

# POST INDEPENDENT

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## Haptonstall done at end of school year

### Contract will be terminated in June

John Stroud  
Post Independent Staff

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — The Roaring Fork District Re-1 school board voted 3-2 at a special Wednesday night meeting to terminate the contract of Superintendent Judy Haptonstall, but not until after this school year.

Haptonstall, who is in her fifth year as the school district's superintendent, will be allowed

to continue in her current position through the end of June.

However, that's one year short of the original two-year contract extension awarded to her last year by the previous school board.

The board's vote fell along the political lines drawn with the November election of three new school board members who had been critical of district leadership during their campaigns.

"This has been a long process

during which we have been looking at a lot of feedback and information," said new board member Daniel Biggs, who made the motion to end Haptonstall's contract after this year.

"We come to this decision based on the entire body of input and concerns, both positive and negative," he said.

Fellow new board members Terry Lott Richardson and Matt Hamilton, the board president, joined with Biggs in the vote.

"I want to thank you for your years of service," Hamilton told



JUDY HAPTONSTALL

Haptonstall before the vote was taken, though it was apparent where it was headed at that point.

"I look forward to the next six months as we put the district in the best position possible," he said.

Board members Richard Stetner and Bob Johnson cast the dissenting votes, and said it was the wrong move.

"This is not the ideal situation in any case to make this decision," Stetner said. "Judy has put a lot of heart and soul into this job. I am disappointed with this decision to say the least."

Haptonstall declined to comment on the decision, as did a handful of supporters, including some district principals and fellow district administrators, who had stuck it out for the board's decision, which came shortly after 9 p.m.

RE-1 A3



GO

### CHILLIN' ON THE GAP

Recent temperatures have remained cold enough to provide acceptable ice thickness on most of Rifle Gap. Which is good news for organizers and anglers taking part in the 14th annual Rifle Gap Ice Fishing Tournament, scheduled for Jan. 21-22. PAGE A10

POLITICS

### TIPTON 'TOO EXTREME'

Sal Pace, the Democratic candidate for the 3rd Congressional District, told party loyalists during a stop in El Jebel that he will portray his foe throughout the campaign as too extreme to represent western Colorado. PAGE A3

NATION

### NEW WATCHDOG

President Barack Obama barreled by the Senate and installed a national consumer watchdog on his own, Richard Cordray. PAGE A8

WEATHER



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Kelley Cox Post Independent

The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority (RFTA) is looking to expand its fleet in the next year with 22 natural gas-powered buses. The authority is also considering installation of a compressed natural gas fueling station at its West Glenwood bus maintenance facility.

## RFTA seeks final OK for CNG buses

### Agency considers Glenwood for natural gas fueling station

John Stroud  
Post Independent Staff

GLENWOOD SPRINGS — The Roaring Fork Transportation Authority is pushing ahead with plans to buy up to 22 compressed natural gas-powered buses as it prepares to implement the expanded Bus Rapid Transit system next year.

And, the agency would like to locate its

compressed natural gas (CNG) fueling station in Glenwood Springs, where other fleet operators and perhaps individual owners of CNG vehicles could make use of the facility, RFTA officials told Garfield County commissioners at a Wednesday work session.

RFTA was preparing to issue a formal request for proposals this week seeking companies to install the necessary infrastructure for the fueling station.

"If things go well and we are able to do this, we would like to develop some partnerships to build a public fueling station somewhere in the Glenwood Springs area," Blankenship said at the Wednesday meeting. "To make that happen, we would need to reach out to a broader group."

That could include financial participation by Garfield County and other local governments, as well as natural gas producers.

CNG A3

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# Pace criticizes Tipton as tea party ideologue

Democratic challenger lays out his campaign strategy during stop at El Jemel

Scott Condon  
The Aspen Times

Sal Pace, the Democratic candidate for the 3rd Congressional District, told party loyalists during a stop in El Jemel on Wednesday that he will portray his foe throughout the campaign as too extreme to represent western Colorado.

Pace took several shots at incumbent Rep. Scott Tipton, R-Cortez, during a speech to about 20 supporters at El Korita restaurant. He said Tipton exemplifies the partisan politics that has bogged down Congress.

"He decided that his tea party ideology was more important than serving his constituents," Pace said.

Pace, 34, added he doesn't begrudge Tipton for following an ideology, but he said it shouldn't come at the expense of the communities he serves.

"We have real problems that won't be fixed by a radical, right-wing ideology," Pace said.

He pointed to Tipton's unwillingness to support a \$20 million federal grant to the Roaring Fork Transportation Agency, which operates the bus system. Tipton wouldn't sign a letter with other members of Colorado's congressional delegation that urged the Federal Transit Administration to approve the grant as quickly as possible. Tipton objected to the grant being awarded in a lump sum. He wanted the application for funds to be scrutinized to see if certain items could be eliminated or reduced to boost savings.

