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Union withdraws petition for TCI vote

By TOM MORTON
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — Faced with the prospect of losing a local union has canceled a vote over whether it would represent employees at TCI Cablevision of Casper for collective bargaining talks, according to labor, management and government officials.

"Certainly, I'm disappointed," said Charlie Dockham, an organizer with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local Union No. 122.

The vote, scheduled for Tuesday, and the withdrawal petition marks unions' latest effort to try to organize some local workforces for collective bargaining.

Other recent organization discussions have occurred at the Wyoming Medical Center and the Bon Marche store in the Eastside Mall. None of those efforts has succeeded.

Dockham said several insulation and maintenance workers at Casper's sole cable television firm appeared and called this year requesting help to organize over issues of scheduling, seniority, training and consistent policies.

The National Labor Relations Board granted the IBEW's petition for a vote, which would have affected approximately 18 employees, Dockham said Tuesday.

More than half of them needed to vote in favor of the IBEW in order for the union to represent them for collective bargaining.

A union vote six years ago to organize workers under the Communications Workers of America was defeated.

In the past two months, IBEW officials and some TCI employees said they believed they had enough strength to win a vote.

But management's influence on, and better treatment of, employees and their

working conditions, convinced organizers that the union would lose, Dockham said.

"Management had a captive audience every day" with employees to persuade them to vote against the union, he said.

The union had been thinking about withdrawing its petition for more than a week, Dockham said.

TCI President Jeff Frankensberger said Tuesday that he didn't want to comment on the union's withdrawal of its petition or the alleged better treatment of employees.

Dockham, however, said the better treatment of employees showed that "the workers vote" in terms of gaining respect for their requests.

"If the company keeps it up, maybe they will not have to deal with people wanting to organize," Dockham said.

But many corporations haven't had a good track record of treating their employees right, so the IBEW will remain

available for further requests for organizing, he said.

Michael Weidmann, field organizer for Wyoming in the Denver office of the NLRB, said withdrawal of petitions is not unusual.

But if the management and union parties set up an election, and the union withdraws its petition, the NLRB precludes the union from petitioning for another election for six months, Weidmann said.

If a workplace conducts the election, and the union loses, the union cannot petition for another election for a year, he added.

For example, the United Food and Commercial Workers Local No. 7 lost an election in June at the Bon Marche in the Eastside Mall. They need to wait a year before approaching the NLRB again. Bon employees and union officials said last month.

Airplane bomb threat suspect indicted

By the Star-Tribune staff

CASPER — Robert Crockett Waters, the 30-year-old California accused of making a bomb threat aboard a chartered jet at the Natrona County Airport, is late June, has been indicted by the federal grand jury in Casper. U.S. Attorney David Freudenfeld said in a release.

Waters, who was working with the production crew for the film "Starship Troopers" here in Casper, was indicted last week for "impairing or conveying false information, i.e. a bomb threat."

The maximum penalty for the offense is five years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Pat Crank said Monday the U.S. Attorney's Office has requested that a summons be issued requiring Waters to appear before a U.S. Magistrate in either Casper or Cheyenne.

Waters, a Simi Valley, Calif., resident, was released on a \$5,000 personal recognizance bond and is believed to be in California.

At his initial appearance, Waters will be advised of the charges against him, the penalties he faces, and his legal rights, Crank said.

Waters will then be required to attend an arraignment where he will enter a formal plea.

The incident occurred June 29 as the film crew was returning to California after spending about three months here shooting portions of the movie at the old Baldy Acre, northwest of Casper. After Waters allegedly told a flight attendant that a bomb was on the jet, Natrona County Sheriff's Office and airport security personnel detained passengers for about three and a half hours. No bomb was found.

Freudenfeld said the investigation into the bomb threat was conducted by both the Natrona County Sheriff's Office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In a previous Star-Tribune story, Waters' last name was spelled Waters by law enforcement officials.

Supplier sues Def-Tec

By TOM MORTON
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — A Virginia company has sued the Casper-based Defense Technology Corporation of America over its failure to pay for supplies it ordered last year, according to documents filed with the 7th District Court.

The alleged failure to pay started at the same time Def-Tec officials said the company had cash flow problems from some of its overseas customers, as well as the federal government. Those issues, no doubt, are a failure to pay lawsuit.

Attorney James Bell said the legal action "is just down the road."

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Def-Tec last year, were responsible for Defense Technology buying off approximately 20 employees on Dec. 31.

In May, the firm moved from its rented offices at 2136 Old Drive to consolidate its operations at its 1855 N. Loop and other offices in Natrona County.

Defense Technology Corporation of America bills itself as "the world's leader in low-cost lethal products" — many of which are made with pepper spray made from oleoresin capicum, an extract of cayenne pepper. The products are sold locally, nationally, and internationally — from the Miami office — for law enforcement and crowd control.

According to the complaint filed July 16 by attorney James Bell of the Casper law firm Moore & Brown, who represents Neuman USA, Ltd., Def-Tec played orders for aluminum chips from Neuman between Sept. 12 and Dec. 11, 1995.

