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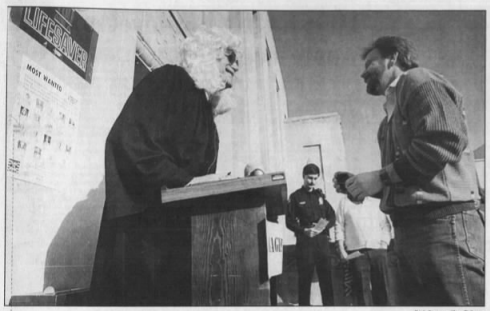

Rick Sorenson/Star-Tribune

Wanted "Judge" Bill Millay, left, explains to City Councilman Mike Reid that he must raise $1,000 "bail" or Reid will be sent to "jail." The money for the bail will be given to the American Cancer Society in the agency's Jail-and-Bail fundraiser. Nineteen prominent Casperites have volunteered to raise money for the ACS in the event.

Police chief: Force to become more flexible, less costly

by CHRIS EWERS
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — A planned reorganization of the Casper Police Department over the next four months is aimed at cutting mid-level management and putting more officers on the street, according to Casper Chief of Police Art de Werk.

The changes will bring Casper up to date with other mid-sized cities regarding efficient police officer deployment, de Werk said.

The main change in the department will be the elimination of one captain's position and the hiring of two community service officers (CSOs), de Werk said.

The CSOs will be patrolling in the community, doing enforcement activities that do not require full police officer's training — like writing parking tickets, responding to people who have locked their keys in their cars, and checking on property.

The department currently has two CSOs on staff, working in the station.

These two will be moved out onto the street, and two new CSOs hired to work in the station.

A second organizational move will add a fourth shift to the three the department usually schedules. The fourth shift will provide flexibility to allow officers to provide additional coverage during peak periods of activity.

The moves, he said, will enable the police to solve crimes more quickly and will increase overall job satisfaction among the police officers. De Werk also hopes the changes will increase community satisfaction with the police.

The idea of moving CSOs into the field has come up two times in the past for the Casper police force, but has never come to fruition.

The fourth police watch will work in around the existing three shifts to cover during peak periods of demand for officers, de Werk said.

Currently, the level of demand for police has no relation to staffing of shifts, he said.

Now, said de Werk, "What we're doing is stripping the numbers down to the bare-bones minimum for the officers and the public to still be safe," then keeping a watch of six officers around to respond to heavy demand.

The "D watch," as the group is called, will work erratic schedules, always tracking demand, and always ready to go to work.

Far from being a repugnant shift, de Werk explained that the department had received "lots of applicants," and that he'd rather do the shift himself, since the officers are always guaranteed to be busy.

The final point to de Werk's plan allows patrol officers to work on a crime from receiving the report to arresting the criminal.

According to the police chief, under the current system, patrol officers only take reports from the public, then pass the written information along to the investigations division, which then deploys an officer to do information-gathering and arresting.

With the new organization, officers will have the opportunity to use their field experience to work on investigations from start to finish, shortening the time it takes to get the cases done, de Werk said.

"More of them will be able to do the work themselves. They'll have an evidence kit with them. They'll go out and get the prints and they'll take the photographs," he said.

The flexibility of the new watch and the officers' autonomy should save the city money in the process of improving crime-fighting abilities, too, de Werk said. Since investigations and evidence officers won't necessarily have to be called in when they are off-duty to perform their functions, the city could save as much as $10,000 in overtime pay.

Additionally, the pay of the captain that de Werk is dropping from the force, $2,977.16 per month to start, more than pays for the two new CSOs, who will be paid $1,350.75 per month.

Public library to hold annual book sale

'Friends' sale provides fund for library program expansion

by CHRIS EWERS
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — The same people that brought library users automatic doors in the back, lettering on the front and video and audio tapes and art prints on the shelves are preparing to set 50,000-80,000 books out for sale from March 21-27.

"The Friends of the Natrona County Public Library" made $280,000 for the library last year, according to group chair Betty Ouderkirk. That funding paid for a set of Oxford English Dictionaries to replace the 1971 set the library owned, a computer printer, carpeting for the bookmobile, and various bookshelves.

This year, the sale should net more money. "I think we have more books," Ouderkirk said.

"We almost always make more money than we did the year before."

The sale, the largest in the Rocky Mountain Area, even outsizes the sale put on by the Denver public library, according to Ouderkirk, because the Natrona library has more space.

People from in and out of Wyoming come to the sale to take part in either buying the books off the tables during the sale or bidding in the silent auction the "Friends" has set up for books that the organization would value above $5.

