

The Sentinel-Record

Published daily in Hot Springs National Park, Arkansas, since 1877

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Monday, March 27, 2023

Two sections, 16 pages
No. 86, Vol. 146 | \$2.00

City cites Mountain View Heights for life-safety issues

DAVID SHOWERS
The Sentinel-Record

A recent inspection of apartments the Hot Springs Housing Authority converted to the Section 8 program revealed 360 violations of the city's property maintenance code, according to checklists the city provided in response to a records request.

Almost 200 were logged at the 120-unit, 11-story Highrise Circle building reserved for older adults. Deputy City

Manager Lance Spicer said Friday that six citations have been issued. He said they are life safety violations that had yet to be corrected when the city's neighborhood services division followed up on them March 20.

Spicer said only about a quarter of the 245 family units on Spring, Autumn and Illinois streets have been inspected. According to the city's checklist, 161 violations were recorded at the 58 units.

"It's definitely good to have this

baseline type of inspection," Spicer said. "I don't know if the city had done a full-scale safety and property maintenance inspection for the Housing Authority."

Spicer said the Housing Authority and property manager Allied Orion are cooperating with the city.

"We've been very pleased with our interactions with both entities," he said. "Nobody has presented any type of roadblocks. It's been very amicable as we've

been moving through this process."

The Housing Authority said last month that Allied Orion, the management company its partner, Knight Development, hired wasn't maintaining the units or preparing them for new tenants when they became vacant. The condition of the grounds got the attention of state Reps. Les Warren, R-District 84, and Richard McGrew, R-District 85.

They contacted the office of U.S.

Rep. Bruce Westerman, R-District 4, resulting in a site visit last month from a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development official.

"We are having calls about the external conditions, the curb appeal," Housing Authority Executive Director Nadine Jarmon said. "I don't want to browbeat (Allied Orion), because I see the effort. But I really won't be convinced until after this April 6 event,

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Behind the Business



The Sentinel-record/Courtney Edwards

■ Cynthia Hall hand crochets a handbag from her DIY workshop Hammer & Stain Hot Springs.

Local business owner feels at 'home' in DIY workshop

COURTNEY EDWARDS
The Sentinel-Record

Hammer & Stain Hot Springs, a DIY workshop, was first opened in 2020 after Cynthia Hall visited a Hammer & Stain location in Texas, she said.

Although not a franchise, Hammer & Stain Hot Springs, 801 Central Ave., Suite 33, is a "conglomerate group of independent owners," with about 90 locations across the nation, Hall said.

"Mine started in 2020 as the result of a son that gave me a gift certificate to a Hammer & Stain in Fort Worth, Texas," she said. "I had no clue what a Hammer & Stain was, looked online, started getting interested, said 'We don't have anything like that in Hot Springs.' So, I've always had a craft or a creative side, so I was like, 'Well, this is what I wanna do.'"

Hall, originally from Bryant, has lived

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The Sentinel-Record/Courtney Edwards

■ Customers can walk in to Hammer & Stain and create signs, stuffed animals and more through a step-by-step process.

Landscaper pleads guilty to evading over \$500K in federal income taxes

FROM STAFF REPORTS

A local man and owner of an area landscaping business pleaded guilty Friday in U.S. District Court in Hot Springs to evading more than \$507,000 in federal income taxes, U.S. Attorney David Clay Fowlkes of the Western District said in a news release.

U.S. District Chief Judge Susan O. Hickey presided over the plea hearing in which Jerry Christopher Wade, 43, of Hot Springs, waived indictment and pleaded guilty to a criminal information charging him with tax evasion.

According to court documents, from 2011 through 2019, Wade owned and operated Four Seasons Landscaping in Hot Springs Village. He started the business around 12 years ago and is 100% owner, the release said.

"The landscaping business was Wade's only source of income. Despite earning income each year, Wade did not timely file federal income tax returns for the years 2011 through 2019. Wade admitted to federal agents he knew he was required to file his tax returns. Wade told agents he did not keep business records, including records documenting income or expenses. He further admitted he did not issue IRS Forms W-2 or 1099 to his workers or to himself and he did not keep payroll records for the wages paid to himself or his workers," it said.

During the years under investigation, Wade received checks from customers totaling \$2,537,771.86 from 2011 through 2019. Wade did not deposit all of these checks into his bank accounts, and he received cash back from the bank totaling \$878,983.48 when he negotiated the checks.