Tipton is a fiscal conservative who wants the federal government to slash its spending to balance its budget.

The RFTA grant was ultimately awarded in full. Colorado Sens. Michael Bennet and Mark Udall as well as Rep. Jared Polis, all Democrats, signed the letter to the transit agency urging quick approval of the funding.

Pace also said there is a "huge contrast between me and Scott Tipton" on a variety of environmental issues. Two examples he provided were:

- Pace wrote a letter to U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Ken Salazar asking that the Bureau of Land Management deny a request by gas company SG Interests to cluster its leases into one unit and start developing in the Thompson Divide area,

southwest of Carbondale. He said any drilling should be subject to "extensive environmental analysis and transparency and accountability" to members of the public.

In contrast, Pace said Tipton has accepted thousands of dollars of campaign contributions from oil and gas companies, including from officials from SG Interests.

- Pace said he supports preservation of wilderness and other public lands as well as possible additions to the inventory. Outdoor recreation has created thousands of tourism jobs in Colorado as well as some businesses that make outdoor equipment. The outdoors, he said, are the backbone of Colorado's economy. Therefore, any extraction of natural resources must be balanced with preservation of public lands.

"I'll go toe-to-toe with him on that," Pace said.

He noted Tipton is co-sponsor of the Wilderness and Roadless Area Release Act of 2011. The bill would release some wilderness study areas managed by the Bureau of Land Management and some roadless areas within the National Forest System. Any lands not recommended by the agencies to be held as Wilderness or roadless couldn't be managed as potentially protected areas, the bill said. The bill hasn't been voted on yet.

In other position statements, Pace said he

wants to remove U.S. troops from Afghanistan "as soon as possible."

"We've been there over 10 years now, and I don't see us making the region more stable," Pace said. Those funds would be better spent improving the nation's education system, he said.

Tipton hasn't made campaign appearances in the Roaring Fork Valley yet, as the campaign is young. He and Pace know each other well, though, having served in the state Legislature together. Pace won a state House seat from Pueblo in 2008, was re-elected in 2010 and served as minority leader in the chamber.

Tipton moved out of the state House and defeated incumbent John Salazar for the 3rd Congressional District seat in November 2010.

The race between Pace and Tipton is being forecast as one of the 11 "toss-up" races nationally in the 2012 election by the Rothenberg Political Report, a non-partisan newsletter covering congressional campaigns and presidential politics.

Pace told his supporters, who included Aspen Mayor Mick Ireland, Pitkin County Commissioner Rachel Richards and Basalt Councilwoman Jacque Whitsitt, that he plans to make several campaign stops in the Roaring Fork Valley this year.

## RE-1 FROM AI

At the start of Wednesday's meeting, the board added to its long list of comments regarding Haptonstall's performance, some in her support and others questioning her leadership amid the significant educational reforms that are being implemented in Re-1 schools.

Glenwood Springs High School Principal Paul Freeman broke his public silence on the so-called "Moving On" standards-based student placement methods now being used by the district, of which he said he has been a critic.

"It is with reluctance that I stand here this evening, because I feel it's

best to have these conversations in private," Freeman said, adding he has an alternative view of Moving On from other district principals who have expressed support for the reforms.

Freeman said there are ample studies that support "socially promoting" students based on their age, even if they haven't shown grade-level proficiency on standards-based tests. That can be especially true of high school-aged students, he said.

Moving On is designed to assess a student's ability in reading and math and place them in classes based on their level of proficiency, rather than automatically advancing students based on grade level.

Studies cited by Freeman suggest that method of student advancement is "minimally effective" and "profoundly negative" to a student's ability to succeed, especially at the high school level.

He said he's been on the "losing side" of the debate in Re-1 for the past three years as the new assessment and levels-based placement methods have been developed.

Former GSHS teacher Bob Brooks shared similar concerns.

"There are problems when you try to innovate without fully understanding all of the consequences," he said.

And, there has been a longstanding reluctance among teachers and others in the district to be

openly critical with district leaders regarding instructional changes, Brooks said.

"I do feel there is a climate of fear in the district, and a lack of respect for teachers," he said.

However, Maria Bagby, a new teacher this year at Crystal River Elementary School in Carbondale, said this has been her "favorite year in education" after more than 20 years, partly because of the challenges in implementing the new system.

"I would ask that you look at the process of change before any big decisions are made," Bagby urged the school board. "As for myself, I'm not afraid to talk in this district, because I do feel honored and

respected."

Longtime Basalt Middle School teacher Allyson Bella-Dodds also spoke in support of Haptonstall.

