

# Gillette News Record

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## ESCAPE VELOCITY

Teens solve puzzles together in effort to solve new library escape room, **B1**

**GREAT FOR NATE** Roughriders coach hits 800-win milestone, **B3**

# Task force weighs what to do about Hospice House

If facility is to reopen, it's likely to need a new business model and expect to still take a loss

By **JAKE GOODRICK**  
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A timeline or plan for the potential reopening of in-patient service at Close to Home Hospitality House is slow to materialize about nine months after the facility was quietly shut down last year.

But the Close to Home Task Force — consisting of hospital board trust-

ees, administrators and members of the Campbell County Healthcare Foundation — is collaborating to determine what the most sustainable plan for reinstating the services may be, as well as how much financial loss CCH and the Foundation can absorb.

Last week, CCH CFO Mary Lou Tate presented a detailed breakdown of the finances behind Close to Home inpatient services, outpatient hospice services and other national trends to

the task force.

Each of the past five fiscal years, the facility lost significant money on its inpatient services, suggesting that to reopen it would mean eating continued losses or exploring a different business plan that would minimize those losses.

In fiscal year 2016, Close to Home had a net loss of \$801,012, according to CCH data.

The next year saw a \$554,643 loss followed by \$329,281, \$776,546 and \$673,923 losses through fiscal year 2020.

A primary reason for the outsized losses is staffing and average daily

census. The facility requires similar staffing regardless of how many of its six beds are occupied. Even with six patients at minimal staffing, Tate said Close to Home would still lose money.

"We cannot break even on inpatient hospice," she said. "Not even break even."

In fiscal year 2017 when the Hospice House had a 5.42 average daily census, its highest in the past five years, the facility still lost \$554,643.

"We're asked to be fiscally responsible for all service lines," Tate said to the task force. "I know you think we're picking on you, but we're not. There are a lot of service lines under scrutiny

right now to reduce their losses too."

