

LOCAL  
**Sommers's  
letter**  
See **A4**

LOCAL  
**CURED  
art show**  
See **A6**



SPORTS  
**Postseason  
preparations**  
See **B1-3**



# Pinedale Roundup

Newspaper of the Upper Green River Valley, Est. 1904

FEBRUARY 19, 2021

One Dollar



BRADY OLTMANS PHOTO

The **Banditas**, Katherine Licht riding Jojo and Alina Gemza, make their first run in the skijoring competition during the Winter Carnival. For more Winter Carnival photos, see Page 3.

## Carnival comes to town

Participants pack Pinedale for Winter Carnival

By Brady Oltmans  
boltmans@pinedaleroundup.com

**PINEDALE** – People from across the region flocked to Pinedale for the annual Winter Carnival last weekend for a few days of fun after nearly a full year of semi-lockdown.

Registration for the skijoring competition was capped at 120 teams. That mark was reached back in January.

A total of 12 teams scattered across three divisions entered in the annual Cardboard Classic. The course was once again lined with spectators of all ages ready for a cathartic weekend.

There was also the Calcutta, kids' 120cc snowmobile race and the snow sculpture contest that completed the fun-filled weekend.

The team of Josh Abbott and Aaron Griffen won the overall skijoring division. Casey Manning and Jeb Richie won the overall novice division and the team of Kayla and Clay Teichert, also known as Greased Lightning, won the overall juniors division.

For the Cardboard Classic, the Silver Fox won the junior division, The Maizie Mae won the family division and The Shaggin' Wagon won the adult division. The Shaggin' Wagon also won the Most Creative Craft award.

The Pinedale High School ski team won the snow sculpture contest with the penguin.

## Some county services likely to move with hospital oncoming

By Brady Oltmans  
boltmans@pinedaleroundup.com

**PINEDALE** – The Sublette County Board of Commissioners started important discussions and received an outlined reduced-budget report at its Feb. 16 meeting in the Lovatt Room at the Pinedale Library.

Sublette County Public Health Nurse Janna Lee, David Doorn of the Rural Health Care District and Tonia Hoffman, chair of the Special Hospital District, met in front of the commissioners to discuss the fate of the Public Health building and if it would remain in its existing capacity when the new critical access hospital is built.

A work group of commissioners and representatives from both Public Health and the Special Hospital District were supposed to meet before the commissioners' meeting but that did not take place. Instead, they all presented their intentions and plans going forward.

Doorn explained the prospective layout and that, in order to connect the hospital to the existing clinic, there would be no way to salvage the Public Health building. He said they aimed to keep it but in order to have a

centralized registration and hook up to the existing clinic the Public Health building was near the planned entrance.

"I wanted you guys to know it's always been our intention to find a place for Public Health, the veteran services office, the sanitarium, within the existing complex," Doorn said. "Our hope is, right now, where the ER is right now, where the lab is, where x-ray, CT is, that whole portion of the building will be empty and those services will be moved to the new hospital."

Doorn explained it's their intention to have Lee and those with Public Health come in and design the space in that building to their needs. He stressed the importance to make a move easy on Public Health so their services see as little disruption as possible.

There will be an interim period for Public Health, Doorn said, but the intention is for the interim period to be as small as possible.

Construction for the hospital, if all goes according to plan, should start at the end of the summer, Doorn said.

Lee voiced her concern about the costs and practicality of moving all Public Health

See 'COMMISSIONERS' on page **A11**

## Hospital board makes its first key decisions

By Robert Galbreath  
rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

**PINEDALE** – Taking the first steps to becoming a solid organization, the Sublette County Hospital District Board of Trustees passed several motions at its meeting Wednesday night.

Following an executive session, the trustees voted unanimously to retain attorney Tom Lubnau out of Gillette as legal counsel. The board chose Lubnau's firm out of four prospective applicants.

Trustee Jamison Ziegler stated that Lubnau brought "piles of experience in hospitals and hospital boards." Fellow trustee Dr. Brendan Fitzsimmons agreed, stating that in addition to his extensive health-care knowledge, Lubnau possessed valuable experience working with the state Legislature.

