

LOCAL

More testing available in Sublette County

See A2

LOCAL

Pets and vets in pandemic

See A3



SPORTS

Be the Light Campaign supports seniors

See B2

Pinedale Roundup

Newspaper of the Upper Green River Valley, Est. 1904

APRIL 17, 2020

One Dollar

School District No. 1 approves finalized lease

Trustees recognize district faculty and staff

By Robert Galbreath
rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – Students, teachers and staff in Sublette County School District No. 1 spent the first full week of April adapting to online learning while staff expanded breakfast and lunch services. At the district board meeting on April 9, the trustees publicly thanked all district employees for their extraordinary efforts during the COVID-19 crisis.

"I want to say how proud I am of how this whole thing has worked out," Clayton Olson said. "There's a lot of negativity behind this, but I've heard a lot of really good things about how impressed the public is that the schools have jumped in and got this virtual schooling going so quickly. I've also heard a lot of great things about the food service. Everybody's done an awesome job and I really appreciate it."

Jennifer Zook and Chris Nelson added a "second" and a "ditto" to Olson's remarks.

"We have an amazing group (in the district)," Charles Prior stated.

"I completely agree," Marie McGuire said. "Thank you all so much for everything."

"The response from the district has been amazing," added Chairman Jamison Ziegler. "(The board) would ask administrators ... to please pass these sentiments on to all your folks. We really appreciate

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EPA approves Fremont Lake study

By Holly Dabb
hdabb@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – After a year of testing, the Town of Pinedale has been given approval by the Environmental Protection Agency to continue getting its drinking water from Fremont Lake.

Better yet, while there are added expenses to protect the water source, there was no mandate for a \$16-million filtration system.

Beginning in July 2018, water samples in Fremont Lake, which provides the Town of Pinedale's drinking water, started testing positive for fecal coliform – a bacteria that grows in the intestines of warm-blooded mammals.

By the end of August, results were high enough to repeatedly exceed limits set by the Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA notified the town that it no longer met standards acceptable for a water system that did not use filtration. Initially, the town was given 18 months to install a pricey filtration system.

Pinedale's water from Fremont Lake is treated with ultraviolet light and chlorine. It is not filtered to remove large particles that could hide fecal coliform

After appealing to EPA, the state's congressional delegation, the governor and anyone else who would listen, Mayor Matt



FILE PHOTO

The overlook above Fremont Lake.

Murdock bought some time by planning and hiring a consultant for a study.

The town paid more than \$250,000 in studies and testing, adding training for in-house laboratory and staff. Ironically, the high levels measured in 2018 did not return in 2019. Without any positive tests, the town was unable to point a direct finger at what could have been causing the high levels.

The full study – all 288 pages – is posted on the town's website, www.townofpinedale.us/fremont-lake-study.

The town responded to the EPA with the study and some proposed remedies to minimize future potential contamination.

Angelique D. Diaz, section chief for the drinking water division, responded in a letter this week accepting the town's proposal.

Pinedale's Supervisor of Public Works

Abram Pearce told council members at the April 13 meeting that the EPA basically accepted everything but did put some deadlines on some of the projects. Many will take place this year.

"U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed and approved the Town of Pinedale's plan and schedule for improving management of the Fremont Lake watershed," the letter states.

"The EPA has also reviewed the March 4, 2020, Fremont Lake Watershed Study Final Report and has determined that the Town of Pinedale has fulfilled its commitment to conduct a study of the Fremont Lake watershed and identify sources of fecal coliforms at the Town of Pinedale's public water system intake," the letter adds.

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Election set for May 5, voters encouraged to absentee vote

By Holly Dabb
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PINEDALE – Come Hell, high water or pandemic, the election shall go on.

As the May 5 Pinedale Town Council election looms only weeks away, Pinedale's Clerk Maureen Rudnick has concerns on how to protect voters, election judges and the public in the face of a worldwide COVID 19 pandemic.

The council discussed during the April 13 meeting moving the election back further into May, which would still enable elected candidates to take office by June 1.

The town council has been proactive maintaining directives issued by Gov. Mark

Gordon that are extended through April 30. The council videostreams meetings, limits on-site audience to only 10 people in the room and moved the venue to the larger Lovatt Room of Pinedale's library so tables can be set more than 10 feet apart for those that attend.

All options of moving back the May 5 voting date were nixed by the Wyoming Secretary of State's Office in a terse email to county clerks, saying Wyoming statutes have no provisions for moving election dates.

