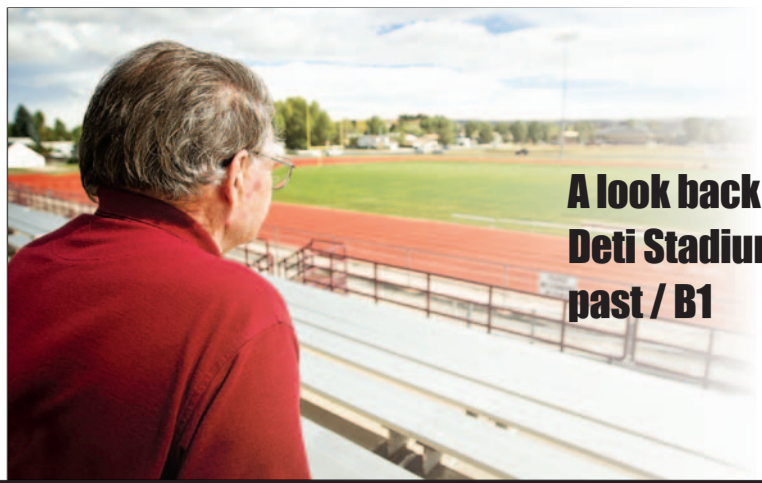


LARAMIE BOOMERANG

THURSDAY | SEPTEMBER 17, 2015 | LARAMIE, WYO | LARAMIE'S VOICE SINCE 1881



A look back on Deti Stadium's past / B1

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TRAFFIC

MORE TRAFFIC, MORE ACCIDENTS



The intersection of Third and Clark streets has seen 33 traffic accidents since 2013 — the most of any intersection in Laramie, according to data from the Wyoming Department of Transportation Highway Safety Program. JEREMY MARTIN/Boomerang photographer

Beginning of semesters bring influx of drivers

By JOEL FUNK
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The fall season in Laramie sees the return of the student population, and with it, an increased vibrancy of the city. But with that influx of people comes an unintended consequence: an increase in traffic accidents.

"When there's that many more vehicles in town, and a lot of those drivers aren't familiar with the streets, signs and traffic movements, you will have more traffic accidents," said Lt. Gwen Smith of the Laramie Police Department.

The month in 2014 with the highest number of accidents reported was September, followed by February. So far in 2015, the highest number of accidents happened in February, followed closely by January and then by August.

The lower number of accidents reported in 2015 would be affected by a change at the start of the year in state statute which no longer requires individual law enforcement departments to report accidents on private property. Instead of submitting a report which would become

a part of state data, the LPD now does only an internal report, which Smith said was part of the reason for the drop in the number of accidents reported.

Data on traffic accidents totaling more than \$1,000 in combined damage or with an injury are reported to the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration.

State accident mapping shows most accidents occur where the highest volume of traffic tends to be: intersections.

"The major intersections on the busiest roads are where we have the most amount of accidents in the city of Laramie," Smith said.

With a total of 33 accidents since 2013, the intersection of North Third Street and Clark Street appears to be the most accident-prone location in the city. Of those accidents, the intersection also had the most injuries and property damage. The intersection of Grand Avenue and South 15th Street reported the second

See Accidents, A11

By the numbers

Months with the highest number of traffic accidents in Laramie:

2014	2015
93: September	62: February
83: January	52: January
85: February	42: August
65: August	30: September (so far)

Intersections with the highest number of traffic accidents (2013-present):

- 33: Third and Clark streets
- 27: Grand Avenue and 15th Street
- 17: Grand Avenue and Third Street, Grand Avenue and Fourth Street and Grand Avenue and 30th Street

See Privacy, A10

CITY COUNCIL



Exploring options

No city land for Feeding Laramie Valley — yet

By JOEL FUNK
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A motion to approve a lease for a local nonprofit group to grow sustainable food on city-owned land was not carried at Tuesday's Laramie City Council meeting, but the possibility for a deal is still alive.

Feeding Laramie Valley, founded in 2009, is a community-driven program designed to work toward food security in Albany County. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, low food security is recognized when a community "reports of reduced quality, variety or desirability of diet (and has) little or no indication of reduced food intake," where high food security is recognized by there being "no

See Council, A11

TECHNOLOGY

Grant will allow Wyoming to test smart vehicle tech

By TREVOR BROWN
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CHEYENNE — A federal grant will let Wyoming test next-generation "smart vehicles" that could make highway driving less dangerous.

