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Members of the Sublette Center board of directors discuss the merger with the county commissioners. Pictured, from left, are Ruth Steele, Sublette Center board; Marilyn Jensen, SC board; Patty Racich, SC board chairwoman; Josh Mays, Layton Construction superintendent; commissioner Sam White; Jeremy Hobbs, vice president of Layton Construction; commission chairman Joel Bousman; Dawn Walker, Sublette Center administrator; Dave Doorn, Sublette County Health administrator and commissioner Dave Stephens.

Merger between Hospital District, Sublette Center takes new form

Signed agreement expected by Sept. 6 commissioner meeting

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

PINEDALE – The proposed merger between the Sublette County Hospital District (SCHD) and Sublette Center continues to move along, although the latest draft version will take a new form, and additional time, to complete.

The Sublette Center's board of directors announced a two-phase transfer process drafted by its attorney, Nick Healy, at the Sublette County Board of Commissioners' meeting on Tuesday, Aug. 23.

The first step involves a membership substitution – a gradual transfer of leadership in board governance – before the Sublette Center transfers its assets, said Patty Racich, chairwoman of the Sublette Center's board of directors.

"I feel really positive about it," said Racich. "Our board doesn't want to hold anything up, we never have. We're just going to move forward."

Due to circumstances beyond its control, the Sublette Center experienced a turnover in its legal team in July.

The Sublette Center's new attorney reexamined the initial proposal to bring the two entities together in a single, abrupt transfer process due to "specific guidelines and specific deadlines" imposed on the center by state regulations, explained Dawn Walker, the Sublette Center's administrator.

"Once (the Sublette Center) does an asset purchase, that signals a change-of-ownership process with the state," she added.

The proposed two-phase merger provides time for the Sublette Center to make the transition in a "clean" and "thoughtful" manner in regards to assets and employees, Walker said.

The membership substitution process begins immediately after the agreement is signed between the Sublette Center and SCHD.

One by one, hospital district trustees will replace members of the Sublette Center's board during an approximate six-month timeframe, Tonia Hoffman, SCHD board chairwoman, said at the SCHD Board of Trustees' Aug. 24 meeting.

The gradual change in leadership permits the Sublette Center to actively participate in the transition period, said Walker.

"The entire point of a phased approach is so the Sublette Center has a voice – not that we have any distrust in the relationship with the (SCHD) – but so (the Sublette Center) can weigh in, form a relationship. It's a really unique proposal and I think it's going to work well."

A portion of the Sublette Center's board membership will remain intact "until the merger is complete," said Dave Doorn, SCHD administrator.

Attorneys for the hospital district agreed with the two-phased approach, Doorn told the commissioners.

“It does give (the SCHD) distinct advantages as far as change of ownership. It gives us time to get that done.”

– Dave Doorn, SCHD administrator

"It does give (the SCHD) distinct advantages as far as change of ownership," Doorn added. "It gives us time to get that done."

The SCHD initially planned to complete the merger in a single-step transfer of ownership, said Hoffman on Aug. 24, before deciding the phased approach was best.

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—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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Gravel pit

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“The focus is on dollars,” Jones said. “But counties are not private enterprises.” They also declined to seek an appraisal, instead citing how much money the county saves by mining its own gravel.

“They were only interested in the money,” Jones said. “They didn’t talk about wildlife, people’s safety and quality of life. ... They didn’t have a net asset value study done. If you don’t plan, study and think, how can you say you’re going to save millions?”

Background

County commissioners learned about the Doyle family’s 40-acre irrigated agriculture property when Road & Bridge Supervisor Billy Pape brought them notice of its “for sale” status earlier this year. It is adjacent to another agriculture parcel the county bought earlier with the intent of reserving its use as a gravel pit.

The two pieces front Highway 191 and Pole Creek Road, although its very visible location just south of town was never specifically named even as commissioners

voted, 3-2, to attempt to buy the second piece.

The first parcel has not been mined, although county officials received a “blanket permit” from the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality to use it all as a gravel pit.