There is one contested seat on the ballot – a two-year seat on the Pinedale Town Council between Isaac Best and Melissa Ryckman. However, there is always an option for a write-in campaign to take out either of the two incumbents running for four-year seats –

Tyler Swafford and Judi Boyce.

Kai G. Schon, Election Division director for the Wyoming Secretary of State's Office, sent an email to every county clerk in Wyoming, saying May elections set for the first Tuesday of the month will go on as planned. This includes municipal elections in about 20 towns and many elections for special districts. That email was forwarded by County Clerk Carrie Long to Rudnick.

"A quick synopsis of the conversations we've had with various special districts and the Wyoming Association of Municipalities: The election code does not provide the flexibility to move those elections," Schon said.

"The recommendation has been to deliver absentee ballots to all voters and use social

media and other readily accessible outlets for communicating, educating and encouraging voters to vote their absentee ballot for the protection of their own safety and the safety of those around them," he added.

Rudnick said sending 1,800 absentee ballots and monitoring their return is not a viable option in the short time before the election and with the town's small staff numbers.

She added she will not refuse people their right to vote because of Gordon's directives.

"In scenarios where a polling place is required, we have recommended that they have more than one election judge and shoot for three election judges," Schon said.

Rudnick said the town's ordinances call for

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This new listing packs a BIG punch!!!



MLS#: 20-611
26 Cheyenne Trl
Boulder, WY 82923
\$205,000



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Dawnita Griffith Associate Broker
307-231-2311
Kristy D Jones Associate Broker
307-360-6690
Neil Lucke Sales Associate
307-749-1361

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COVID-19 testing ability expands in Sublette County

By Robert Galbreath
rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – Testing capability for COVID-19 improved in Sublette County this week due to deliveries of kits from a private laboratory, said Dr. Brendan Fitzsimmons, public health officer, in a briefing by the Response Team on April 15.

“The situation (with testing) has gotten a lot better for us,” Dr. Fitzsimmons said. “We do have access now to a private lab and we do have a lot of test kits. We’re able to test a lot more people and we don’t have to stick to the small, narrow window that the state wants.”

The private tests go through St. John’s Health in Jackson and are then sent to Qwest Laboratories, said Sharon Rutsch, clinical services coordinator for the Sublette County Rural Health Care District (SCRHCD).

Tests meeting certain criteria are still being sent to the Wyoming Department of Health’s Public Health Laboratory, Rutsch said. The private tests allow medical providers in Sublette County to test additional people that do not qualify for free testing through the state, she added.

Not everyone in the county can be tested at this point, Rutsch said, even with the greater availability. The decision to carry out a test is made by a patient’s medical provider at the clinics. Tests must be ordered by a provider and are not home tests, Rutsch continued. Patients exhibiting symptoms can call the Pinedale or Marbleton-Big Piney clinics to speak to providers about the possibility of testing. If a patient is asked to come in to the clinics for testing, Rutsch said they must wear a mask to prevent possible spread.

The turnover for test results through Qwest Laboratories is “equivalent to the state,” Rutsch said, with results averaging two days to arrive. The tests are carried out by a swab inserted into the nasal cavity.

Testing through private labs come with a fee. Many insurance companies, however, are waiving costs related to preventing COVID-19. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Wyoming will cover “diagnostic tests” for COVID-19, the company said in a press release on March 11. Medicare will also waive lab testing costs for COVID-19, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services stated on its website.

Dr. Fitzsimmons also addressed antibody tests. “There is a lot of problems with them in terms of how dependable and accurate they are,” he said. “The vast majority of these are not approved by the FDA.”

SCRHCD updates
Providers and staff at the Pinedale and Big Piney clinics are calling to check in with patients that have chronic conditions, said Emily Ray, communications coordinator for the SCRHCD, on April 15.

“Please don’t be surprised if a clinic staff member calls in to see how you’re doing,” she said.

The SCRHCD also requested that all patients, both in emergency and routine cases, limit the family members accompanying them to the clinics to one person, Ray added.

“We understand that during times of emergency, this could be difficult, but we want to decrease the risk of exposure to ensure the safety of our staff as well as other patients.”

Ray encouraged people to keep in touch with their providers. “We’re still open for any and all non-COVID-related appointments,” she added.

Response group rolls out new website

SUBLETTE COUNTY – The Sublette COVID-19 Response Group is rolling out a new website Wednesday as the one-stop shop for all things related to the coronavirus pandemic in Sublette County.