In order to pay for legal services and establish a financial foundation, the board approved a motion to seek a limited line of credit through First Bank. The Sublette County Rural Health Care District (SCRHCD) and Sublette Center both have existing primary accounts through First Bank. The trustees agreed that remaining with First Bank for the immediate future would provide stability and continuity for the SCRHCD and Sublette Center's accounting staff during the process to turn assets over to the hospital district by the end of the fiscal year in June.

Dave Doorn, administrative director for the SCRHCD, reported to the board that most of the paperwork for the USDA loan

was complete. The list included appraisals, financial reports and a preliminary architectural report.

The SCRHCD is working on an environmental report and is in negotiations with the Highland Irrigation District to relocate a ditch running through the SCRHCD's property, Doorn added. He said that once the environmental report was completed, the remaining application process included approving a management partner, creating bylaws and hiring a construction manager.

Ziegler proposed obtaining a construction manager at risk. Based on his construction experiences as a Sublette County School District No. 1 board member, Ziegler explained that the construction manager at risk is one of three construction delivery methods. The contract requires the construction manager to deliver a project within a guaranteed maximum price up front based on the architectural specifications available at the time, Ziegler added.

The construction manager at risk system would allow the hospital district to know construction costs in advance, Ziegler explained. Davis Partnership Architects, the firm the SCRHCD hired to design the preliminary architectural report, recommended a construction manager at risk, Ziegler said, and already drafted requests for proposals.

The board passed a motion to begin the process to send out RFPs and start moving on acquiring a construction manager at risk.

## Management proposal partners make 2nd bid

By Robert Galbreath  
rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

**SUBLETTE COUNTY** – Three prospective companies that submitted proposals to join the Sublette County Hospital District made a second bid in six public question-and-answer sessions last week.

Each company emphasized its role as a guiding partner to help the hospital district take the first steps toward building a proposed critical access hospital and expanding health-care services. The discussions are available on the hospital district's YouTube page.

The district plans to hold another round of public meetings on each proposal before March 10.

**Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center** The EIRMC and HCA team emphasized its vast resources and diverse experience they can provide as a large national corporation.

Jeff Sollis, CEO at EIRMC, stressed the medical center's 11-year relationship with the clinics in Sublette County. Across the state and nation, critical access hospitals

are closing, yet EIRMC and HCA believe in the potential for a CAH in Sublette County. Sollis stressed the importance in finding a management partner to "navigate the challenges."

HCA has access to resources and experience that the other bidders lack. HCA manages 185 hospitals in the U.S. and United Kingdom, including eight critical access hospitals, some serving similar demographics to Sublette County. The other bidders do not have a comparable track record in managing CAHs, Sollis said.

HCA's vast network provides buying power to purchase items in bulk at low rates for its facilities, including high-cost items like CT scans and pharmaceuticals.

HCA established an enormous library of knowledge with unmatched intellectual capital, including providers in every medical specialty that Sublette County can connect to. The company provides continuing education for staff and providers and a range of telemedicine opportunities.

HCA maintains an in-house auditing

See 'PARTNERS' on page **A10**



pinedaleroundup.com

Official newspaper of Sublette County and the town of Pinedale.

# PARTNERS

Continued from 1A

department with higher standards than the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Financial teams at HCA are experts in maximizing revenue from Medicare and Medicaid.

"You could leave millions on the table if you don't know what you're doing financially," said Sollis.

EIRMC's role is to provide tertiary care – trauma care that requires sophisticated equipment and specialists. The Sublette County Hospital District would focus on secondary care, including specialists and surgery and primary care.

EIRMC does not intend to take those patients away from Sublette County.

EIRMC can provide an "outside and objective check and balance system" on Sublette County's relationships with facilities across the region, Sollis said.

Rep. Albert Sommers raised concern about large medical corporations buying hospitals and asked if HCA is a good fit for a small community.

Sollis replied that HCA "promotes and allows independence" at each facility, including the ability for hospital districts to choose their own management teams with varying degrees of consultation with HCA.

Kyle Brostrom, HCA vice president for strategy and business development, said HCA "stays in the background" to provide help when needed, but ultimately, "It's your

hospital."

Pinedale Mayor Matt Murdock expressed concern about bringing jobs to Sublette County and using local contractors. Sollis replied that hospital districts make those decisions, with HCA in a hands-on hands-off position. EIRMC uses local contractors and tradesmen 95 percent of the time, he added.

