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Commissioners discuss seep

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SPORTS

Swim sweeps the weekend

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Pinedale Roundup

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One Dollar



JOY UFFORD PHOTO

Bondurant musher Alix Crittenden pulls up her anchor and gets ready to race the Big Piney-Marbleton Stage of the Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race with 2 seconds to go. For more photos of both Pinedale and Big Piney-Marbleton stages, go to PinedaleRoundup.com.

Mushers eat up the miles 2021 Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race

By Joy Ufford

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SUBLETTE COUNTY – It snowed high in the mountains – just enough and just in time – to cushion the trails for the 26th annual Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race stages at both ends of the county.

The order was changed slightly this year with Pinedale as Stage 2 on Jan. 31 and Big Piney-Marbleton's Stage 4 on Feb. 2, with Kemmerer in between.

A roster of 24 teams traveled to Wyoming to compete in seven 30-plus-mile stages with their eyes on winning a share of the \$165,000 purse. COVID was a grave concern and rules were set up in advance for mushers and handlers who might contract the disease. Community events were canceled and spectators were discouraged due to COVID concerns – many mushers, dog handlers and race staff wore facemasks or gaiters.

The 35-mile Pinedale stage started out with a cold 10 degrees and fast snow, which

helped Anny Malo, winner in 2020 and 2019, edge out leader Lina Streep, winner in 2017 and 2018. They, like many of the mushers, are from Canada but Sublette County's own Alix Crittenden of Bondurant has lots of hometown fans. Like horse racers, excellent mushers and dogs jockey for the best positions. Two are JR Anderson and Erick Laforce.

Late snowfall helped keep Tuesday's Big Piney-Marbleton 35-mile stage on track from the Middle Piney parking lot, where sunshine promised warmer weather and slower snow. Malo also won this stage, followed by Lina Streep with the two men on their heels.

Although spectators were few, they too followed social distancing and wore facemasks and wore big smiles watching the dogs' excitement as they yelped, howled and leaped through the snow.

To keep up with daily results of the 2021 Pedigree Stage Stop Sled Dog Race, visit wyomingstagesstop.org or the Facebook page.

Hospital district board discusses management, financing and legal

By Robert Galbreath

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PINEDALE – The Special Hospital District Board of Trustees face a daunting task establishing basic organizational needs and laying the groundwork for the proposed critical access hospital and new assisted living facility.

The trustees convened a special meeting on Jan. 27 to continue discussion on three priorities – management, finances and legal counsel.

The board heard presentations from local banks willing to work with the hospital district. Trustees also reported on meetings held with potential management partners and the ongoing search for legal representation.

The board did not take any formal action at the special meeting, citing the need to gather more information, but established a tentative decision-making timeline.

Trustee Wendy Boman stressed the need for the board to take a cautious approach toward each significant step in the process – to do everything right the first time – and encouraged the public to be patient.

Finding a bank

The hospital district lacks revenue, possessions and cash until the Sublette County Rural Health Care District (SCRHCD) transfers its assets to the hospital district at the end of the fiscal year on June 30, Dave Doorn, SCRHCD administrative director, said to the Examiner.

The hospital district will begin collecting the mills levied to the SCRHCD and the additional mill approved by voters in July, Doorn added.

In the meantime, trustee Dr. Brendan Fitzsimmons suggested setting up an initial bank account and applying for a small line of credit to pay for legal expertise and hire employees. Representatives from three local financial institutions – the Bank of Sublette County, Rocky Mountain Bank and First

Bank – gave public proposals offering their services to the board on Wednesday.

Fitzsimmons told the board that Wells Fargo expressed an interest, but was unable to attend the meeting.

The hospital board lacks assets to leverage and financial statements. The banks said that it was willing to work with the board and consider alternatives, including an examination of financial statements from the SCRHCD and Sublette Center.

Board Chairman Tonia Hoffman asked each bank about its engagement and involvement in communities across the county.

The banks at the meeting did not have

branches in Big Piney and Marbleton. Kelli Lovell, SCRHCD finance manager, raised concern about the ability to do remote banking, including direct deposits and courier services.

Hoffman told the banks that the board needed time to look through the packets, and added that the board planned to choose a financial institution at a special meeting sometime during the first two weeks in February.

Legal counsel

Hoffman announced that trustees had interviewed two legal companies offering services to the hospital district. The submitted proposals "looked good," she added.

The request for bids remained open through Jan. 31, and Hoffman said that the board received an additional application that Wednesday. Hoffman reported that the board was still gathering information on each proposal and planned to make a decision at the same special meeting when the board chooses a bank.

Management proposals

Hoffman briefly outlined multiple meetings held the previous weeks with three prospective management partners – Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, St. John's Health and Star Valley Health.

Hoffman stated that the board was not yet

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Proposed school district budget reductions tabled

By Robert Galbreath

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PINEDALE – Following 90 minutes of emotional and passionate public input, the Sublette County School District No. 1 Board of Trustees voted, 6-1, to table a \$1,150,010 budget reduction plan for the 2021-2022 school year.