The website provides readers a chance to take a deep dive into information about COVID-19, and resources available for the public from local, state and federal sources. The site, located at sublettewyocovid.com, includes sections on health, business, education and state services, as well as provides social media streaming from various agencies.

From the county case count dashboard, to daily case updates from the Wyoming Department of Health and the interactive global map from John Hopkins University, you’ll find it all at sublettewyocovid.com. The Sublette COVID-19 Response Group is an interagency incident team consisting of federal, state and local agencies and governments, emergency responders, medical professionals, public health officials and community and volunteer organizations addressing the COVID-19 pandemic in Sublette County.

The group has launched the new website to channel information from varied credible sources into one site. Agencies represented in the group will provide updates to the site.

UW Extension creates online COVID-19 resource page

A one-stop shop for resources to help the public during COVID-19 has been created by the University of Wyoming Extension, said David Keto, UW Extension manager for communications and technology.

The page is linked from UW Extension’s homepage and offers a variety of resources particularly relevant during the current crisis, he said.

The page offers general resources such as news updates, national and state resources and information regarding sanitation and cleaning, Keto said. It also provides resources for individuals and self-sufficiency by providing links to at-home activities, community resources, food resources in Wyoming, gardening and growing food, personal finance and public assistance programs.

Resources for businesses and organizations and additional ideas for food, safe food handling and pantry supplies are also available. It does not replace any of the existing extension websites, said Keto.



Weekly Weather Forecast Pinedale, Wyoming • April 17 - 22

Today

Sunrise: 6:33 a.m. Sunset: 8:05 p.m.

High: 41° Low: 14°

RealFeel® 42° 11°

Day: Not as cold with plenty of sunshine
Night: Clear.



Saturday

High: 50°

Plenty of sunshine.

Low: 26°



Sunday

High: 53°

Times of clouds and sun.

Low: 29°



Monday

High: 54°

A couple of snow showers.

Low: 28°



Tuesday

High: 55°

Mostly cloudy.

Low: 28°



Wednesday

High: 52°

Partly sunny.

Low: 27°



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ELECTION

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five election judges.

"If all voters vote their absentee ballot, there may be a case for not having a polling place at all in those particular towns or special districts," Schon said. "However, those specific decisions, based on reasonableness and not statute, is ultimately for their legal counsel to advise," he adds.

Murdock said Pinedale is probably the largest town to have May elections, making the absentee ballot more difficult.

Meanwhile the clock is ticking and statutes have mandatory publishing dates for notices that can't be left to the day before an election.

Schon added the problem may continue until the August primary election and he has requested the Legislature's Management Council take up the issue next week.

"We are holding Wyoming's elections as scheduled. These elections are going to be conducted under the provisions of our existing law and forthcoming directives," Schon said. "This has already been quite the 'ride.' Let's keep our hands inside the car at all times and keep our eyes open with every twist and turn. This is a crisis but with all of us unified in response and action, we will get through this."

Will Dinneen, public information officer for the Secretary of State's Office, cautioned the situation is changing quickly and there could be another directive from Gordon that changes things again. He added Schon's response was only one of a string of emails between Schon and concerned clerks needing direction.

Based on that directive and ongoing communications with the Secretary of State and Governor, Rudnick said, at this time, the municipal election will still take place.

"There has been much discussion regarding postponing the election due to COVID 19. At this time, the state had indicated that this is not an option," Rudnick said. "Mayor (Matt) Murdock is appealing that in an effort to ensure all of our citizens are safe as they exercise their right to vote."

Luckily, Rudnick ordered hundreds of additional absentee ballots in anticipation that many voters will choose that option.

SCHOOL

Continued from 1A

everything they're doing, every day – the sacrifices that they're making and folks doing things they don't normally do like putting together meals. But everybody's making it happen and the community, and especially the kids, really appreciate it."

Lease with Town of Pinedale finalized

In a unanimous vote, the trustees approved a finalized agreement drafted by their attorney to lease approximately 27 acres of district land to the Town of Pinedale. The town plans to build new ball fields at the bus barn location to provide the Sublette County Rural Health Care District (SCRHCD) with land for a new critical access hospital where the current ball fields are located.

During a special meeting on April 2, the trustees voted in principal to lease the property and included a clause that allowed the town to immediately put the ball field project out to bid.