At the commissioners’ July 19 meeting, 25 or so citizens attended to speak against the purchase, its price, a lack of mineral analysis or appraisal, water availability and quality, wildlife, noise and dust. Commissioners went ahead and approved the purchase, 3-2, with commissioners Dave Stephens and Doug Vickrey opposed.

“County commissioners have approved the mine in closed door sessions with public inputs, committing an additional one million public dollars,” the petition says. Commissioners legally met in executive sessions to discuss “real estate.”

Two gravel pits that brought public complaints and criticism into the county’s meeting room are the county’s Bondurant pit and the “Bousman pit,” initially owned by

Doyle Gravel Mine

On Tuesday, Sept. 6, the Sublette County Board of Commissioners agenda will slot public comment for citizens to speak about the Doyle gravel mine on what they consider “prime agricultural land supporting ranching and a myriad of wildlife.”

retiring commission chair Joel Bousman.

Commissioners scheduled a public workshop in Bondurant, which is shielded from view to hear citizen concerns. The older Bousman pit, now under another name, was the topic of many letters to the editor about dust, noise and traffic in its day.

What’s next

Jones said he and the Dean Boundy family, which owns part of the original Old Brazzill Ranch and leases pastures “to a real rancher,” are fighting to reverse the county’s decision or at least force thoughtful answers to what they see as major issues.

When asked about noise and visuals at the July 22, Pape suggested a berm.

“That’s between the mine and the highway,” Jones said, “Which leaves three other sides not enclosed.”

As for water management, Pape said a drainage plan would be worked out.

“My understanding is a couple of (current irrigation) ditches would be affected,” Jones said.

Jones and the Boundy family have filed a complaint with Wyoming DEQ, requesting an investigation. The petition and comments will be sent to the Lander office, he said.

Jones tried to verify how many gravel pits there are countywide and could not. But, he said, “The rumor is the are about 200 gravel pits that are private, public, private/ public and government.”

Groundbreaking

Continued from **Front Page**

“A hospital is really a big deal for the community,” he said. “It not only increases the quality of life, but in emergency situations, it can be the difference between life and death.”

Local leaders at the mic

SCHD Board Chairwoman Tonia Hoffman delivered a heartfelt speech to the community gathered on the grass.

“This is truly such an exciting moment in our county’s history,” she said.

Hoffman described the journey to the groundbreaking as “one of profound personal challenge, reflection and growth.” She recognized change can be “intensely uncomfortable” and cause dissent and emphasized the necessity of finding a balance between positive growth and tradition.

“We can embrace progress and growth without letting it change us or the values that define us,” Hoffman said.

The groundbreaking opened a “new chapter” for residents in Sublette County, she added.

“I believe what we’ve come to celebrate is an opportunity to keep our loved ones closer during difficult times, an opportunity to strengthen the ability to sustain our communities and do so independently, an opportunity to create jobs that more of our young people will want to come home to, an opportunity for growth, but growth on our own terms.”

Hoffman gave a shoutout to fellow SCHD trustees – Bell, Wendy Boman, Kenda Tanner and Jamison Ziegler and the Sublette Center board of directors – Chairwoman Patty Racich, Nancy Guio, Marilyn Jensen, Kerry Mahanovich, Ruth Steele and Tanner.

She also thanked SCHD and Sublette Center employees and administrator Dave Doorn, state and federal legislators and elected officials, past and present boards of county commissioners, town governments, the USDA, Jeremy Hobbs and the Layton Construction team, Star Valley Health, the Sublette County Rural Health Care District (SCRHCD), Louann Heydt, Joan Mitchell and Hoffman’s family.

“Now let’s build a hospital!” Hoffman proclaimed.

Dave Doorn, SCHD administrator, took the microphone and recognized the “hard work” of multiple community members over the past years.

“Every step we took got us to this moment today,” he said.