"There have been times when we have disagreed with each other," she said. "But, no matter what, we have always been respectful of one another."

Haptonstall's \$146,000 annual contract calls for her to be paid any salary through the current academic year, had she been terminated immediately.

However, with the official termination to come after the current year ends in June, she is not entitled to any pay or additional benefits beyond that, according to the contract agreement.

## CNG FROM AI

"Encana is making a substantial funding award to RFTA to cover a portion of the cost of upgrading 22 new buses to run on compressed natural gas," Sher Long, stakeholder relations advisor for Encana Oil & Gas, said after the meeting.

She said it makes sense for RFTA and other fleet operators to adopt "a clean, low cost, domestically produced fuel to meet this region's transportation needs."

Encana is also a leader among energy companies in converting its own fleet of 1,400 vehicles to run on compressed natural gas.

"We presently have around 50 CNG fleet vehicles in the Piceance Basin," Long said of the energy-producing region that encompasses much of western Garfield County.

Garfield County Commissioner Tom Jankovsky was anxious to climb aboard with RFTA in facilitating the CNG bus conversion.

"This is important for us in Garfield County," he said. "We are now a big exporter of natural gas, and we need to find uses for it here. This is a better way to do that."

Added Commission Chairman John Martin, "I hate to say how many cubic feet [of natural gas] is leaving Garfield County on a daily

basis. We need to be tapping into that for our transportation needs."

The county has also converted seven of its fleet vehicles to operate on natural gas in Rifle, where currently the only CNG fueling station is located at the Rifle Shell Station.

The Governor's Energy Office, as well as local entities such as the Community Office for Resource Efficiency and Garfield Clean Energy, are also interested in facilitating the expansion of CNG fueling stations and CNG-powered fleets.

RFTA does have some hurdles to clear before it can commit to converting to CNG buses, rather than those using "clean diesel" technology, as it originally envisioned.

In 2008, voters in the RFTA service area, which includes the Roaring Fork Valley and parts of Garfield County, approved a sales tax increase to help fund the \$46 million Bus Rapid Transit project.

However, about 54 percent of that cost is to be paid for with nearly \$25 million in Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants. That grant proposal was premised on the acquisition of 18 new clean diesel fuel buses. Four additional buses in the existing fleet are also to be replaced with newer vehicles.

Since that time, RFTA has determined that CNG technology has

improved enough in recent years that it would prefer to buy the CNG buses instead, Blankenship said.

Fuel costs using natural gas are also expected to be significantly lower over the long term, and the buses require less maintenance, he said.

RFTA will need formal authorization from the FTA in order to purchase the CNG vehicles. The switch will involve up to \$3.1 million more in costs for the buses and related infrastructure, plus safety modifications at the bus maintenance facility on Wulfsohn Road in Glenwood Springs, Blankenship said.

The RFTA board is expected to approve the purchase of the new vehicles at its Jan. 12 meeting in Carbondale. But the agency will have until February or March to determine exactly which type of vehicle it will be purchasing.

If approved, RFTA would like to have four test buses in operation by January 2013, and the remainder of the new fleet in place by June 2013.

In addition, the Bus Rapid Transit expansion, called "VelociRFTA," is to include the construction of 11 modern, new bus stations, three new park and ride facilities, installation of various transit priority signaling systems along Highway 82, and several other system upgrades.

## LOCAL NEWS BRIEFS

### Correction

**County manager firing:** An article in the Jan. 4 Post Independent about Garfield County Manager Ed Green being fired incorrectly referred to former county attorney Don DeFord as having also been fired in late 2010 by the county commissioners. DeFord, in fact, retired at that time.

The Post Independent regrets the error.

### Doritos contest entry misses cut

**CARBONDALE** — A local entry in the Doritos Crash the Super Bowl contest vying for a commercial spot during the Feb. 5 Super Bowl and a \$1 million prize failed to make the editor's cut.

A group of local filmmakers and producers were among the 600 entries in the contest. That number was paired down by Doritos contest officials to five finalists, which were announced at [www.crashthesuperbowl.com](http://www.crashthesuperbowl.com) on Wednesday.

Brothers Austin Lottimer of Carbondale and Maitland Lottimer of Boulder co-wrote and directed the local entry, titled "Choose Your Chip Wisely."

Their father, Barclay Lottimer, along with Steve Kaufman co-produced the 30-second spot. The segment was shot at Russets Restaurant in Carbondale and starred local actors Sean Warnecke and Jennetta Howell.

Selected for final round of online voting by the general public through Jan. 31 were clips titled "Dog Park," "Sling Baby," "Bird of Prey," "Hot Wild Girls," and "Man's Best Friend."