visitors an escape route for both fire and an active shooter situation.

An emergency button that would close all the doors immediately and lock them, giving people time to get into one of the vaults, would be used. Additionally, an easier way of closing the vault doors, as they are extremely heavy, would be installed as well as locks inside the vaults for security.

The departments themselves do not have the funds within their budgets to have these items installed, so help from the county commissioners would be needed to make this happen.

After commending the department heads for

taking the initiative and looking for solutions to the problem, the commissioners agreed that the first and second priorities should be taken care of first and determined the funds would probably need to come out of emergency expenditures.

It should be noted, by the end of April, all of the employees at the courthouse will have gone through the ALICE active shooter training.

There has been a lot of discussion over the past few weeks in regards to the re-use of the old airport property.

To that end, county planner Bo Bowman told the commissioners Tuesday there was a possibility of a grant through Brownfield that could cover the cost of one of the items that will need to be done should the commissioners decide to sell the property.

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## Wyoming's wolf management upheld

On March 3, a three judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia recognized Wyoming’s wolf management plan should be upheld. This comes after, the US Fish and Wildlife Service removed Wyoming’s wolves from the protection of the Endangered Species Act through a delisting rule in 2012. In 2014, a federal District Court judge reinstated federal protections for wolves and vacated the 2012 rule because the judge believed that population commitments Wyoming made in its wolf management plan needed to be in regulation or statute. As a result, the judge ruled that the US Fish and Wildlife Service acted arbitrarily in delisting Wyoming’s wolves. Wyoming and the federal government appealed that decision.

In the 3-0 opinion that came out on March 3, the Court concluded that US Fish and Wildlife Service did not act arbitrarily when it determined Wyoming’s Wolf Management Plan was sufficient to maintain a recovered wolf population upon delisting.

Game and Fish is pleased with that ruling. “Wyoming showed it could manage wolves in a conservative and responsible manner that met all objectives after delisting. We look forward to again taking on the important work of managing this public resource,” said Chief of the Wildlife Division, Brian Nesvik.

Wyoming will not take over management immediately because of the legal process involved. So, until that process plays out Game and Fish reminds people that wolves are still considered protected under the Endangered Species Act and under federal management. This also means the take of wolves in Wyoming remains suspended.

## Agar: “Interesting” end to Legislature

by Mark Dykes

The 2017 general session of the Wyoming Legislature adjourned Friday, and Senate District 20 representative Wyatt Agar stated, “The final week of session was interesting to say the least.

“For the senate chamber it was a hurry up and wait situation, which is highly frustrating when you strive for efficiency. We did not adjourn on Friday until around 11:30 p.m. waiting on the house to take action on several bills.”

After reconsideration of four different bills on the house side, Agar reported, (which the Senate was finally able to vote on concurrences of HB 236, regarding school finance, and HB 58, regarding school facilities appropriations.

“I voted for 236 and against 58,” Agar stated. “We have a waiting list process for schools that

need structural attention to work through. As HB 58 is written, an undetermined school in the Cheyenne area that is down the list moves ahead of schools such as Ten Sleep who sit at the top of the list, simply because it gets more press. The students of Ten Sleep are in a 90-year-old building — the oldest in the state by 30 years — and the community has waited their turn. I simply believe it is wrong to shuffle the list in this manner.”

The Senate also voted on fee increase bills — HB 218, 219 and 288 — which moved the Department of Transportation and Game and Fish out of the general fund into stand alone status, Agar stated. “Many of these fees have not seen increases in 20 to 40 years and the move to make these departments self-sustaining

is wise. However, I voted against HB 218 and 219. With the economy and the people hurting I believe it is the wrong time to increase mandatory fees.”

Agar further reported, “The Senate chambers went into this session with a platform that would not impose new taxes on the people and would seek responsible cuts to the budget. Through the process, several bills that contradicted this and had increases of both taxes and spending were sent our way. I am proud of how strong and united the senate stood against those bills.

“I feel blessed to have had the leadership of President Bebout and Majority Floor Leader Perkins for my freshman year. We caucused

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