The written lease accepted by the school district board on April 9 allows the Town of Pinedale to possess the roughly 27 acres for 99 years – from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2119 – for a nominal \$10 annual rent.

The lease limits the town's use of the property to "recreational purposes," including "but not limited to constructing

"Residents are highly encouraged to vote via absentee ballot. In order to facilitate the availability of absentee ballots the town clerk will take phone, email and in person requests for absentee ballots," Rudnick said.

Even that gets tricky when Town Hall is closed to the public.

"Though you may not enter the building, you may stop by the Pinedale Town Hall at 69 Pinedale S. Road to pick up your request form. If you are currently registered to vote, you may complete it on site, submit it and receive your absentee ballot," she said.

This service will be open 7 days per week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. until May 5.

Anyone wanting the form by email can send a request to info@townofpinedale.us or call 307-367-4136 to request a form be mailed.

The absentee ballot request form is also available on the town's website at www.townofpinedale.us.

Only registered voters residing in the Pinedale's town limits may vote.

On election day, the polls will open at the Wrangler Gym from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Anyone not registered by the April 21 cutoff can wait to register on the day of the election at the polling place.

Absentee voting ballots must be received at town hall by 5 p.m. on May 5. Just in case things change, Rudnick said absentee ballots will remain locked in the ballot box until a new election day.

She added, anyone showing up at the poll on election day will have strict social spacing guidelines, no more than 10 people will be allowed in Wrangler Gymnasium at a time including election judges and staff, who will disinfect voting stations between each voter.

When asked if the ballots will be locked up and quarantined before being counted, Murdock just laughed and said, "Right."

As required by law, a canvassing board of Emily Paravicini and Samantha Harnack will certify election results.

softball and baseball fields, soccer fields, streets, parking areas, lighting, support structures, utility lines, etc."

Under the lease, the town is responsible for maintenance, utilities, services and liability insurance on its portion of the property. The terms also require the town to build and "maintain a fence that separates the leased premises from the remainder of the landlord's property."

The lease contains a "hold harmless" clause protecting the school district's assets in case the project to create a new hospital district by ballot in November falls through. If the town proceeds with ball field construction and there is "no hospital opened in Sublette County" in five years, the town must trade a "comparable piece of property" to "make the (district) whole."

The town may use the existing access road to the bus barn as long as activities "do not interfere with the landlord's regular use of the road for school buses." The lease requires the town to complete its own access to the ball fields from Wilson Street within one year of signing the lease.

The lease allows the town to use vacant portions on the west side of the access road to stage and store equipment and materials during construction. The town is liable for

STUDY

Continued from 1A

Among the requirements are:

- Pinedale will complete an additional year of sampling at Fremont Lake during 2020. The sampling will include a more thorough evaluation of the Sylvan Bay Creek drainage, by Dec. 31.

- Pinedale will update the Fremont Lake Watershed Management Control Plan based on the results of the 2019 and 2020 monitoring by June 30, 2021.

- Pinedale will work with the Forest Service to extend fencing along the eastern side of the watershed to keep cattle out of the Sylvan Bay drainage by Sept. 17.

- Pinedale will work with the Forest Service to correct infiltration and/or runoff concerns around Forest Service vault-restroom facilities located in the Fremont Lake watershed by Sept. 30.

- Pinedale will work with the U.S. Forest Service to update the signage around the lake to make it more prominent and informative. Updated signs will be located at the Lower Boat Dock, Sandy Beach, Upper Boat Dock / Campground and Elkhart Park Trailhead by Sept. 17.

- Dog waste collection containers will be installed at those same locations by Sept. 30.

- Pinedale will create educational brochures that can be distributed to community groups and people using facilities in the watershed by June 30.

In addition to confirming the items are completed on time, the EPA will discuss the current status of each of these items with the Town of Pinedale during future annual watershed protection meetings.

any damage to this portion of the property or the access road.

The Pinedale Town Council also approved the lease at its April 13 meeting. Attorney Ed Wood said he has been going back and forth with the school district's attorney to finalize wording. The motion authorized the mayor to sign pending approval by Wood.

Other district news

- The trustees voted to change the district's certified evaluation plan to line staff evaluations up with new requirements from the Wyoming Department of Education.

- The board approved a memorandum of understanding between the district and the Sublette County Sheriff's Office on "law enforcement responses to school-based incidents." The board also agreed to an MOU with the Sublette County Golf Committee to address issues with hosting golf tournaments in Pinedale.