Janice Simons, the CEO of Medina Healthcare System near San Antonio, Texas, entered into a management partnership agreement with Methodist Healthcare, a subsidiary of HCA. Medina is governed by an elected hospital board and operates a CAH and six assisted living facilities.

Simons said HCA respects Medina's autonomy and acts as a "big brother" or "big sister" – "When you need them, they're there," Simons said.

HCA rescued Medina from near-bankruptcy, Simons explained. Medina's CAH created 130 well-paying jobs in the community, Simons said. Medina's long-term care facilities retain community members that would otherwise go to San Antonio.

### Star Valley Health

Executives from Star Valley Health (SVH) discussed similarities between the critical access hospital in Afton and the proposed facility in Sublette County, emphasizing their company's autonomy and connections to the local community.

Daniel Ordyna, SVH's CEO, described Star Valley and Sublette County as rural, like-minded communities with similar values.

"We are the only CAH that is trying to partner with you," said Daniel Ordyna, SVH's CEO. "We have an intimate understanding of your experience. We have insights (the other bidders) don't have and a unique way of delivering medicine in rural areas."

Mike Hunsaker, SVH chief operating officer, explained that he was a member of the hospital board in Afton when construction began on its critical access hospital in 2002. Star Valley is a template to help guide Sublette County through the process of obtaining USDA funding, merging the Sublette County Rural Health Care District and Sublette Center and searching for a qualified, seasoned management team.

Star Valley's CAH is a self-sustaining facility that earns 98.5 percent of revenue from operations and services, while the remaining 1.5 percent comes from taxpayers – a smaller amount than many CAHs, Ordyna stated.

Hunsaker claimed that as a critical access hospital, SVH had unique knowledge on maximizing Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement that EIRMC lacked because they were a tertiary hospital.

Initially, SVH partnered with Intermountain Healthcare out of Salt Lake City but ended the relationship when the community demanded more autonomy over health care, Hunsaker explained. Intermountain frequently transferred patients out of Star Valley to its own facilities.

"There was a point in time when the community needed more opportunities to care for patients here," Hunsaker said. He emphasized becoming a real hospital rather than a "transfer facility."

Ordyna said the ultimate goal for Sublette County was to become an independent entity in charge of its own destiny in an interdependent relationship with SVH rather than a dependent one.

SVH offers telemedicine options and has agreements with Western Wyoming Community College, Star Valley High School and Weber State University for

further education and to recruit future providers.

In response to several questions, Ordyna clarified that Star Valley Health does not intend to manage a CAH in Sublette County as a 501(c)(3) organization at this time.

### St. John's Health

Michelle Kren, administrative director, discussed the long relationship that exists between the SCRHCD and St. John's Health dating back several years. In 2015, the two agencies joined an affiliation agreement to share leadership, services and visiting specialists along with hospice care and access to group purchasing, she added.

The agreement also provides opportunities for staff and providers in Sublette County to shadow their counterparts at St. John's and improve their skill sets, Michelle Kren said.

Dr. Paul Beaupre, former CEO at St. John's, stressed the importance of keeping quality health care in Wyoming and leaving health-care decisions up to Wyomingites. St. John's was the organization capable of providing a local partnership with the ability to strengthen health care in both Teton and Sublette counties.

Beaupre spoke to St. John's independence and the organization's close link to policymakers and bureaucrats in state agencies.

St. John's is focused on keeping people well, a skill set that large hospitals can sometimes lack, Beaupre said. St. John's strives to establish low-cost care, including services like Mental Health Jackson Hole that provides free behavioral health to more than 500 people, Beaupre explained. Few other organizations are willing to reach out to their community in similar ways, he added.

St. John's receives cost-based reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid for part of its revenue, but the company also has experience working in close relationships with large insurance providers and helping patients that are underinsured or uninsured, said John Kren, CFO. St. John's is uniquely able to look at the whole financial picture, he added.

William Wagon, current CEO, stated that St. John's is completely committed

See 'PARTNERS' on page 11A



**MASA** Medical Transport Solutions

*Emergencies Happen...*

The question is, how much will it cost you?

**OUR MISSION IS THAT IT WON'T**

## JOIN MASA MTS FOR A FREE MEAL

& Informational Seminar to learn why over 1.5 million members have trusted us since 1974 to provide peace of mind when it comes to surprise medical costs.

