



Town nominated as opportunity zone

by Mark Dykes

During a recent meeting of the Thermopolis Town Council, Travel and Tourism Director Amanda Moeller said she did some paperwork for the State of Wyoming a couple months ago regarding opportunity zones, noting the town of Thermopolis was recommended by the governor to be such a zone.

However, it is still 30 days before the secretary of the treasury will accept the town as an opportunity zone.

Moeller summarized being accepted as an opportunity zone acts something like a new market tax credit program. "If there's a

large company somewhere else that has capital gains when they sell their asset, instead of paying the capital gains [taxes] they can invest that money into an opportunity zone. Our community would be one of those zones." What this means is Thermopolis could be seeing much more investment.

Investments are done through qualified opportunity funds, which is any investment vehicle that holds at least 90 percent of its assets in opportunity zone investments, including property within a zone, or stock or equity in a trade or business that owned or leased property in a zone.

In order to be eligible, a zone must have census tracts that show a poverty rate greater than 20 percent or median family income that is less than 80 percent of the statewide median family income.

Another qualifier is that census tracts must be adjacent to a qualified low-income community designated as a qualified opportunity zone, and median family income of the tract must not exceed 125 percent of the median family income of the low-income community with which the tract is contiguous.

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photo by Cindy Glasson

Nothing left

Thermopolis Volunteer Firefighter Rod McQueen at the scene of Tuesday's accident on Hwy. 120, around mile marker 27. The two vehicle, head on collision between a pickup and a motorhome resulted in the deaths of three adults. According to Highway Patrol, the driver of the pickup, which was traveling in the direction of Thermopolis, for unknown reasons swerved before over-correcting into the oncoming lane, striking the motorhome. Friends traveling in tandem with the occupants in the motorhome identified the couple as being from outside the U.S. Highway Patrol has not identified the driver of the pickup as of press time. Small explosions occurred with the wreck as ammunition from the pickup ignited. Highway Patrol's Crash Response Team was called in to investigate the wreck while the highway was closed for several hours. Road damage at the scene could take up to a few weeks to repair.

Lawsuit filed against Wyoming Whiskey

by Mark Dykes

In a case filed on Nov. 16 in the Circuit Court of Cook County, Ill., plaintiff Frank Sacca alleged that Wyoming Whiskey, as well as Brad Mead, Katherine Mead and David DeFazio breached a National Sales Director Employment Agreement.

Though a Wyoming company, the business has had multiple sales staff in Illinois, directed considerable efforts to market its product in the

state and has had significant communication with its employees and other residents in Illinois.

Documents further state Illinois is Wyoming Whiskey's second-largest market, with over 1,800 cases sold there in 2016. Additionally the defendants are accused of knowingly and intentionally directing numerous calls and communications into Illinois concerning Sacca, his employment, his compensation and the termination of his em-

ployment, and making decisions regarding Sacca's compensation and employment that would affect his job in Illinois.

Therefore the Circuit Court of Cook County was initially determined to have jurisdiction in the matter, though the case was transferred to Wyoming U.S. District Court on Feb. 7. The defendants were served with Sacca's summons and complaint as early as Oct. 14, 2017.

According to allegations in the complaint, Wyoming Whiskey and the individual defendants recruited Sacca from another company in spring 2015, to be the national sales director. Sacca previously had 27 years experience in distilled spirits working for other companies, and joined Wyoming Whiskey in April 2015.

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Outdoor Recreation recommendations

by Cindy Glasson

In the fall of 2016, Governor Matt Mead asked the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources to develop an Outdoor Recreation Task Force to assess, make recommendations and address improving Wyoming's outdoor recreation sector. Since that time, the task force, consisting of private business owners, the Wyoming Outdoor Council, conservation groups, the forest service, BLM and others have created a list of 11 things Wyoming can do to up the ante on the state's recreation opportunities. The outdoor recreation economy has incredible potential for growth in Wyoming but the implementation will require local leaders to bring businesses, government agencies, organizations and interest groups together. The task force realizes the recommendations they've made are just a starting point and need to be translated from suggestions into specific, measurable and attainable goals.

Recommendation 1

Wyoming needs to attract and retain outdoor recreation businesses and there was much dis-

cussion on making this happen. Businesses are the basis of an outdoor recreation economy and attracting and retaining those entities needs to be a priority. The state will need to look toward promoting more geographically, conceptually and culturally diverse outdoor recreation with emphasis on innovation and sustainability. We need to gather the tools and information needed for funding and business development and develop a strategy to recruit outdoor recreation-focused events. Along with that, we need to maintain and enhance a tax environment that supports outdoor recreation businesses. Hosting outdoor recreation events can be an important part of growing the industry. Outdoor events, activities and conferences will promote Wyoming as a 'go-to' outdoor destination.

Recommendation 2

Wyoming will need to explore and implement innovative funding strategies to enhance the outdoor recreation economy. This would include any public and pri-

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photo by Dennis Nierzwicki

King and queen

Josi Thurgood was crowned prom queen during grand march Saturday in the school auditorium and using a sombrero in honor of the Cinco de Mayo theme, Logan Meier was crowned king.

Woman sentenced to prison

by Mark Dykes

Monday in Hot Springs District Court, Holly Herrera was sentenced to three to five years in prison on each of three counts of child endangerment — exposure to methamphetamine — and one year on a charge of second-offense possession of methamphetamine.

Herrera was found guilty of the charges in February, which are from a July 1, 2017 incident. She and three juveniles were passengers in a vehicle stopped for not having illumination on its rear license plate. During the stop, there were difficulties in verifying Herrera's identity and the owner of the vehicle. However, a bag believed to belong to Herrera was located in the vehicle; inside was a pipe that could be used for smoking the drug.

The four prison terms were ordered served concurrently, and concurrent with a four to five year sentence she received in Washakie County for a probation violation. Herrera was also fined \$3,000 on each of the three endangerment

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