- A unanimous motion to accept Wyoming Health Fair to host district health fairs passed.

- Following an executive session, the board voted to approve the reemployment of certified staff members "as presented." A full list is available on the board of trustee's "Board Docs" website.

Group of protestors outside Capitol demand a plan to reopen economy

CHEYENNE (WNE) – Ed Burns doesn't envy the position of Gov. Mark Gordon and other state leaders, but that didn't stop him from traveling from Laramie to Cheyenne on Wednesday to call for a reopening of the economy.

"We're not trying to make small of the virus – it's serious, and we understand that," Burns said. "But I would like to know – what's the plan? Are we ever going to open up? What are we waiting on?"

Burns was among five protesters in front of the capitol on Wednesday, each of whom were flashing signs or flying flags to passing cars on Central Avenue.

From Burns' view, Wyoming's unemployment numbers – which rose more than 800 percent last month – give plenty of reason for the state to reopen its economy. As a retiree, Burns has been largely unaffected by the economic turbulence of the pandemic.

Burns, who came to the Capitol with his wife, was also joined by a small group of men from Wheatland.

One of them was Jim Kumelos, clad in a multi-colored gas mask and a blue Bud Light hat. He drove down to the Capitol in defense of one thing.

"Granted, there is a bug, and it's dangerous, but we're rapidly losing our freedom," Kumelos, 66, said.

Kumelos said he hasn't been impacted personally by the virus, but added he hates to see its impact on younger generations. Asked when he would like to see the closure orders come to an end, Kumelos was blunt: "Last week."

"This is hurting a lot of people," he said.

The gathering is at least the second public demonstration against COVID-19 orders in the last week, as a group of about 20 people gathered in Casper last Thursday to protest what they view as government overreach, according to the

Casper Star-Tribune.

The governor's current order, which closed many public places and banned gatherings of 10 or more people, extends until April 30.

Lovell police: Party of young people in confined space 'disgusting'

LOVELL (WNE) – Approximately 25 young adults were found gathered together in a close confined space Friday by Lovell Police in an event Lovell Police Dan Laffin called a blatant violation of countywide health orders.

"The most important issue here is the blatant and disgusting disregard for the community's safety," Laffin said. "Most citizens are doing their best to maintain social distancing and adhere to the prudent safety precautions to help minimize the potentially gruesome effects of this pandemic. The selfish actions by this group jeopardize the significant sacrifices endured by this community."

Late Friday evening, Lovell Police responded to the east end of town where they located a gathering of teenagers and young adults inside a garage having a party and drinking, according to Laffin. The adults on scene were not cooperative and initially attempted to deny entry to officers.

Once officers gained control of the situation it was determined most were consuming alcohol. Multiple citations were issued for underage drinking. More important than the underage drinking is the danger it may potentially put Lovell in, Laffin said.

"This is an arrogant and blatant disregard for the safety of our citizens. It is this very type of behavior that puts this small tight knit community in jeopardy," he said. "The behavior is not excusable and is outright disgusting."

It's essential that Lovell continues to practice and encourage social distancing, Laffin said. "It's important to

recognize the efforts the majority of the citizens have been making in keeping our community safe."

"Please keep up those prudent safety measure with regard to social distancing and avoiding large gatherings. Help us educate and direct the younger generation to the seriousness of this virus and how easily it spreads."

Cody man rides horse into Maverick gas station, gets citation

CODY (WNE) – It's a story that's about as Wyoming as it gets: All Jimmy Basso wanted was a can of chewing tobacco.

So he and a companion took his brown horse Rooster for an evening ride.

They moseyed down from his residence on the Belfry Highway to the Maverick gas station on Big Horn Avenue. The automatic doors of the store parted like the Red Sea and they rode on in.

"It was not a terrible thing," Basso said.

According to the Cody Police blotter from March 22, two people were seen on the store's surveillance camera entering via horseback.

But Basso said he and his friend left almost as soon as they came – possibly getting cold hooves – even before trying to purchase a can of Copenhagen at 1:15 a.m.

Basso, 39, did receive a property destruction ticket from the incident, as the horse's hooves allegedly scratched the floor at the gas station.

The gas station does allow service animals inside, but even the cattle rancher Basso admitted it would be a stretch to make this claim regarding his quarter horse.

"Yeah, not really," he said.

Basso will have his court date May 11 in Circuit Court before Judge Bruce Waters.