Doorn thanked the county commissioners for jumpstarting the process to form a hospital district, the management team at Star Valley Health – CEO Dan Ordyna and COO Mike Hunsaker – for sharing staff and their “expertise” and the USDA.

Doorn recalled a visit by Gov. Mark Gordon to the Pinedale Clinic in July.

“Gov. Gordon came up to me and said, ‘Sublette County is finally ready for a hospital and a new nursing home.’” Doorn remarked. “I say, yes, we are ready for that.”

Dr. David Burnett, SCHD medical director, credited relationships across Sublette County for making the hospital a reality.

“Successful communities depend upon the relationships of those in their community,” he said. “Community spirit and strength are dependent on those working

relationships. This project’s success will continue to depend on those relationships.”

Burnett channeled musician Sam Cooke’s song, “A Change is Gonna Come.”

“This groundbreaking today certainly has been a long time coming, but with the completion of this project, a change is going to come in our capabilities to meet and deliver the health-care needs of all our citizens in all our communities. As a county, we will succeed and we will grow stronger.”

Dawn Walker, Sublette Center administrator, compared the journey to bring a hospital and new long-term care facility to a teambuilding exercise she attempted to lead to Sacred Rim. The group took the wrong path and ended up at Photographer’s Point as night began to fall.

Upon reaching Photographer’s Point, Walker realized the view was “beautiful,” but not “life changing.”

The group “failed the mission almost entirely” and turned back. The team attempted the hike weeks later with a guide and successfully reached Sacred Rim.

“When we got to see that, that’s the thing that makes you stop and go, ‘Wow, this is beautiful, this is amazing, this is important. Not everybody gets to see this.’”

Walker felt the same emotions at the groundbreaking. Despite obstacles and detours along the way, the community achieved its goal.

“We’re up at the top,” Walker said. “We’re looking at something that has never been done before. I, myself, am so honored, and I know that the Sublette Center Board

of Directors and the SCHD board are so honored that you have allowed us to see this vision. We are reaching new heights in health care together.”

County commission chairman Joel Bousman spoke next, recognizing previous commissioners for their involvement in the project.

He referred to a 1925 article in the Sublette Examiner outlining the need for a hospital.

“About a hundred years later, we finally got that to come to fruition,” he said.








The partnerships between the SCRHCD, SCHD and Sublette Center created a hospital district as “one health-care entity for the whole county.”

Bousman encouraged the community to support the “economic base” of Sublette County – energy, agriculture and recreation – that provides a majority of the revenue to fund the county and hospital district.

Rep. Albert Sommers had the last word.

“In a time when politics doesn’t seem to seek collaboration and solutions, I think what happened in Sublette County with this hospital is truly unique and truly wonderful. What could result from this is not only a successful story on how to collaborate in the community, but it shows young families they can live here in Sublette County and promote economic diversity and better living.”

DeWitt invited the Sublette Center Board, SCHD board and the commissioners to break ground with golden shovels, followed by the Star Valley management team, State Sens. Fred Baldwin and Dan Dockstader, Sommers, Mayor Matt Murdock, Doorn and Walker.

Weather for Sublette County, WY							Aug. 30 - Sept 5
Today	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	
 83° 45°							
Precip: 1% Wind: NW 8 mph UV Index: 7 High	82° 47°	85° 47°	85° 47°	86° 52°	83° 45°	84° 46°	

Merger

Continued from Page 2

The membership substitution allows the SCHD and Sublette Center to “take a few steps back and try to figure out what’s really best for both organizations as we go through this merger,” Hoffman said.

“We will still end up with the same product in the end,” she said. “It will just take more time. (The membership substitution) allows some time for everything to be handled and smooth and ready for when the full transition takes place.”

During the Aug. 23 meeting, commissioner Tom Noble reemphasized the need for the county to see a finalized, signed agreement between the Sublette Center and SCHD before the county signs the agreement transferring ownership of the Pinedale Clinic and Public Health building to the SCHD.

