



Teacher quits ahead of possible firing

By Wes Venteicher
Enterprise Staff Writer

Facing allegations of an inappropriate relationship with a student, Park High School teacher Jason Dalton resigned Tuesday, one day before a Livingston School District Board hearing to consider firing the teacher.



JASON DALTON

Reached by phone Wednesday, Dalton, who no longer lives in the area, said he did not think he should have lost his job teaching health and coaching softball at the school. He said he submitted a letter of resignation because his legal counsel, teacher's union representative Steve Henry, told him that in similar situations most accused teachers had been fired.

"I did some things wrong, but to the point I would lose my job I would never have said so," Dalton said.

After a 17-year-old female student's mother alleged Dalton had sent her daughter sexually suggestive text messages early last summer, school officials commissioned an investigation of the matter in August. Based on the results of the investigation, which consisted of interviews with involved parties, District Superintendent Han-

nibal Anderson recommended in December the school board terminate Dalton's employment.

At the hearing scheduled for Wednesday afternoon, the school board would have weighed Anderson's recommendation. Now, Anderson said, the board will likely accept Dalton's resignation.

Investigator Bobbie Larson, of Billings, wrote in a 36-page report she was unable to verify a sexual relationship existed between the student and the teacher. She did determine an inappropriate emotional relationship may have existed.

During the 2009-2010 school year, the student spent time with Dalton in the morning and during lunch, during two classes, during extra-curricular activities and at Dalton's home, according to the report.

Larson determined that during a three-week period in June and July, 571 minutes of phone calls and 92 minutes of texts were exchanged between Dalton and the student.

"This suggests a personal relationship beyond reasonable teacher/student boundaries," Larson states.

On Wednesday, Dalton said he regretted letting the student drive his pickup truck without a driver's license and letting her use his debit card to purchase a sandwich.

"I've helped a lot of kids at the high school," he said. "But I should have done it differently."

Board reviews college prep at Park High

By Wes Venteicher
Enterprise Staff Writer

Rows of seats normally empty were filled Tuesday night with interested teachers, students and administrators at the Livingston School District Board's regular monthly meeting, where the board discussed college preparation, high school renovations, adult education and other topics.

After a Park High School senior approached the board in December about a perceived lack of information and materials available to students preparing for college, the Park High Guidance Department detailed a long list of its tasks Tuesday night, including college preparation.

The guidance department offers information and materials but does not force it upon students, counselors said.

School board members agreed the previously-entertained possibility of creating a standardized test preparation class is untenable. Board members said students and parents are primarily responsible for preparing for college.

"These are community issues, not just school," board member Ted Madden said. "We need to cultivate a culture of higher education."

Other topics discussed at the meeting included:

Renovations

Architects leading the \$15 million renovation project at Park High School presented floor diagrams illustrating possibilities for a multipurpose room at the high school.

Board members supported placing a multipurpose room, which could provide space for a performing arts stage, a basketball court, a photography dark room and other facilities, near the main entrance. Some board members questioned the need for a dark room as digital photography becomes more prevalent.

Adult education

The board briefly considered the future of the adult education program. After the resignation of the program's coordinator, Megan Drimmel, in late November, the board is reconsidering the extent of the program. Currently, board members said, the program consists of a couple classes a couple times per year. They said they would like to see the program expanded.

FFA

The board approved an FFA trip to Denver to attend the Denver National Western Stock Show, Jan. 21 to 25. The trip will be funded largely by FFA alumni donations and funds raised by the organization.

Success Maker

School principals reported positive results among kindergarten through fifth-grade students who are using the new computer program Success Maker to learn and be tested in math and reading skills.

"The kids are absolutely loving it," East Side School Principal Sandy Tangan said.

The board approved the purchase of the \$110,000 software program in December.



Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Creel gets a kiss from Tuklut, a Siberian husky, before a six-mile dogsled ride on the Snowbank Trail in the Mill Creek drainage Tuesday afternoon.

Wounded vets get a day on the snow in Operation

Never Forgotten

After growing up as a self-proclaimed "Army brat," the owner of Absaroka Dogsled Treks didn't have to think twice when he was approached with the opportunity to help wounded veterans and their families.

"I feel honored to do it," said Mark Nardin, Tuesday afternoon in the comforts of a heated car at the Snowbank Trailhead in the Mill Creek Drainage, after watching five veterans, who were wounded in Iraq, take off on three of his dogsleds.

The dogsled rides capped the five-day Operation Sports, Afield and Stream event organized by Operation Never Forgotten, where veterans with physical and invisible wounds and their families got a chance to ski, snowmobile, ice climb, tour Yellowstone and be around other soldiers like them.