As part of his plea, Wade admitted he intentionally attempted to evade his income tax responsibilities by taking the following actions: conducting business transactions in cash, paying employees without reporting said payments to the IRS, cashing customer checks at his financial institution, and asking customers to write multiple checks in amounts of less than \$10,000 to avoid bank reporting requirements, the release said.

In total, Wade did not pay federal income taxes of \$507,554 to the IRS, and also admitted he failed to file state income taxes. He has agreed to pay restitution, including penalties and interest, to both the U.S. Treasury and Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration.

Wade is scheduled to be sentenced at a later date and faces a maximum of five years in federal prison, a period of supervised release, monetary penalties, and restitution. Hickey will determine his sentence after considering the federal sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors, the release said.



The Sentinel-Record/Courtney Edwards

■ From left, state Sen. Alan Clark and state Reps. Les Warren and Richard McGrew are asked a question by Rotary Club President Neal Gladner.

Legislators answer questions at Rotary

COURTNEY EDWARDS
The Sentinel-Record

State Reps. Richard McGrew, R-District 85, and Les Warren, R-District 84, along with state Sen. Alan Clark, R-District 7, answered questions about state and local government last week for members of Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club.

The club's president, Neal Gladner, moderated the presentation during the club's weekly meeting on Wednesday, beginning with a question about the "two big matters yet to be settled" — the budget and the Revenue Stabilization Act — in addition to the governor's plan for tax cuts and the criminal justice reform bill.

"What else, besides those

three items, is sitting out there that you think is going to get attention before adjournment?" Gladner asked.

"The two things that I understood as far as the governor's agenda, a state income tax and a new prison, I think when we get back on Monday, there's to be a bill dropped that will address a new prison somewhere in the state," Warren said.

"The only place that I've heard mentioned, I know some legislators around Jonesboro had been pushing for it to be there," he said.

"State income tax, that was a third provision outside of the Arkansas LEARNS, and so I think we'll see some form of tax cut."

The RSA is the last thing done

in the Legislature before adjourning, Warren said.

Once the Legislature and the governor's office figure out the hierarchy of what will be funded, "we will vote on a Revenue Stabilization Act. It has typically been about a 2% increase over the previous term. I've heard that it may be as high as 4% this time."

McGrew mentioned a forthcoming bill on property management "that should make property management stronger in Arkansas and more available to individuals in Arkansas."

"We have a huge shortage of property management in the end, and there's also talk about a study group that would study tenant and landlord issues to help some

See **ROTARY** on Page 3A

Tikes, Trikes and Trails enjoys good weather, turnout

LANCE BROWNFIELD
The Sentinel-Record

Avoiding Friday's downpour, Tikes, Trikes, and Trails saw a good turnout Saturday according to Hannah Rice, Hot Springs Trails coordinator.

Usually held in the fall at Entergy Park, it was the first time for the event to be held in spring at the Hot Springs Transportation Depot from 10 a.m. to noon.

With the sun shining and temperatures in the 60s, the outing was a stark contrast to the past few times when rain soaked

their plans. The last iteration of the bicycling event was held before the pandemic, with Rice suggesting that the program be reintroduced in the springtime when the weather is ideal.

Coleman Gocio, the owner of Hot Springs Bicycle Touring Company, supplied 17 bikes for the program to be used by those who don't have a bike of their own. At least 22 children and adults made use of the bikes Saturday. The company, located at 436 Broadway St., rents out bikes, e-bikes and trailers for

adults and kids, as well as a pet trailer, and provides tours of downtown Hot Springs.

"It's all about promoting the Greenway," said Gocio. "Getting people to just actually know that the Greenway's there, how fun it is, how interesting all the art along the Greenway is."

The ride down the Hot Springs Creek Greenway Trail takes an estimated 40 minutes one way and 40 minutes back according to Rice, depending on several factors.

With another mile-and-a-

half expansion planned for the path to Television Hill Road, the trail is set to increase to 5 miles, according to Gocio. The trail currently terminates where Adams Street meets Seneca Street. There are also plans to put a kayak put-in at the end of the trail.

"It's going to be a really amazing amenity," said Gocio. "And just the other parks that it goes through, the dog park, and the new pump track and the skatepark. Lots to check out."

On top of getting people

See **TRIKES** on Page 2A



The Sentinel-Record/Lance Brownfield

■ A girl rides around cones laid out at Hot Springs Transportation Depot on a borrowed bike during Tikes, Trikes and Trails on Saturday.



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