

Star-Tribune WYOMING

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SECTION B

IN BRIEF

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

Nine candidates miss filing deadline

CHEYENNE — Nine state legislative candidates failed to file their pre-election campaign finance reports by the Tuesday deadline, according to officials in the secretary of state's office.

Each candidate is required to file a report of receipts seven days before the election under state law.

Candidates who failed to file complete reports by the deadline were Senate candidates Tony Ross, Gerald Geis, Michael Von Flatern, and Stan Cooper, as well as House candidates Mick Powers, Susan Cannon, Hubert Townsend, Pat Childers and Jane Wostenberg. Cannon is a Democrat, Townsend a Libertarian, and the rest Republicans.

Von Flatern and Childers actually filed reports, but those reports were missing necessary signatures. As of 2 p.m. Wednesday, Ross, Geis, Powers, Cannon and

State stays out of Alpine school fight

By **BRODIE FARQUHAR**
Star-Tribune correspondent

LANDER — Wyoming's School Facilities Commission declined Wednesday to be drawn into a fight between people in Alpine and the Afton-based Lincoln County School District 2.

At issue is where to build new schools or refurbish old schools in Star Valley. The valley is experiencing explosive growth in the north end of the valley, and a school population that is stagnant or declining in the rest of the valley.

The Lincoln County School District 2 board has decided to locate a new elementary school in Etna and not in Alpine, a rapidly growing bedroom community that provides service workers to Jackson.

Chad Haag, a member of the Friends of the Alpine School group, handed out packets of information to the state commission and made a 20-minute presentation in Lander Wednesday. He argued that Alpine

is the largest town in Wyoming without its own school and ranks only after Pine Haven as the fastest-growing community in the state.

Haag said it makes no sense for his local school board to not build a school in Alpine.

The school board counters that reconfiguring existing schools would be problematic, and that Etna is centrally located and a school site there makes the most sense.

Specifically, Haag asked the commission to reject Lincoln County School District 2's five-year facilities plan, or at least hold a special meeting to focus on the district's plan and Alpine's growth.

Commission member Ralph Goodson of Sundance asked why, if Alpine is growing so much and so fast, it doesn't have representation on the school board.

Haag said no one from Alpine has ever been elected to the school board and said he doubted whether that could ever happen — until Alpine's population out-

numbers the rest of Star Valley.

"There's a significant cultural and religious divide between Alpine and the rest of the valley," Haag said.

Friends of the Alpine School have challenged the school board's decision in court, contending it smacks of discrimination because of board members' comments about an additional burden from Hispanic students in Alpine. According to U.S. Census data, Lincoln County is 97 percent white, while neighboring Teton County is 6.5 percent Hispanic.

The old elementary school in Etna was identified by the state as in need of rehabilitation. The board elected to rebuild the school on land next to its current location.

Haag noted that the school district will have to buy land in Etna to rebuild the elementary school, to the tune of about \$250,000 once sewer and water amenities are included. Alpine is offering to give

11 acres to the district, with the amenities in place.

It would make far greater sense to build an elementary school in Alpine and bus kids in from surrounding rural areas than to bus into Etna, he said.

Finally, Haag noted that Etna is so small that it lacks all kinds of other infrastructure, such as ambulance service, fire and police protection, and sewer service — all of which is present in Alpine.

Commission Director James "Bubba" Shivler said the commission is required by law to work with school districts alone, and has no mandate to do otherwise. Chairman Jeff Marsh agreed, noting that while Haag had presented interesting information, Marsh could only urge the Friends of the Alpine School to "work with your school board."

Marsh said the commission was limited in its scope to looking at the size of school facilities, the relevant geology and safety issues — not local politics.