### Lakeside Lodge

99 Forest service Rd, Pinedale, WY 82941

Tuesday, March 2nd at 11:30am & 4:00pm

#### WE'LL BE DISCUSSING:

-  Ground, Helicopter and Fixed Wing Ambulances to & From Hospitals
-  Minor Children/Grandchildren Return
-  World Wide Coverage
-  Spouse/Companion Transport

  **RSVP TODAY (855)802-8413**

*In-Home Consultations Available Upon Request*

Limited seating available. Members welcome!

For your safety, our presenters and venues are committed to following CDC guidelines for hygiene and social distancing. Protective face masks will be provided upon request, while supplies last.



**SPLIT DIAMOND MEADOWS**

**ENGEL & VÖLKERS**

**OVERVIEW & FEATURES**

- Average Lot Size: 41 Acres
- Municipal Water & Sewer
- Underground Utilities
- Pedestrian/Bike Path
- Landscaped 1-Acre Park
- School Bus Stops
- Postal Service
- 3.32-Acre Storage Area
- Protective Covenants
- Homeowner's Association
- Architectural Guidelines
- Wind River Mtn Views
- Wyoming Range Views
- Maintained Streets

Short-Term Owner Financing Considered

**CLARKE TODD**  
Real Estate Advisor  
307-690-5158  
clarke.todd@evrealestate.com  
clarketodd.evrealestate.com

**JIM HICKEY**  
Real Estate Advisor  
307-413-1775  
jim.hickey@evrealestate.com  
jimhickey.evrealestate.com

SplitDiamondMeadows.com



# PARTNERS

Continued from 10A

to partnering with the hospital district whether or not the hospital district chooses St. John's as its managing partner.

Beaupre envisioned a CAH in Sublette County hiring 200 to 300 employees that would add revenue to local businesses. The partnership would also allow both St. John's and a CAH in Sublette County to form a stronger organization to attract providers and specialists.

John Kren emphasized that St. John's tries not to outsource staff and specialists whenever possible. He believed that a partnership between Sublette County and St. John's could benefit staff working in Jackson. Due to prohibitively high living costs in Teton County, John Kren envisioned a system where staff members lived in Sublette County and worked remotely. He added that 67 percent of St. John's contractors and tradesmen on construction projects are local.

In response to questions about the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic, he stated that the first goal is to focus on getting the CAH up and running in Sublette County. St. John's is working on projects to build additional urgent care and primary care clinics in different communities around Teton County and recently spent more than \$40 million on building a new long-term care facility.

St. John's has received numerous accolades, including Newsweek's Top Hospital Award for Wyoming and the Women's Choice Award and recognition by the American College of Radiology. The assisted-living facility is rated 5-star by CMS.

# COMMISSIONERS

Continued from 1A

services and equipment.

Commission chair Joel Bousman said it's the county's responsibility to provide Public Health, veterans' affairs services and sanitation services. All of those exist in the current Public Health building and would be displaced by construction.

Hoffman said it's never been the district's intention to displace those county services. And, according to Doorn, no decision has been made on interim location or timeline regarding movement of those services.

Bousman asked about the new facility's capability to serve the county's veterans. Veteran Services Officer Billie Hamby said veterans can be treated in county currently because they are so far removed from a VA clinic.

"As long as the hospital gets approved for community care it'll be the same way," Hamby said.

Commissioner Tom Noble said all parties involved should come up with proposals before the working group comes together to meet again.

No action was taken in those discussions. Lee returned in front of the commissioners later to present the county's COVID vaccine funding contract, worth \$102,617. That would pay for staff and costs associated to vaccinations. As of the meeting Public Health administered 1,035 first doses and 305 second doses. She said they're moving through the Phase 1B group and have been able to fully vaccinate staffs at both school districts in the county.

The commissioners approved that contract.

### Budget

County Treasurer Emily Paravicini

presented the county's expense and revenue balance sheet to the commissioners. She outlined the budget and discussed what impacts Senate File 0060, Monthly ad valorem tax revisions-2, could have on the county. That bill has already passed through the State House and Senate.

Budget sheets handed out showed the county was down \$3 million for the month. She said at this point the commissioners should talk about where the threshold is when the county digs into reserve funds.