The U.S. Department of

Transportation announced this week that Wyoming is one of three locations selected for the Connected Vehicle Pilot Deployment Program.

Wyoming, New York City and Tampa, Florida, will share up to \$42 million to use "innovative applications" for vehicles that share and

communicate anonymous information with each other and their surroundings.

The exact amount the Cowboy State will get is unknown. But Vince Garcia, a program manager with the Wyoming Department of Transportation, said the agency estimated in its application it would need "in

the ballpark" of \$5 million. Wyoming's funds will be targeted at improving freight traffic flows through the Interstate 80 corridor.

Ali Ragan, another project manager with WYDOT, said

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Accidents

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most, with Grand Avenue and South Third, South Fourth and South 30th Streets all tying for third at 17 accidents. Only one of those, Grand Avenue and South 30th Street, reported having a critical injury, where an injury was incapacitating or fatal.

Increased driver cognizance when travelling through intersections could reduce accidents, Smith said.

"People need to slow down a little bit and be familiar with what's around them and who has the right of way," Smith said. "People need to be paying attention to who is moving, who isn't moving and who gets to move."

Weather issues played a part in the increased number of accidents in February 2014, Smith said. Snowpack, icy conditions and wind can affect the number of incidences, even among people who think they are "really good drivers," Smith said.

"When the roads are icy and snow-packed and the wind is blowing, people need to slow down much more than they think they do," Smith said.

In general, Smith said it is good advice to avoid unnecessary travel

through most of the winter months in Laramie.

"If you're not on the roads, it's hard to be in an accident," she said.

The increase in accidents would mostly be attributed to the influx of drivers unfamiliar with the community, and not necessarily to young drivers being more prone to distracted driving, Smith said.

Young drivers report more crashes while using cell phones, according to an April 2012 study by the NHTSA. Drivers age 18-20 had the highest incidence of crash or near-crash experiences, as well as reporting the highest level of phone involvement at the time of the accident. Drivers age 25-34, however, reported talking on their phone at the time of an accident more than any other group, according to the study. Of the 15 percent of males and 12 percent of females of any age who did report being in a crash or near-crash, 6 percent reported using their cell phone at the time of the crash. Though male drivers were involved in more accidents, females reported a slightly higher rate of cell phone use at the time of an accident.

There is no data available to the LPD on how many accidents involved young people and distracted

driving, she said.

"Citizens of Laramie can be distracted as easily as students can be," Smith said.

As new students enter the community, the University of Wyoming provides orientation programming informing students about various aspects of the campus and community, known as Cowboy Connect.

"The university does an exceptional introduction for freshmen and new students coming into the community," Smith said.

Part of that programming includes community meetings, where representatives from campus, as well as the city attorney, the University of Wyoming Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Fire Department and LPD speak to students. William Evans, associate director of resident life at UW, said the event focuses on helping students make appropriate decisions with drugs and alcohol such as not driving while intoxicated.

"The LPD talked about how most of situations folks find themselves in jail for in this area involve alcohol," Evans said. "They talked about the importance of making good decisions and having designated drivers."

According to a 2014

report by the Wyoming Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police, just less than 85 percent of traffic crashes involved alcohol, with the driver having an average blood-alcohol content of 0.17, more than twice the legal limit of 0.08. In Albany County, underage offenders accounted for just less than 10 percent of Driving Under the Influence charges in 2014, with a BAC of 0.12. Just more than 2 percent of underage DUI arrests involved drugs.

Danny Henderson, 18, is a freshman at UW from Denver. Though he did attend the orientation programming the university provided, Henderson said he did not think he needed the information.

"Everyone here is a better driver than when I was in high school," Henderson said. "There are a lot less road signs and signals, but it's not bad once you get used to it."

Another freshman, Anastasia Marchese, 18, from Nashville, Tennessee, said she thought navigating traffic in Laramie was "pretty normal" and "not bad."

"I went to orientation, but they didn't talk about anything I didn't already know," Marchese said.

Council

Continued from A1

reported indications of food-access problems or limitation."

Founder of Feeding Laramie Valley Gayle Woodsum requested a lease on the Hunziker parcel of the Monolith Ranch to pursue an agricultural operation.

