

Montana mayors here for conference

By AMANDA RICKER Chronicle Staff Writer

Mayors from across the state got some pointers on “How to Stay Out of Jail Your First Year in Office” and “How to Get Sued for Land-Use Decisions” during a conference in Bozeman this week.

Forty-seven mayors from Libby to Glendive registered to attend the 2008 Montana Mayors Academy, a free, three-day conference at the Best Western GranTree Inn that ends today.

The mayoral gathering is conducted by Montana State University’s Local Government Center, which offers training, technical and research assistance to elected officials.

Mayors, who often have little or no training prior to being elected, are brought together at the academy to network, learn about available resources and understand the risks and responsibilities of the job, said Jane Jelinski, the center’s director.

“You get a different perspective on things,” Bob Rice, mayor of Havre, said during a session on budgeting Thursday. “Probably the best part of it is talking to other mayors about the way they operate.”

Miral Gamradt, former finance director for the city of Bozeman, taught the mayors Thursday how to read budget documents and devise long-range capital improvement programs.

Several mayors said their cities didn’t have capital improvement programs. Gamradt created one for Bozeman in 1998.

Sessions also were scheduled to cover the state code of ethics, land-use risk exposure and personnel management.

Area mayors registered for the academy included Bozeman’s Deputy Mayor Jeff Krauss, Manhattan Mayor Anthony Haag, Three Forks Mayor Gene Townsend and Belgrade Mayor Russ Nelson. Bozeman Mayor Kaaren Jacobson was not signed up.

The academy has been held every other year in Bozeman since 2004, according to Jelinski.

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