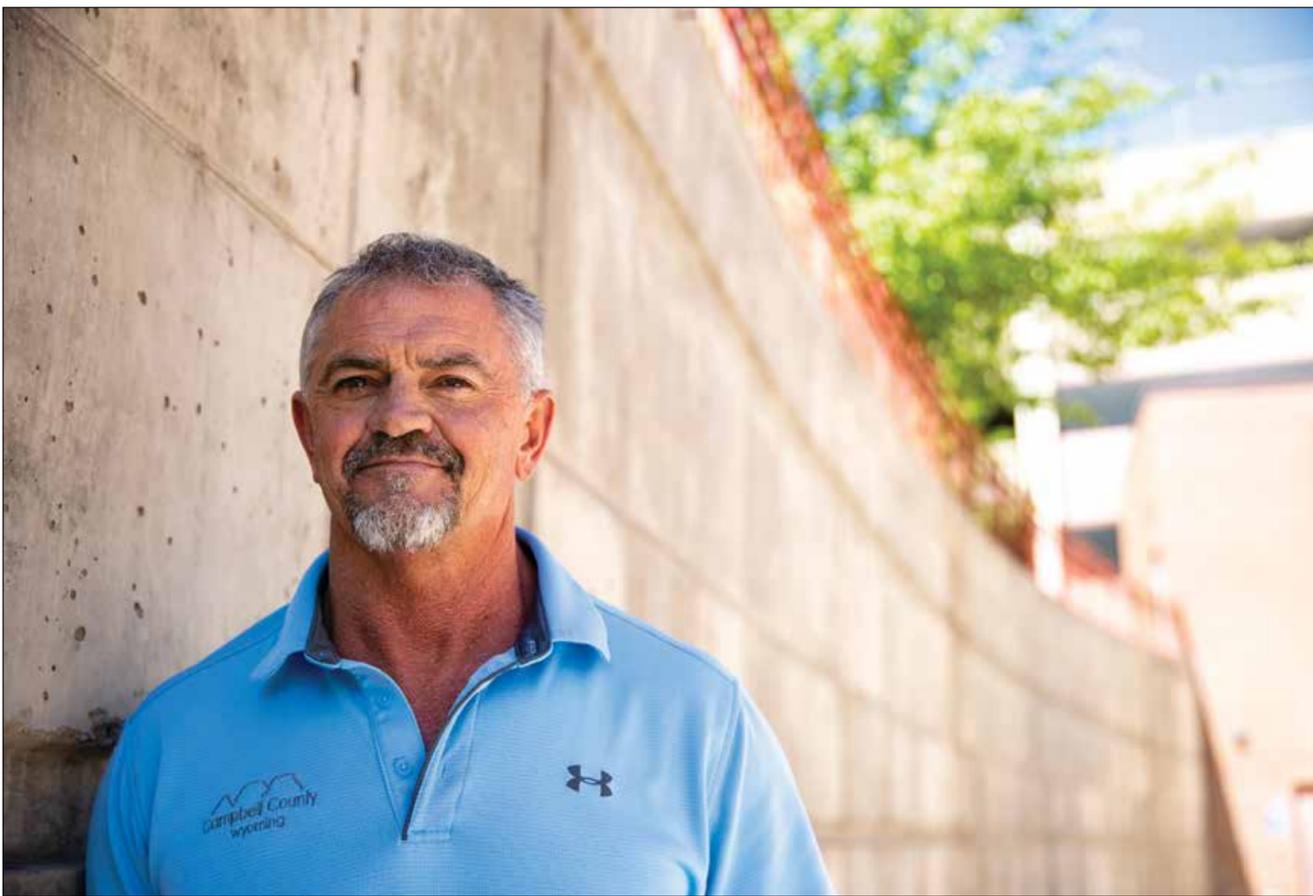
### The elephant in the room

At this point, CCH administrators and the Healthcare Foundation seem aware that almost any plan to reopen Close to Home will be at an operational loss, and whatever that operational loss is will have to be split in some manner between the organizations.

But how much each side is willing to accept is the big question that neither has answered.

"Can I ask the question that probably everybody in the room wants

See **HOSPICE**, Page A10



News Record Photo/Mike Moore

Campbell County commissioner Del Shelstad poses for a portrait outside of the Campbell County Courthouse on Friday morning. He's generated some buzz with an outside-the-box proposal on how to pay for a potential community college district around Gillette College without raising taxes overall. A recent letter outlining the plan would dissolve the Campbell County Cemetery District and sell the hospital to a private operator. The mill levies charged for those could be funneled to the college, he said.

# A grave mistake?

Shelstad proposes dissolving cemetery district, selling hospital to help fund college

By **JONATHAN GALLARDO** \* NEWS RECORD WRITER  
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Campbell County voters will decide Aug. 17 whether they want Gillette College to become its own community college district. If approved, a board of seven trustees, who will be elected in that special election, will get to set a tax to help fund the district.

Commissioner Del Shelstad has suggested dissolving a couple of special districts and using their mill levies to fund the college. He floated this idea on Facebook earlier this month, and it has been met with criticism from other entities involved.

He wanted to find a way for Gillette College to get a mill levy without increasing the tax burden on local industry. He said that while he supports the college becoming its own district and having local control, he does not like the additional tax that would come with it.

"Let's get rid of the cemetery district and fund it jointly through the county and the city (of Gillette)," Shelstad wrote. "This would save the tax payers 3 mills."

Cemetery districts are allowed to levy up to 3 mills. The Campbell County Cemetery District has regularly

kept its under 1 mill.

He also suggested selling the hospital to the highest bidder.

"A large hospital corporation would turn our hospital around for the better for our community. This would save an additional 3 mills," Shelstad wrote, referring to the tax Campbell County Health assesses each year.

He suggested adding the dissolution of the cemetery and hospital districts to the ballot for the special election in August.

"It may not be the best plan, but for my money at least, I have come to the table with something outside of just raising the mill levy an additional 4 mills," he wrote.

Unsurprisingly, Shelstad's idea does not sit well with those in the cemetery district.

"He continues to create and fabricate this fantasy of his, and we've never understood why, but that's what he does," said Jim Hastings, president of the Campbell County Cemetery District board.

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# Man gets 8-13 years in prison for attempted manslaughter

By **JONATHAN GALLARDO**  
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A man who fired three shots into a nearby apartment, hitting one person in the head, because he saw people with "glowing eyes" last August will serve eight to 13 years in prison.

Zachary Manning, 34, had pleaded guilty to one count of attempted manslaughter, and he was sentenced Thursday afternoon by District Judge Thomas W. Rumpke.

Manning will receive credit for 313 days served.

On Aug. 2, Manning fired three shots from his custom Olympic Arms AR-15 after he saw people with glowing eyes and thought a neighboring apartment building was being invaded. He said cars had shown up and appeared to be surrounding the apartment. He got out his AR, loaded it and waited on the balcony in a prone position, according to an affidavit of probable cause.

Manning had been hallucinating due to a mixture of alcohol and prescription drugs, said his public defender, Jefferson Coombs.

On the night before the shooting, Manning was experiencing withdrawal symptoms after trying to quit alcohol cold turkey, Coombs said. He was sweating and had nausea and an irregular heartbeat. He was taken to the hospital and was prescribed Lorazepam.

The hospital's discharge form for Manning told him to take the prescription medication for four days, and that he "should never drink alcohol again," Coombs said.

But Manning took the pills and drank alcohol, and he started to hallucinate.

"It looked like they were kidnapping people and before they started pulling people out, it seemed like all the cars had hooked to the houses and was trying to pull them (off) their foundations," he told police, according to court documents.

He said police arrived "and at least two to three people had come running out of the house, their eyes were glowing and they fell. They presented a shot, and I took it," according to the affidavit.

The victim, a 22-year-old, told police that he and his girlfriend were in their apartment at about 10 p.m. when they heard a gunshot and went outside to investigate. A neighbor pointed toward Manning's balcony.

The two went back inside and heard another gunshot. The victim felt himself get hit. Then they heard another shot fired through their front door, according to the affidavit.

The victim's wound required stitches

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ZACHARY MANNING

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**WYOMING:** Driskill among state lawmakers who clash over election bill pledge, **A7**

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