In the auction each day, a new set of books are bagged with minimum bid prices. People submit written bids that are tabulated in the evening. The highest bidder gets the book.

Even used book sellers come to the event to beef up their inventories, said Ouderkirk.

The money from the sale doesn't go to the library's operating budget.

Natrona County government supplies the majority of the operating costs for the Natrona County Library's day-to-day operations, supplying $560,200 last year of the library's total $749,119 budget, according to library bookkeeper Greta Lehnerz.

The balance of the operating budget is made up by fines, motor vehicle taxes from the state, and miscellaneous funds from interest, said Lehnerz.

The "Friends" book sale provides a fund for extraneous items, like expansion of programs, that couldn't be covered in the operating budget. "We give them a list of things we need and they just donate it," said Lehnerz.

"They couldn't do a lot of stuff without us," said Ouderkirk.

Council moves closer to changing laws outlining terms of office

By EMILY HARRISON
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — An ordinance instituting a one-time change to the council's election process was unanimously approved on first reading Tuesday by the Casper City Council.

If approved through the council's three reading process, the proposed change permanently alters the number of council members elected in a given election year.

Currently, if there are no resignations, six council seats are open during one election year and then three seats are available two years later during the following election. The proposed change would alter this pattern to five seats and four seats, respectively. All council members are normally elected to four-year terms.

However, under the proposed one-time change, one of the six seats up for election this year will be for a two- rather than four-year term. Therefore, during the 1996 election, four rather than three seats will be up for renewal, altering the current pattern.

Because former Councilman Frank Schulte resigned his two-year seat, seven seats will actually be open this fall. Schulte's seat will also be filled for two years during the upcoming election to finish out his four-year term.

The ordinance was originally proposed by Councilman George Parks, who said the intention behind the proposal is to create more continuity and minimize disruption on the council during years when six seats are open. Parks said that there is not an "ulterior motive" or "power play" behind the proposal.

The ordinance to change the number of council members elected was approved unanimously on first-reading. Those voting in favor of the proposal Tuesday included Mayor Mike Corrigan and Councilmen Jack Kelly, George Fetter, Bunky Loucks, Mike Reid and Ed Opella. Councilwoman Judi Laird did not attend the meeting.

In other business, the council unanimously approved authorizing the removal of traffic signals at the intersection of Center Street and Midwest Avenue; Wolcott Street and Midwest Avenue; Wolcott Street and Fifth Street and Durbin Street and Fifth Street.

City Manager Tom Forslund said the decision to remove the traffic lights is the result of a study from the city engineer's office. Removal of the lights will be done in stages to notify the public of the change and give the public a chance to comment.

On the council's consent agenda, the council unanimously approved:

- Authorizing a contract with 71 Construction Company, in the amount of $50,000, for Washington Park storm sewer improvements.
- Authorizing a contract with High Plains Construction, in the amount of $68,011.72, for construction of the Alta Vista Drive subsurface drainage improvements.
- Accepting perpetual easement from Judy D. Miller to install subsurface drainage piping on 1516 Alta Vista Dr.
- Authorizing purchase of property at 1288 Bryan Stock Trail, in an amount not to exceed $79,460, and accepting warranty deed for same.
- Declaring certain Public Works Department equipment as surplus property, and authorizing disposal of same.
- Authorizing contract with Dana Kepner Company of Wyoming, Inc., in the amount of $47,190, for waterworks materials purchase.
- Authorizing contract with Waterworks Materials, Inc., in the amount of $27,092.80, for waterworks materials purchase.
- Authorizing a contract with Vogel Paint and Wax Company, Inc., in the amount of $22,165, for purchase of traffic line paint.

Just before the end of the meeting the council received comments from the public. Leo Cherrick, who regularly addresses the council, asked why the city does not invest in street paint that lasts.

Councilman Kelly responded that the issue had been brought up earlier in a pre-meeting session. Kelly said in order to comply with environmental regulations, the city must use water, rather than oil-based paint.

County OKs expanded Def-Tec operation

By HUGH JACKSON
Star-Tribune staff writer

CASPER — The Natrona County Commission Tuesday approved a permit allowing Defense Technology Corp. of America to expand portions of its non-lethal weapons plant near Casper, despite a protest from a property owner in the vicinity of the plant.

Commissioner Bill Brauer explained that the protest to the conditional use permit, filed by Dana Kepner Co., was identical to a previous protest to Def-Tec's operations in the free trade zone near the airport.

