Snowpack continues to drop

February didn’t help ‘concerning’ outlook

By GREG MOORE
Express staff writer

The good news: Homeowners in the Wood River Valley won’t have to worry about flooding this spring.

With four SNOTEL stations in the Wood River basin setting record lows for monthly precipitation last month, the basin now has 69 percent of normal snowpack.

“That’s the area of Idaho where we wanted precipitation the most, and we got the least,” said Daniel Tappa, supervisory hydrologist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Idaho.

The Chocolate Gulch SNOTEL site, north of Ketchum, received 0.1 inches of precipitation in February, 17 percent of normal.

The Hydraman SNOTEL site, near the head of the East Fork of the Big Wood River, received 0.4 inches of precipitation, 17 percent of normal.

The Swede Peak SNOTEL site, in the southeastern Pioneer Mountains in the Little Wood Basin, received 0.2 inches of precipitation, 7 percent of normal.

The Soldier Ranger Station, north of Fairfield, received 0.1 inches of precipitation, 4 percent of normal.

The Big Lost-Big Wood River divide, on Trail Creek Summit east of Sun Valley, recorded the second lowest amount of February precipitation ever, at 0.7 inches, 21 percent of average.

Galena Summit fared a little better, receiving 2 inches of precipitation, 59 percent of average.

“The Wood and Lost basins have the most concerning water outlook in Idaho,” the NRCS stated in a press release on its March newsletter. “More than anywhere else in Idaho, this region would benefit from a wetter than normal spring. … More abundant precipitation will be needed in order to avoid water shortages.”

See VALLEY SNOWFALL, Page 12

P&Z wary of Hot Dog Hill development

Developer to return next month

By ALEJANDRA BUITRAGO
Express Staff Writer

The Ketchum Planning & Zoning Commission advanced three projects and stalled one on Monday night.

A pre-design review application was approved for one mixed-use, two-story building at the corner of Fourth and Walnut streets, design review moved forward for the Ketchum Boutique Hotel and a preliminary plat application was approved for a 15-unit single-family home development on Bird Drive.

Stalled is a 59,130-square-foot mixed-use building that would take over Main Street between Fourth and Fifth streets, where Irving’s Red Hots stands in the summer and Formula Sports currently sits.

The development is proposed to be four stories, with retail shops on the ground level, residential units on the three upper floors and a 16-spot underground parking garage with access from Fifth Street.

However, P&Z commissioners opted to keep the project in pre-design review. The panel asked the developer to return next month. That, it hopes, will allow for some adjustments to be made to a design proposal that currently uses three elements, two color schemes and rectangular shapes.

“The building looks like a layered-wedding-cake due to the lack of vertical integration,” the city’s staff report states.

Developer Chris Ensign appeared at the meeting, see Friday’s edition of the Idaho Mountain Express.

See MAIN STREET, Page 12

BCSD SUPERINTENDENT TO STEP DOWN

GwenCarol Holmes announces intent to leave district in 2021

By GRETEL KAUFFMAN
Express Staff Writer

Blaine County School District Superintendent GwenCarol Holmes will step down from her position next year.

Holmes sent an email to district staff Monday announcing her plans to step down as superintendent on June 30, 2021, after her current contract ends. She had already notified the district’s board of trustees of her intent to leave her position, she said.

“This is an incredible district and the work we are doing together to ensure ALL students achieve at the highest level is extremely important to the continued success of our valley and our country,” Holmes said in the email. “I promise you that for the next 14 months, I will be all in as we continue to work together to fulfill the promise to all our students.”

Holmes has served as district superintendent since 2014, when she was hired to replace former Superintendent Lonnie Barber.

A recent public survey of School District parents, community members, teachers and students found widespread concerns surrounding the district’s superintendent and board of trustees.

A few dozen of the board’s 45 percent of respondents said they were very dissatisfied with Holmes, 26 percent said they were dissatisfied.

The board of trustees was scheduled to consider renewal of Holmes’ contract at its regular March meeting. However, P&Z commissioners opted to keep the project in pre-design review. The panel asked the developer to return next month. That, it hopes, will allow for some adjustments to be made to a design proposal that currently uses three elements, two color schemes and rectangular shapes.

“The building looks like a layered-wedding-cake due to the lack of vertical integration,” the city’s staff report states.

Developer Chris Ensign appeared at the meeting, see Friday’s edition of the Idaho Mountain Express.