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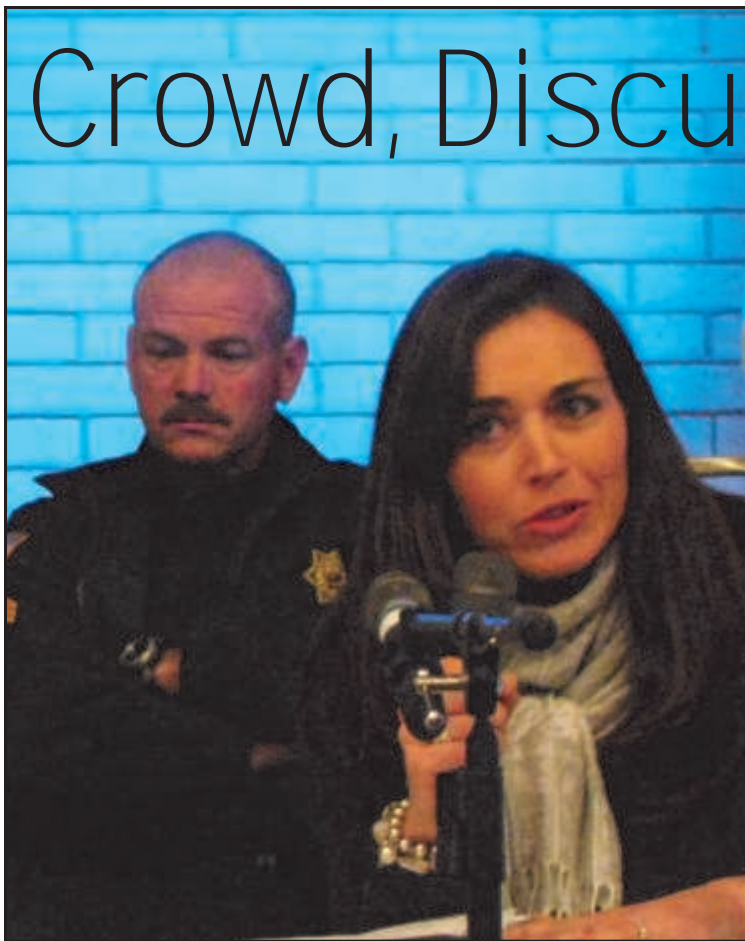


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"Town Hall Action Meeting" Draws

Crowd, Discusses Bullying Problem

By Bradley Harrington



Wyoming First Lady Carol Mead speaks to a town hall crowd of about 150 people on bullying issues at Cheyenne's First Baptist Church, Jan. 31, with CPD Sergeant James Olsen in background. / Photo by Bradley Harrington

CHEYENNE, WYO. - A "Town Hall Action Meeting," organized in the wake of 13-year-old Cheyenne student Alexander Frye's bullying suicide on New Year's Day, drew about 150 people together the evening of Jan. 31 to discuss bullying issues in an attempt to find solutions to the ever-growing issue.

The meeting, held at First Baptist Church next door to Carey Junior High, Frye's school of attendance, was emceed by KGAB 650 AM's "The Morning Zone" host Dave Chaffin, and featured Wyoming First Lady Carol Mead as a panelist and the keynote speaker. The meeting was sponsored by Chaffin and organized in tandem with Marvin Nash, co-founder of the Cheyenne-based "Bullying Hurts" program (see our "Sunbeams" article on "Bullying Hurts," Page 16), and Moses "M. Lee" Hasenauer, local political and community activist and candidate for the office of Laramie County Commissioner, both of whom also served on the panel.

Other panelist speakers included Anne Siebert of the Parent Leadership Training Institute; Lynn Huyler of Safe Harbor; Darlene Nash, wife of Marvin Nash and the other co-founder of "Bullying Hurts"; and Lauren Bard, Frye's sister. The meeting ran from 6:30-8:30 p.m., with the first half of the meeting focused on panelist speeches and the sec-

ond half on audience participation and ideas for solutions. Other meeting attendees included Mayor Rick Kaysen; Laramie County Sheriff Danny Glick; Chief of Police Brian Kozak; Laramie County School District #1 (LCSO1) Superintendent Dr. Mark Stock; and City Councilor Georgia Broyles.

"I'd like to open a dialog and begin what I hope will be an ongoing conversation," Mead said at the beginning of the meeting. "We all know how important this issue is - how it's affected our community, how it's affected our families - and there's been many steps taken, but we haven't taken enough, yet, and there's no one entity to blame.

"There's no easy solutions to this problem," Mead said. "It's a complex problem. As I said, steps have been taken; more steps are needed. The most important step, which we're taking tonight, will, I hope, be the beginning of a whole change of course in how we deal with this in our community. I've received, in the last couple of days, pages of data, which I'm not going to get into; but I do want to share with you three things that struck me.