The action took place at a special meeting on Jan. 28 at the high school auditorium. Trustee Chris Nelson voiced the dissenting vote.

The district's finance committee drafted the plan in response to House Bill 61, sponsored by the Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration, board chair Jamison Ziegler said.

The bill is part of the state's wider attempt to trim the next fiscal budget and would require School District No. 1 to cut 6.54 percent of its approximately \$17-million annual operating budget, Ziegler explained.

The bill did provide language to establish an unspecified sales tax to fund

education, Ziegler added.

The board considered the cuts arbitrary, capricious and unconstitutional, Ziegler stated. He cited the Wyoming Constitution's provision to fund education before all other agencies and guarantee equitable spending across each district.

House Bill 61 was introduced to the House last month. Ziegler said that if the bill is passed, the district could pursue legal options.

In the meantime, the Board Finance Committee presented the budget reduction plan as a proactive measure in case House Bill 61 passes and to allow public input before the final district budget is approved in July, Ziegler said.

The central question remained whether community members are "willing to tax ourselves" to fund items on the proposed chopping block, including several sports programs and staff and faculty positions, Ziegler added.

Saving faculty positions

The budget reduction plan called for cuts

to staff and faculty positions, including one full-time physical education teacher.

Pinedale High School science teacher Luke Myszewski, "speaking on behalf of teachers," asked the board to consider alternatives to staff cuts. A majority of faculty are willing to make sacrifices, including paying more into retirement plans, to retain staff.

The board's plan unfairly "penalized" physical education teachers, and if the district lost one position in that department, the student-teacher ratio would "balloon."

The district offers "amazing benefits," but Myszewski stated he would be "absolutely happy to give up those benefits that other districts don't even offer their own employees to save a teacher who has done nothing wrong."

"I would ask that our board members, who I truly appreciate, keep an open mind and maybe find some way, somehow, to keep our staff together," Myszewski said.

"Our staff as a whole, as a cohesive unit,

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Miller donates 162 more acres for conservation

From WSGLT

SUBLETTE COUNTY – The Wyoming Stock Growers Land Trust and Sublette County rancher Maggie Miller have partnered to permanently conserve 162 acres near South Beaver Creek.

The 162 acres under conservation easement was originally owned by the Hammer-Reed family and was acquired by Miller to minimize future fragmentation of the ranch area already owned.

The conserved acres are directly adjacent to other WSGLT-conserved properties and will bring the total acres conserved by Miller and Grindstone Cattle Company to more than 18,000. Miller's desire to conserve the property rests in the agricultural and wildlife values inherent to the ranch and a pressing need to prevent fragmentation due to development.

"All of these conservation easements just make me so happy. This is something I enjoy doing and I'd like to keep this wonderful land the way it is," Miller said about closing this most recent easement.

The property is located between the Bridger-Teton National Forest boundary and South Beaver Creek, a tributary to the Green River. It hosts an abundance of wildlife including sage grouse, raptors, lion, grizzlies and black bears. It also provides habitat for Wyoming's iconic large ungulates – mule deer, antelope, elk and moose.

Most of the property is within a stopover area within the Sublette Mule Deer Migration Corridor, the longest known mule deer migration corridor in the world.

Miller fully donated the conservation easement, a tremendous charitable contribution and continuation of her conservation legacy. The Wyoming Wildlife Natural Resource Trust supported project costs. WSGLT appreciates the continued commitment and partnership of WWNRT to conserving working agricultural landscapes in Wyoming.

With the Hammer-Reed conservation easement completed, WSGLT holds conservation easements on more than 72,000 acres under conservation easements in Sublette County and more than 285,000 acres



COURTESY PHOTO

statewide.

Tate Smith, WSGLT conservation director, commented on the closing of the project, noting, "Maggie's dedication to conservation is admirable and we deeply appreciate her

continued partnership. The Hammer-Reed Place conservation easement will expand continuity and connectivity of wildlife habitat while also protecting agricultural stewardship of this important landscape."

GOP Purity Test

My Republican Party is a large welcoming party with many differing views, but we like to focus on where we agree. If you have a problem with the first three planks of our platform maybe you should rethink your party affiliation.

Plank No. 1: All individuals are endowed by their creator from moment of conception to moment of natural death with the rights of Life, Liberty, Property, and Pursuit of Happiness.

Plank No. 2: Every citizen is equal, equally protected and equally subject to the law.

Plank No. 3: The right to bear arms shall not be infringed.

These are Planks of America, not just Wyoming.

My plan was for this to be an organizational meeting with "meet and greet" as the agenda. I did not meet the advertising requirements so as most Wyoming Republicans would do, we made the most of it and moved forward with a meet-and-greet gathering. Same agenda, same purpose, just not a legal meeting and no voting.

Gun-toting, freedom-loving redneck is not a Republican Party plank but are traits that most of my Wyoming brothers and sisters of both parties proudly identify with.

You sat quietly through almost two hours of lively interactive discussions to write a hit piece and bash myself and the like-minded majority that attended who in my opinion are truly Wyoming Republicans. That is not a trait of my Republican brothers and sisters. We as a party do respect your opinion and I wish

you could respect ours.