Paravicini said the county usually spends about \$2 million a month - \$3 million if payroll is included - and the county only keeps 15 to 16 percent of property taxes collected.

"We're getting to the point where we will get a big tax payment again in May and then we have June, July, August, September when we won't get much from those tax payments," she said.

A report showed delinquent property taxes for the first half of 2020, which should have been paid in November, totaled over \$6 million. Most of that came from one company. Paravicini said she's already placed liens on those companies in the event companies declare bankruptcy. No tax payments at all from them would short the county \$12 million.

A different report pulled showed around \$63 million in unpaid 2020 taxes, she said.

Paravicini came to the commissioners to bring the situation to their attention and so the board could determine where that threshold into savings would be.

She then brought up Senate File 0060, which is supposed to help counties by making monthly payments.

"I think it looks great on paper and what it's designed to do will help counties eventually but the first year, they're anticipating a 30- to 40-percent shortfall for the counties," she said.

The county was proposed to receive \$130 million in full. If the county didn't collect 40-percent of that (roughly \$52 million), Paravicini said it would cause serious problems and force the county to dip heavily into the "rainy day" fund.

### Other items:

- The board decided not to take any action on a bill requiring payment from the New Fork Lake Irrigation District to the Service. Rancers Sue Briggs and Dave Noble from the district explained the history of the situation and asked for support. The commissioners once again voted to support the district, short of financial backing, and supported involving elected officials, as well as landowners in the area.

- Billy Pape and Rio Verde Engineering reported no new developments, just snow-related work.

- Commissioners did not take action on a proposal making the Sand Draw building the new emergency management location, since the building is only being used to store equipment. Commissioners moved to advertise the sale of the "Big Red" fire engine.

- The board approved catering permits to 4TS, LLC for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation's event at the county fairgrounds on Feb. 27.


- Commissioners went into executive session regarding real estate. Chair Bousman said no action was taken during that session.

# Business & Services DIRECTORY

**Isn't it time your parents got the same quality of care as they gave you?**

Now that it's your turn to take care of your parents, what do you look for? A safe place with friendly, on-staff nurses? A balance of gifted care and dedicated friendship? A welcome feeling of home?

*At Deer Trail, you'll find all of this. And so much more.*



2360 Reagan Ave., Rock Springs, WY 82901  
362-0100  
deertrailassistedliving.com

**WH Services, LLC**  
Will Hampton

**Heating and Air Conditioning Installation and Repair**

Most Plumbing Repairs

PO Box 1790 Pinedale, WY 82941  
**307-749-3040**



**All American Fuel Co. locally operated**

Serving & Supporting Sublette County/Western WY since 1995

- Bulk Fuel Deliveries
- All lubricant & chemical needs
- DEF available in case, drum or tote

91 Octane Ethanol Free Premium available

Same day service if needed  
Call Travis 307-367-6311



**Whisler**  
CHEVROLET

*I'm here to help with your next vehicle purchase. Give me a call and let me go to work for you!*

(307) 362-5677

TREVOR ARNOLD  
Sales Consultant

tarnold@whislerchevy.com • www.whislerchevy.com  
2200 Foothill Blvd. Rock Springs, Wyoming Cell 605-933-0522

*Feel free to text me with any questions that can make your vehicle buying experience better!*



**Fun Joke:**  
What did the blanket say to the bed?  
Don't worry, I've got you covered

**YNOT Auto Sales**

We buy and sell • Consignments welcome

**639 S. Pine St. | 307-367-7526**

Call or text Tony or Warren at  
307-231-4717 or 307-231-4687

<p><b>2014 RAM 2500</b></p>  <p><b>Crew Cab 4WD Diesel \$29,988</b></p>	<p><b>2012 Nissan Frontier</b></p>  <p><b>PRO-4X Crew Cab 4WD ONLY \$19,900</b></p>	<p><b>2015 Lincoln Navigator</b></p>  <p><b>Brand new tires, low mileage ONLY \$25,988</b></p>
<p><b>2011 Dodge Ram 1500</b></p>  <p><b>ONLY \$15,995</b></p>	<p><b>2019 Jaguar XE AWD</b></p>  <p><b>ONLY \$25,988</b></p>	<p><b>2020 Ram 1500 Laramie</b></p>  <p><b>Low miles ONLY \$38,988</b></p>