"I'm a mom," Mead said, "and I'm here primarily as a concerned parent tonight. I brought my two kids with me, because I think they need to hear

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City Council's Sixth Penny Prioritization

Procedures Stir Controversy, Questions

By Bradley Harrington

CHEYENNE, WYO. - Current events regarding the approval path of the Sixth Penny project list have been embroiled in controversy as of late, to the point where at least one Governing Body member, Councilman Jack Spiker of Ward 2, has questioned the legality of the prioritization process, and tempers appear to be fraying a bit in many directions.

The project list has been winding its way through the approval process for several months now, with several special meetings having been held throughout December and January for the Governing Body to acquire public comment and input regarding what items should be on the list, and the list will ultimately be slated for Laramie-County-wide voter consideration on the Sixth Penny ballot during the Primary election of Aug. 21.

At its Jan. 9th meeting, the Governing Body made the decision by a 6-4 vote to reject prioritization of any of the items on the Sixth Penny project list, acting instead to move to place the entire list before the voters to sort out come Aug. 21.

That list, coming in at a total of \$96,531,157, consisted of the following: "Lower Capitol Basin Life-Safety Public Improvements" (\$4.8 million); "Landfill Equipment" (\$3 million); "Public Safety Building" (\$25 million); "Christensen Overpass" (\$1.5 million); "Aerial Fire Truck Grant Match" (\$600,000); "Municipal Pool Repair and Renovation" (\$5 million); "Greenway Construction" (\$2.8 million); "Botanic Gardens Construction (New Conservatory)" (\$15 million); "Recreation Center" (\$33 million); "Airport Terminal" (\$4,831,157); and "17th Street Pedestrian Lighting and Beautification" (\$1 million).

The next step of the process was a Jan. 19 meeting of the Laramie County Specific Purpose Sales Tax Committee (comprised of representatives from all five of Laramie County's government

bodies of Laramie County, Cheyenne, Pine Bluffs, Burns and Albin), at which it was determined that, overall, the five government bodies in question would submit Sixth Penny ballot measures for: Laramie County, \$70,096,850; Cheyenne, \$96,531,157; Pine Bluffs, just over \$10 million; Burns, just over \$5 million; and Albin, \$3.2 million, for a grand total of \$185 million. The overall consensus at the meeting was that even though the magnitude of the costs of all of these projects put Sixth Penny collection procedures out at 10 years or more, raising issues of bonding and inflationary costs, it should be left up to the voters to decide what projects should be approved and which denied.

Prior to the Sales Tax Committee's

meeting, previous caps on Sixth Penny expenditures had been placed at around \$90-\$100 million, keeping tax collection boundaries within five years, and Albin was the lone dissenting vote in raising project list costs past this amount. "We are voted in by the people to do what is best," Albin Mayor Kelly Krakow said at the meeting. "I think this sends a bad signal that we don't care about the economy and the value of money. I think we're putting the vote in jeopardy."

And, indeed, the following week, at its Jan. 26 meeting, the Sales Tax Committee abruptly reversed its previous position and decided to cap its project list at \$105 million after all, limiting Cheyenne to a total of \$57 million to spend on Sixth Penny projects - a reduction of nearly 50

percent.

In the wake of that decision, and with the next Sales Tax Committee scheduled for Feb. 7, this left Cheyenne's Governing Body in the position of having to scramble quickly to prioritize its Sixth Penny project list in a hurry, and that's where the controversies started to heat up.

At that point, early in the morning of Jan. 27 after the Sales Tax Committee Meeting of the night before, Council President Patrick Collins sent out the following email to all members of the Governing Body:

"Council Members: The 6th penny sales tax committee met tonight. The committee decided that \$185,000,000 was too large. The cost of interest or inflation on construction would result in years of tax collection that would just go to pay interest. The committee decided to limit the tax to \$100,000,000 to be split between the five governing bodies, and \$5,000,000 for the airport board that will be sponsored by all five governing bodies. The dollars will be split by historic percentages, Albin 2 percent, Burns 3 percent, Pine Bluffs 5 percent, Laramie County 33 percent, and Cheyenne 57 percent. That gives us \$57,000,000 to place on the ballot.

"We have learned that we cannot rotate the ballot propositions as the software won't allow tax propositions to be rotated," Collins' email continued. "We have decided to pull the propositions out of a hat to determine order on the ballot. The committee is going to meet on Feb. 7 to finalize the ballot. This means I will need your priority list by Monday. I will average all the propositions and let you know how they turn out.

"Next question would be if we need to have a COW [Committee of the Whole] meeting - Ed.] and Council meeting to discuss the results, or are we going to go with highest-ranked projects. If we are

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A golden Cheyenne sunset sears the skies at Triple Crown Estates, 12 miles east of Cheyenne, on the evening of Jan. 14. / Photo by Bradley Harrington