Dana Kepner's complaint cites toxic or hazardous wastes being created and/or stored at the facility in the process of Def-Tec's manufacture of distraction devices, or stun grenades.

Def-Tec Vice-president Lee Rhodes said in an interview Tuesday that the protest is "hogwash" because Def-Tec uses all the chemicals it brings to the facility, and there is no waste.

Def-Tec is expanding its capacity for distraction device production, as well as what Rhodes called the "explosion proof" where the devices are manufactured.

Approval of Def-Tec's expansion, has several conditions attached, including one that the company provide proof of $5 million in liability insurance.

At Tuesday's commission meeting, no one from Dana Kepner appeared to oppose the permit, and the commissioners approved it unanimously.

The commission Tuesday also accepted a $151,000 bid for construction on the sewage lagoon at Alcova Lake.

Lamax Construction made the low bid, and it was accepted.

The lagoon must be brought up to state standards since the state Department of Environmental Quality in 1989 determined the lagoon was never permitted and did not meet DEQ permitting requirements. Most of the $151,000 is funded by One Cent funds.

The commission also accepted a $20,000 bid for a "physical features study" of county roads.

Eric Easton, county attorney, said earlier Tuesday the $20,000 came in the form of a state grant, and would be used to identify safety hazards and make road repair priorities.

Finally, the commission Tuesday took a step to comply with the American with Disabilities Act.

A grievance procedure was established for complaints about potential violations of the federal act enacted last year.

County officials said over time, there is the potential that the act could cost the money as it tries to comply with access to county buildings, county records, or even public meetings.

The implication for the county are under study, and no notable expenditures necessary to comply with the act have been identified as yet, Easton said.

Company says mixing tear gas not cost-effective in United States

CASPER — Stringent environmental requirements may keep Defense Technology Corp. of America from relocating a portion of its non-lethal weapons manufacturing operations to Casper, a company spokesman said Tuesday.

The company had initially hoped to move its tear gas manufacturing process to Casper from the company's manufacturing plant in Ohio, said Lee Rhodes, Def-Tec vice-president.

"With all of the filters and all of the air cleaning devices" state and federal regulators are requiring, however, manufacturing tear gas may no longer be cost-effective in the United States, he said.

Rhodes said it would probably be cheaper to export chemicals to Mexico, Europe or the Middle East, have the tear gas mixed there, and then ship it to Casper for assembly and packaging.

If the company takes that course, then it may choose simply to purchase its chemicals abroad as well, he said.

An Environmental Protection Agency air quality expert in Denver said he personally did not know anything about tear gas manufacturing, but "would tend to agree" with Rhodes own assessment of the effect of EPA regulations on the manufacturing costs.

The EPA's air quality standards have become "very tight" regarding plant maintenance and emissions in certain chemical manufacturing processes, said John Dale in the EPA's Region 8 office.

Rhodes said the tear gas manufacturing or "mixing" process is not particularly labor-intensive, and the company still plans to employ as many as 120 people at its plant in the free trade zone at the airport by year's end.

9 indicted on drug charges

CASPER — Six Casper people and three people from Las Vegas have been indicted by a federal grand jury for charges connected to methamphetamine trafficking, U.S. Attorney Richard Stacy's office said Monday.

Lee W. Roberts, 43, of Casper, was charged with four counts of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of methamphetamine. Roberts was also charged with two counts of using and carrying a firearm during the course of a drug trafficking crime, and aiding and abetting in the distribution of methamphetamine.

If convicted on all counts, Roberts could be sentenced to between 35 years to life in prison, fined $5.5 million, and a 14-year period of supervised release.

Carolyn Roberts, 43, John Wales, 27, and Jackie Wood, 34, all of Las Vegas, along with Billy Joe Wood, 30, of Casper, were charged with two counts of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of methamphetamine, and aiding and abetting in the distribution of methamphetamine.

If convicted on all counts, they could be sentenced to between ten years and life in prison, fined $5 million, and eight years of supervised release.

Casper residents Susan Byers, 38, Cindy Canfield, 23, Shawn Baruth, 30, and Robyn Cantrell, 26, were charged with two counts each of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and distribution of methamphetamine, and use of a telephone to facilitate a felony.

If convicted on all counts, each could be sentenced to between ten years to life in prison, a $4.25 million fine, and a six-year period of supervised release.

In a separate announcement, the U.S. Attorney's office said Maxine Vermeulen, 38, of Casper, has been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of embezzlement of $5,300 by a bank employee

The charge carries a sentence of up to 30 years imprisonment, a $1 million fine, and five-year period of supervised release.

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