

A Year To Remember

and a visit by Santa were all on tap.

A meeting between members of the Big Timber City Council Police Committee and Sweet Grass County Sheriff Dan Tronrud proved to be an eye opening one for the Councilmen. Tronrud told Councilmen Paul Westervelt and Phil Moulden law enforcement personnel had handled 1,744 complaints from January to October of 2003 and approximately 56 percent, or 1,148 occurred in the city. During the same timeframe 596 complaints from the county were handled.

The Councilmen also learned the \$124,000 budgeted by the Council to be paid to Sweet Grass County for law enforcement costs fell short of the 34.5 percent share previously agreed to by the city and county. For fiscal year 2002-2003, the shortage was \$22,343.94 and another shortage in the amount of \$63,882.50 was expected for the fiscal year 2003-2004 budget. Some of the blame is due to the City Council budget hearings occurring before the county budget information is available. To prevent this in the future it was decided the City Council would meet with Tronrud and others from the county in June or July of 2004 to come up with the necessary information. Sweet Grass County Clerk and Recorder Sherry Bjorndal confirmed the County Commissioners would most likely expect the city to pay its 34.5 percent share in the future.

The Big Timber Food Bank received a \$2,700 donation from the Town Pump Charitable Foundation's Second Annual fundraising campaign. Approximately \$1,500 of the contribution were matching funds from the foundation and the rest donations from Town Pump customers.

Big Timber organizations announced their holiday campaigns to raise funds and supply food and toys for those experiencing financial hardship at this time of year. The Tree of Hearts and Lights, Christmas Giving Program, Local Care Fund, PMC Gifts with a Lift, and Community Needs/Empty Stocking Project announced their

needs so generous residents of Sweet Grass County could contribute.

DECEMBER

December 5 - 11

The speed limit on McLeod Street was again on the mind of Big Timber City Council after they were told by City/County Planner Betty Alexander of a response she received from Bruce Barrett of the Montana Department of Transportation following her letter to him asking if the speed limit could be reduced to 15 mph. Barrett stated lowering the speed from the present 25 mph to 15 would not be possible because past traffic studies do not warrant any changes.

After much discussion by the Council and Mayor Doug Lowry's stating, "The city should be able to set speed limits on McLeod," and "I am fed up with bureaucrats telling us how to run our towns.", Alexander said she would try to get the speed at least lowered by 80 percent, to 20 mph. She feels this is a possibility because of the Senior Center being located there and the state guidelines which will allow an 80 percent reduction in speed limits without a new traffic study.

Alexander also gave the Council a heads-up on a possible zone plea they might be receiving involving a home owned by John Esp. He has been approached by a group of lawyers interested in turning the residence into an office center that would house several businesses. Council members Phil Moulden and Paul Westervelt stated they would both be against such an endeavor in the residential area due to the impact it would be likely to have on residential property values and the parking problem that would result.

This edition of The Pioneer also addressed the availability of a Ben Franklin franchise with the upcoming closing of C and D Mercantile, the present holder of the franchise. The transaction is being handled by David Larson, who stated an initial investment of \$30,000 to \$40,000, or approximately one third of the total franchise cost, would be expected.

Craig Snodgrass, owner of C and D Mercantile, stated the large

turnout of customers since the store's closing was announced has left him feeling angry. "If people would support the community the way they have since our closing was announced, this community would blossom." Snodgrass also expressed little regard for those who regularly do their shopping outside of Big Timber. "Unless this community wakes up and gets its head out of the sand," stated Snodgrass, "they're going to have to go to Walmart for everything because there will be no local businesses left."

Sweet Grass Sheriff Dan Tronrud told The Pioneer of two recent incidents occurring at The Fort and Town Pump in which purses and other items were removed from unlocked cars at the businesses. He urged everyone to not leave items unattended in unlocked vehicles.

A new business, Montana Pantry, was highlighted. Owner Ranna McCauley said she is ready to supply Big Timber cooks with a ready supply of fresh herbs and spices as well as gluten free products.

For the first time in nearly two decades the Big Timber Science Olympiad team almost swept the state competition. The Sweet Grass County team earned 246 points out of a possible 294 in their victory.

Fire totally destroyed a house on property owned by Matt Cremer that is known as the Old Sullivan place. The state Fire Marshall participated in the investigation which indicated the fire, which Big Timber Volunteer Fire Chief Mark Stephens stated did between \$30,000 and \$40,000 in damage, was an accident.

Louis Todisco, infant son of Joe and Becky Todisco of Big Timber, received a new heart on November 30. The baby had been battling an infection the last several weeks that had left doctors stumped and damaged his heart.

December 12 - 18

Sweet Grass County Clerk Sherry Bjorndal stated the costs for the Hobble Fire that swept the eastern part of the county during August topped off at \$212,464.80.

Of this amount the county received partial reimbursement for 75 percent of these costs, or \$159,348.60, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, leaving the county with a monetary toll of \$53,116.20.

JoAnn Fuller, owner of the Timber Bar said donations for the annual food drive to benefit the Big Timber Food Bank are down this year from last, prompting her to possibly change the date of the drive next year.

Tana Parisi of the Big Timber Food Bank told The Pioneer the food bank had been hit harder in November and December this year but donations from area churches had enabled the needs of the hungry to be met.

December 19 - 25

Sweet Grass County Attorney Rich Malagasi took a voluntary leave of absence from his job after two county employees, Jam Moody and Arlene Yost, filed temporary orders of protection against him.

Court papers filed by the

women in District Court indicate they were concerned for their safety and fearful their relationship with Malagasi would "escalate to include not only verbal but some type of physical abuse."


Yost and Moody met with Sweet Grass County Commissioners before taking the action and were assured by the group the situation between themselves and Malagasi would be addressed.

During Malagasi's absence Park County officials would be contacted, according to Clerk of Court Deanna Novotny.

Two trials are scheduled in January that are being prosecuted by Malagasi, according to Novotny, and she is uncertain what will happen in those cases.

This Christmas issue of The Pioneer also featured pictures of Big Timber Grade School students performing in the annual Christmas Program and offered a "Christmas Through the Decades" section containing stories reprinted from past issues of The Pioneer.

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MONTANA PANTRY
..And a happy New Year!

Resolution: organize the kitchen cupboards!
Resolution: Try a healthier new recipe each week.

717C Fourth Avenue North next to the Centerpiece, Big Timber 932-6240

Wishing you every happiness this Holiday Season and throughout the coming year.

Thomas Biglen
Attorney at Law

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