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118th Year, No. 92 Serving Sheridan County, Wyoming

THURSDAY

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Whitney Benefits buys Central Middle School

By Rebecca Miller

Press Intern

Whitney Benefits Inc. announced this morning it has purchased the Central Middle School building from School District 2.

According to Whitney President Tom Kinnison, the organization paid \$870,000 for approximately 5.6 acres, including the school building.

Kinnison said the decision to purchase the building took place after considering the building's location, the future and the effect on the community.

"We have a building there that's going to

be vacant next summer," Kinnison said. He added that with the vacancy, there was a potential for the property to become "a real community eyesore."

Kinnison said the decision was made easier with the proximity of the CMS building to Whitney Ice Rink.

Although Kinnison said there are no plans to have a community center at the CMS site, a Whitney news release states the property will be used for "the continued development of educational and community resources for the residents of Sheridan County."

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Whitney

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Kinnison added that "the building has to be completely evaluated" before Whitney makes any decisions regarding its use.

According to Kinnison, "We want to work with everybody that we possibly can." Still, he said, future plans haven't been decided.

The release states Whitney will put together a "collaborative assessment" for the site's use. According to Kinnison, no date has been set for the assessment's completion.

"There's plenty of time," he added. With school in session until next summer (seventh- and eighth-graders are there this year), Whitney has no reason to push ahead with fur-

its Main Street Hallmark store, another recent purchase.

According to Kinnison, Whitney attempts to consider the future of the community 50 to 100 years from now.

He added that the organization not only functions as a nonprofit, but also as an investor. All its purchases, he said, are viewed as "assets."

Those considerations, Kinnison said, are the reasons behind Whitney's purchase of the different properties around Sheridan.

According to District 2 Superintendent Craig Dougherty, the district wanted to sell the property as soon as possible to avoid liability issues with the CMS building.

Craig Dougherty

District 2
 Superintendent

ther arrangements right away, Kinnison noted.

The CMS purchase isn't the only item on Whitney's plate.

Next Wednesday, the nonprofit will host the grand opening of Whitney Commons, a community park on West Alger Avenue.

In addition, according to Kinnison, Whitney is preparing to release a report within 60 days on the use of