Neuman delivered the chips, and charged \$142,678, which was the agreed upon price, according to the complaint.

But Def-Tec hasn't paid \$105,127.70 of that amount, according to the complaint. So Neuman is demanding the unpaid balance, plus 18 percent interest.

Bell said Tuesday that the legal action "is just a failure to pay lawsuit."

He doesn't know whether other Def-Tec suppliers in Wyoming or other states have had similar difficulties in receiving payment, he said.

As of Tuesday, Bell had not received a response from Defense Technology Corp. to Neuman's complaint, he said.

Def-Tec and its pepper spray products, however, have been associated with legal actions in California. Pepper spray has come under criticism because law enforcement officers in California have used it to subdue suspects who later died.

Debbie Connolly, manager of Defense Technology Corporation of America, could not be reached for comment about the suit.

Master of the garden



Master Gardener Mickey Smith waters Tuesday at the Community Gardens near the fairgrounds. Smith is in charge of watering the plot for the Master Gardener's group and says the recent rain still hasn't been enough for the thirsty plot.

Casper Briefs

Girl injured in bike-auto collision

CASPER — An 11-year-old girl was taken to the Wyoming Medical Center after she collided with a 1988 Chevrolet Suburban about 11:20 a.m. Tuesday while riding her bicycle in the 300 block of East Second Street.

Police would not release the name of the girl or the driver late Tuesday.

Police Officer Doug Beas said the girl is believed to have a fractured leg and a punctured liver. He said she is in stable condition and will remain in the hospital at least until today.

The Suburban was turning left into the eastbound lane of East Second Street from a parking lot behind the Natrona County Library when the bicycle, riding westbound on the right, ran into the Suburban's side, Beas said.

He said the Suburban was driving no faster than 5 mph and the girl was not wearing a helmet at the time of the collision. Police have not yet issued any citations for the accident but are still investigating the case, he said.

Woman reports rape

CASPER — A 39-year-old woman told police Monday that she was raped about 1:45 a.m. Saturday at North Capitol Park in the 1000 block of East E Street.

The woman told police she met a man in his early 30s outside Old City Lagers, 1807 N. Durbin St., and accepted his

invitation to go to Mini Mart for a soft drink.

He instead drove her to the park, threatened her with a knife and raped her, she told police.

She said she did not report the crime last night because she was tired, Police Lt. Jack Waters said.

Police seeking alleged batterer

CASPER — Police have requested a warrant for a 24-year-old man who allegedly knocked his 22-year-old girlfriend down and hit her in the head repeatedly about 12:30 a.m. Monday at their apartment on the 1800 block of North Clemons Street.

The man is being charged under the Domestic Violence Protection Act, which allows police to arrest suspects even when the victim is unwilling to press charges.

Paradise Valley Golf Course vandalized

CASPER — Paradise Valley Golf Club employees told police someone had broken into a storage shed and caused more than \$1,000 damage to the course sometime between 9 p.m. Monday and 5:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Police report the vandals had dug holes in the greens on holes one, five and eight, causing about \$5,000 damage to each.

The largest hole was four feet by five feet, David Henshaw, the club president, said.

The vandals also placed a hole in an underground and a club golf cart in a pond and broke several trees lying hole across, the report stated.

The club board is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to a conviction.

Correction: Robinson didn't side on abortion

CASPER — Democratic House District 16 candidate Ann Robinson has voiced neither support nor opposition to abortion rights.

Robinson said Tuesday her abortion position is that election to the state house "has not, and will not, make such a personal and medical decision for another person — it shouldn't be a government issue."

An article on this page incorrectly characterized her remarks as being pro-abortion rights.

Robinson also did not say her participation in the steering committee for the Vida West-Sagegate Park Improvement and Service District — a government entity, not a community panel — and not affiliated with Vida West — was a factor in her potential election success.

The article put Robinson's service on that board in the wrong context, and also misstated her volunteer work publishing a Democratic Party newspaper as a paid job, which it wasn't.

The Star-Tribune regrets the error.



Used motor oil lies abandoned in a vacant lot near Ash Street in Casper on Tuesday.

Hazardous Waste Collection Day fast approaching

By the Star-Tribune staff

CASPER — Looking for the proper place to dispose of unwanted paint, used motor oil, automobile batteries or old tires?

You can take them to the city baileff north of the North Platte River on Byron Street for free. From 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. during the city's eighth annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day.

Just don't take any pesticides, thinners, solvents, cleaning products, gardening chemicals, unknown chemicals, explosives, medical waste, radioactive materials or leaking containers.

Baileff Supervisor Mike Hagler said those items will not be accepted, and the limit on old tires is two per car.

Hagler, who also chairs the Collection Day Committee, said he still needs more volunteers to help out with the event, which drew over 1,000 cars to the baileff last year.

Volunteers should wear old clothes and shoes and will be provided with personal protective equipment and refreshments, Hagler said.

For more information about the program, contact the baileff at 255-9246.