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The I-70 Scout

# The I-70 Scout

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Searching for news in Watkins, Bennett, Strasburg, Byers, Deer Trail and Agate

Thursday, September 5, 2024

## DEAD IN THE WATER

### Strasburg FPD backs out of proposed fire authority over board make-up disagreement

by **Steven Vetter**  
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — After about 1½ years of back-and-forth debate, efforts to combine three of the I-70 Corridor fire districts under the semblance of one fiscal umbrella came to an abrupt end after one entity decided to pull out.

“It is with deep regret that I write to inform you of the Strasburg Fire Protection District’s decision

to withdraw from the East Metro Fire Protection Authority negotiations,” said a letter signed by Strasburg fire board president Jeff Thain following an Aug. 28 special meeting between Strasburg, Bennett-Watkins and Byers fire district boards.

Whether the letter addressed to the other two districts supersedes a decision made in the meeting to table the authority discussion and revisit the

issue after efforts to garner public input on the subject was uncertain at press time.

Prior to the Aug. 28 meeting’s adjournment, all three boards stated their positions concerning how they wanted to move forward and whether Byers would be under the actual authority or be brought in on a contract basis to start. Byers’ mill levy is well under the other two, making the three-district authority

less equitable across the board.

Thain said Strasburg remains adamant that the authority have a board made up of three from Bennett and two each from Strasburg and Byers, but that they would be “amenable to” a 3-2 board make-up under a contract proposal with Byers.

“But a super majority (vote) in both instances,” he added.

Bennett-Watkins board

president Royce Pindell said his group was against including Byers under the authority umbrella but would be fine with the 3-2 board makeup of Bennett and Strasburg with Byers brought in under a contract.

“We’re concerned with the cost to help run Byers and that it might put them in more financial strain than we thought at the

**SEE FIRE AUTHORITY PAGE 4**

### Juvenile accused of \$7,500 in damage to middle school

by **Steven Vetter**  
Managing Editor

STRASBURG — Two weeks into the new school year, Hemphill Middle School underwent repairs for damage that allegedly occurred at the hands of a student late last month.

Adams County Sheriff’s deputies were dispatched to the school about 10:30 a.m. Aug. 25 on report of a break-in that happened overnight. School staff reported finding an open door to the gym broken and that “the music room glass was broken and there was a rock laying in the middle of the floor.”

“I walked around the school with staff looking for additional possible entry points, and points of damage,” a deputy’s incident report said. “While walking around, I found the eastern door glass to be damaged, northernmost window on the east side.”

The deputy confirmed finding a rock, about 6-inches in diameter, in the area.

During the investigation, surveillance video showed that a teenage girl was outside the school starting at about 1:30 a.m. Sunday and that she stayed in the area for at least an hour. She got through a first door on the front of the building, but she could not get through the vestibule and wandered the exterior of the building, eventually ending up on its south side.

“At approximately 2:30 a.m., you can see the female walking around ... near the library exterior door, and near the windows,” the incident report said. “On the footage, you can see the female approach the window multiple times and then step back into frame and throw an item. At 2:34 a.m., [the middle school] had a hallway motion activation. At the same time, you can see the female, who is now in the building, exit [the room] and enter the hallway.”

During further review of surveillance footage, including a full-face still image, the suspect was identified by school staff, who said the girl “had been troubled recently” and “has been making inappropriate comments.”

During the initial interview with the suspect later on Sunday, deputies reported seeing similar gloves to the ones that the suspect was wearing at the school.

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### Chainsaw artist transforms 'Burg tree

by **Kathy Smiley**  
Staff Writer

STRASBURG — To Bongo Love, a piece of old wood or a tree stump is alive with possibilities.

The chainsaw artist has been carving wood into animals, people and whimsical objects for 18 years and is a world-renowned master carver. He was in Strasburg at the end of August transforming a tall cottonwood stump in Lyons Park into a sculpture of an eagle, an owl, two bears and a feather. The project is a joint commission between the Strasburg Parks & Recreation District and community member Cheryl Humbert. Three trees in the area will eventually be carved, each



Love

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PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS CLAUSSEN/The I-70 Scout

The front of the completed tree carving, left, depicts an eagle, an owl and a bear, while the opposite side has the back side of the eagle, another bear, and a feather.



KATHY SMILEY/The I-70 Scout

Chainsaw artist Bongo Love works on the dead cottonwood tree in Lyons Park in Strasburg Aug. 30. Three such tree carvings are planned, each by a different chainsaw artist.