The Hunziker parcel, just more than 100 acres of land, is a small portion of the more than 11,000-acre ranch, purchased in 1981 by the city after residents voted to approve the purchase. A renewal of the existing lease with rancher Stanley Baer to continue his cattle operations was carried by a unanimous vote. The renewal extends the lease with Baer for eight years.

Water use on the land would determine the city's future water rights, which the ranch operation is set up to manage. By maximizing the use of water on the ranch and having a low rate of return, the city increases the amount of water it would have the rights to when transferred from agricultural to municipal use.

Water rights are the sole purpose for the city to own the land, Mayor Dave Paulekas said. Though he said he supported Feeding Laramie Valley and thought its mission was "commendable," Paulekas said comments from the city's leading water rights adviser, attorney Harriet Hageman, as well as from lessee Baer presented possible problems with awarding the lease to Feeding Laramie Valley on Tuesday. Paulekas said he did not feel comfortable approving the lease without bringing the lessee

"I fully support working with a partnership to find a location, and if it turns out to be Hunziker, I'm good with that, but we need to explore other options."

JAYNE PEARCE
Laramie vice-mayor



to the table as a partner with the city.

"The value of that ranch is in the water rights and the water rights only, and that's what you need to maintain focus on," Paulekas said. "That's not to say Feeding Laramie Valley won't fit in, but we have another partner, and that's Mr. Baer."

During a Sept. 8 work session, Hageman said the current manner in which the city managed the ranch was the best practice for maintaining water rights, and advised against deviating from that path. Baer indicated he used the Hunziker parcel, and said his cattle operation would be disrupted if the parcel was leased to Feeding Laramie Valley.

Vice Mayor Jayne Pearce said she also supported Feeding Laramie Valley's initiative but did not know if the Hunziker parcel would work.

"I fully support working with a partnership to find a location, and if it turns out to be Hunziker, I'm good with that, but we need to explore other options," Pearce said.

Following the work session, it appeared to city staff there would likely not be majority support from council to approve the lease with Feeding Laramie Valley, said Dave Derragon, assistant city manager. City staff would look into alternative locations suitable to Feeding Laramie Valley's

needs, as well as continue negotiations with Baer, Derragon said.

"From the beginning of negotiations with Baer, it's been on the table that Feeding Laramie Valley may be an option," Derragon said. "I think we can work amicably with Baer to make this happen."

Feeding Laramie Valley had no desire to jeopardize the work being done on the ranch, and would contribute financially to safeguard the land and water, Woodsum said.

Because she thought Baer currently used the Hunziker parcel for less than two months a year with a small number of steers, Woodsum said a partnership with the rancher could work out "beautifully and cooperatively" to make adjustments.

"He would have to find an alternative place on the remaining 11,000 plus acres, so there would be that displacement, but I think it's something we could work out," Woodsum said.

Laramie, Woodsum said, is a "community in great need" with the highest degree of food insecurity in Wyoming; a problem she said Feeding Laramie Valley could help with.

"Feeding Laramie Valley is a proven entity whose primary mission is to bring lots of people, agencies and groups together to work to improve life — not only now, but in the long term — by addressing food stability," Woodsum said.

Christine Porter, assistant professor of public health

at the University of Wyoming, said she worked as an academic and researcher with Feeding Laramie Valley. As part of a national project working with five communities with organizations similar to Feeding Laramie Valley, Porter said the organization has "done more with less." Making public land available to Feeding Laramie Valley could provide valuable insights for the community, such as the connection between health and gardening, as well as how partnerships with other entities such as the United States Department of Agriculture could improve food security in Albany County.

"There's so much that could be done with a property of that size where Laramie could be a leader in looking at small to medium scale production operation and what that could do for economic development and food security," Porter said.

Of more than 30 people in the audience at the meeting, nine spoke in favor of leasing the Hunziker property or finding an alternative location for the Feeding Laramie Valley project.

Even though the council did not approve the lease for the ranch land at Tuesday's meeting, Woodsum said she is "thrilled" by the council's "commitment to wanting to partner with us and make it work."

"It gives us an opportunity to explore a lot of options and focus on answering the very good and specific questions the City Council had," Woodsum said. "I'm ready to move onto a new level of engagement and get working with staff to answer some of those questions."

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\$10 all you can drink
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