Thirty-plus years ago I considered myself a conservative Democrat, but after getting involved, growing up, reading and learning about the Republican Party I switched affiliation. I encourage everyone to read our party platform and I believe most will agree far more than disagree.

Please don't lecture me on community activism, I have been the mayor of Marbleton for almost 22 years, served on Town Council, volunteer fire department, senior housing, church, coach Junior Jazz and others. Everyone I know in our community serves one way or the other to the best of their abilities. From mowing a sick neighbor's grass to paying someone's water bill that is down on their luck. Not being able to make a meeting does not disqualify one's opinion. I will continue to give voice to those who cannot or chose not to make meetings.

I have worked in ranching or in the oilfield for over 35 years and have never written a book but I will stand my ground and not be quiet while being lectured to.

GFC God, Family, Country is the brand I ride for and that defines the Republican Party I am part of.

I will continue to point out our differences but focus on where we agree. I will continue to be honest and open. I will continue to make mistakes and ask for your understanding. I will continue to stand for my community, my party and my country and I ask you to join me.

*Thank you and God bless,
Jim Robinson,
Sublette County Republican Party
Chairman*

HOSPITAL

Continued from 1A

ready to make a final decision, and asked trustees for feedback on the "next steps" in the process.

"We have a lot of information yet to gather," she said. "We don't want to make any decisions too quickly."

Fitzsimmons proposed collecting feedback from stakeholders in this hospital. Stakeholders included the board of county commissioners, town councils, school boards, sheriff's office and Sublette County Unified Fire, he said. Fitzsimmons stressed the need to "actively engage the community" in the process.

Commissioner Tom Noble, attending the meeting, suggested adding state representatives and staff from the governor's office as potential stakeholders.

Pinedale realtor Chauncey Goodrich requested that local businesses and the chamber of commerce be included.

Hoffman stressed the need to listen to feedback from each employee at the SCRHCD and Sublette Center. Fitzsimmons reported that during a SCHRC staff meeting, support was voiced for "all three" potential management partners.

Kari DeWitt, a member of the SCRHCD board, said that she received 19 calls concerning management partners. Five of the calls were "in favor" of St. John's. One caller raised concerns about sending money outside Wyoming.

The board opened the floor to employees to voice concerns or opinions.

Sharon Rutsch, SCRHCD clinical services coordinator and director of laboratory services, and Dawn Walker, Sublette Center administrator, said they felt staff would be more comfortable sharing in small groups or one on one rather than at a public meeting before the board.

Vice chair Jamison Ziegler recommended creating a survey to anonymously gauge employee support for each management proposal.

Bill Kluck, EMS operations director, asked the board to clarify the "role" a management company would take in Sublette County, citing employee concerns that hiring an outside management company could represent a "takeover."

Hoffman responded that the requests for proposals (RFPs) outlined the hospital district's expectation that the relationship would be a partnership rather than a takeover.

Hoffman described the potential partners as "someone to come in and help us find management, administration – someone to help us with our design and help us with all the services that go into getting a hospital off the ground."

Fitzsimmons added that the hospital district needed "specialized skills" and "access to resources" that a health-care management partner could provide. The board faces a "prohibitively steep learning curve," he said.

Ziegler said that any agreement between the hospital board and a potential management partner would focus on sustainable growth and allow the county to retain a level of independence.

Ziegler explained that this partnership would allow the hospital district to "connect to larger (health care) groups" and provide specialty services like cardiology that would otherwise be difficult to establish in a small, rural community.

The RFPs are posted on the hospital district website. The board planned to hold workshops with stakeholders and the public in February before making the final decision on a management partner.

Street Talk

By Terry Allen

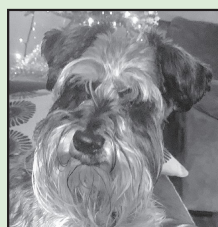
What do you do to get through our cold and dark winter?



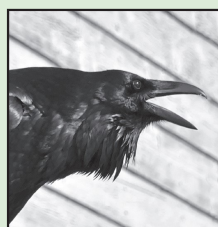
I take walks with Peggy, but I can't wait to get back to the library and do my reading therapy dog gig.
Rosie Webber, Pinedale



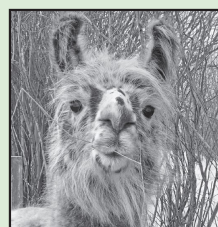
All summer I gorge on Albert's calves in the Upper Green while trying to stay out of the clutches of Zach so I can take a nice, long winter's nap.
Griz Sublette, Pinedale



I snuggle with Keeley and sometimes curl up by the fireplace.
Elvis Sandner, Pinedale



I do all right. I've got my gang at Ridley's, and I often visit my family out on the highway at The Roadkill Café.
Edgar Raven, Pinedale



I pretty much relax with my besties hunkered down in the willows. I like lots of snacks and dreaming of pack tripping into the Winds, which keeps my spirits high. Life is good!
Mr. Whiskers, Pinedale