"It means a lot," said David Amore, a 31-year-old who is still in therapy for the severe traumatic brain injury, five crushed discs, hearing loss and nerve damage he suffered in May 2009, when a suicide bomber drove up next to the Humvee he was in and detonated a 120-pound mortar. "I never thought I'd ski or snowboard. We're learning things we never thought we would



Army Staff Sgt. Ryan Creel steers the sled as B.J. Ganem, a retired Marine from Klamath Falls, Ore., snaps pictures at the start of a dog sled ride Tuesday afternoon.

learn. It's like we're crossing off things on our own personal bucket list, but we're doing it as a team."

Scott Krutchen, a retired Marine, was on Amore's team Tuesday afternoon and like Amore, the 35-year-old

from Madison, Wisc., has a long list of injuries he suffers from as the result of an explosion in Iraq.

On Nov. 8 in Iraq, Krutchen was traveling in a Humvee when an explosion launched the vehicle nearly

75 yards and killed all four of Krutchen's fellow Marines from the 224 Golf Company who were riding in the vehicle.

The explosive that launched Krutchen's vehicle also helped launch Operation Never Forgotten. About four years ago, Bozeman's Linda Kelly, whose son Jesse Frank served in the same company as Krutchen, met Peggy O'Donnell, the mother of Shane O'Donnell, who was one of the Marines killed in the explosion. When Kelly asked O'Donnell if there was anything she could do for her, O'Donnell told her to make sure her son and other soldiers get the recognition they deserve. That's when the graphic designer decided to start the nonprofit Operation Never Forgotten.

Operation Sports, Afield and Stream was the first event organized by Operation Never Forgotten. Kelly said 48 veterans and their families participated in the event.

Nardin said the reaction from the veterans after their nearly six-mile-long dog sled trek was very heartwarming. He said Robert Acosta, whose left arm is amputated below the elbow, said driving the sled was one of the best things he had ever done in his life.

Enterprise story and photos by Aaric Bryan

Congresswoman shot

Obama to be nation's consoler at memorial service

WASHINGTON (AP) — Searching for unity out of tragedy, President Barack Obama will honor the victims of the Arizona mass shooting in personal terms and remind those in grief that an entire nation is with them. The president is again stepping into his role as national consoler, a test of leadership that comes with the job.

His mission at Wednesday's memorial is to uplift and rally, not to examine political incivility.

Set to speak during an evening gathering in Tucson, Ariz., Obama will remember the six people killed in a

point-blank assassination attempt against a congresswoman who had been meeting with constituents outside a grocery store. Remarkably, Rep. Gabrielle Giffords is showing greater signs of recovery — including breathing on her own — just three days after a bullet shot through her brain.

The White House said Obama would meet privately with the victims' families before the service.

The shootings have consumed national attention since the weekend. In total, 19 people were shot, six fatal-

ly. Others were injured trying to flee the shooting.

Obama was crafting his speech and aides were reluctant to discuss it even broadly in its unfinished form, other than to say it would emphasize the memories of those lost. Still, Obama's comments since the shooting Saturday and his experience dealing with other tragedies offer guidance.

His main mission will be to honor those who were killed by describing them in personal terms, so the country remembers how they lived, not how they died.

City commissioners, officials review advantages of charter form of government

By Camden Easterling
Enterprise Staff Writer

Livingston City Commissioners say they're ready to take the next steps toward asking voters to approve a charter form of government.

Commissioners Tuesday night held a workshop on creating a charter, or self-governing, form of government.

Montana law permits municipalities to operate as a charter form of government or to have general governing powers. Creating a charter government, though, requires voter approval.

Having general governing powers — which is Livingston's current system — essentially limits a municipality to using only those powers specifically permitted by and outlined in state law. A char-

ter government permits a municipality to use any power not prohibited by state law.

City leaders have said a charter government will offer them more flexibility and creativity in solving problems and providing services.

Commissioners on Tuesday spoke with two Bozeman consultants who specialize in issues of local government to ask questions

about particulars, such as the kind of language that would appear on a ballot, of creating a charter government. They also asked what advantages the self-governing form offers.

Benefits include added flexibility and improving citizens' ability to access their local government, consultant Ken Weaver told commissioners. A charter government includes a guiding document,

called a charter, that usually is a simple, short work that explains how the municipality is set up and how it functions.

"The charter can bring transparency because it's short, it's easy to understand, and it's authoritative," Weaver said. "It's like a local constitution."

While the commission does not

See **Charter**, Page 3