Doom stated the Sublette Center and SCHD planned to present a completed agreement at the next commissioners’ meeting on Sept. 6. The county can sign its transfer agreement the same day, said deputy county attorney Clayton Melinkovich.

Melinkovich told the commissioners he changed language in the county’s transfer agreement to “reflect that (the merger) is a two-step process.”

Otherwise, the transfer agreement between the county and SCHD is “essentially ready to go.”

Construction updates

Jeremy Hobbs, vice president of Layton Construction, the SCHD’s construction manager and general contractor, told commissioners the company was “ferreting through bids” and working with Doorn and the design team to begin moving dirt in late September.

The prospective bidders represent “a lot of local involvement,” Hobbs said.

On Aug. 24, Doorn told the SCHD trustees the bids received by the district covered “all disciplines” in the critical access hospital and long-term care facility project. Layton was sifting through bids and talking to each contractor to ensure companies were bidding on the right piece of the project and not adding anything extra to their applications.

Doorn said Layton hoped to have a guaranteed maximum price for the project “in a few weeks.”

Commissioner Doug Vickrey raised concern about the negative effects of rising prices on construction materials.

Hobbs responded that inflation and availability of materials both posed challenges. He laid out a proactive approach to obtaining hard-to-find items, including purchasing materials currently on the market in the southeastern U.S.

Layton’s goal is to remain fluid and “think outside the box,” Hobbs added.

“

If the company is unable to find a “switch,” they have two choices . . . wait 12 more weeks to get a switch or get on your horse and see about finding the switch.

– Jeremy Hobbs, VP of Layton Construction

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On Aug. 24, Mike Hunsaker, chief operating officer for the SCHD and its management partner, Star Valley Health, said he and Walker scheduled meetings with Sublette Center staff to address employee needs and questions during the merger process. The district’s goal was to give Sublette Center staff the “peace of mind” that “we have their best interests at heart,” Hunsaker added.

During the financial committee report on Aug. 24, SCSD Trustee Dave Bell encouraged the board to keep a close eye on legal fees incurred by the district during the process.

“Because of our national buying ability, we can actually sidestep a lot (of the shortages),” he said.

If the company is unable to find a “switch,” they have two choices: “You can say, ‘Well, I have to wait 12 more weeks to get a switch.’ Or you get on your horse and you go see about finding the switch. We’re more type A – aggressive about finding things.”

Hobbs introduced Josh Mays, Layton’s construction superintendent, to the commissioners. Mays will relocate to Pinedale to oversee the project on a full-time basis, said Hobbs.

Mental health program for First Responders

PINEDALE – The Sublette Prevention Coalition, Fremont County Prevention Program and Sublette County Sheriff’s Office are hosting a one-day training program to help first responders learn mental health coping skills titled “The Pain Behind the Badge: Winning the Battle.”

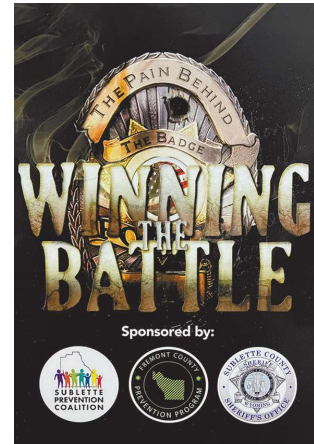
The event is on Friday, Sept. 23, from 8 a.m.-3:30 p.m. in the Pinedale Library Lovatt Room at 155 S. Tyler Ave.

The program is free and available only to First Responders – police, corrections, fire, EMS, Wyoming Highway Patrol, Game and Fish, Forest Service and clinic providers among others – civilian employees at these agencies and spouses and significant others.

This powerful and motivating presentation is a very effective tool used to help first responders, fire, hospital and military personnel, civilian employees and spouses and significant others deal with tragedies commonly referred to as “critical incidents.” Critical incidents include terrorist attacks, teen/school violence, mass casualty incidents, active shooters or any violent act that creates a victim or violent situation.

The program is also effective in helping the same personnel deal with daily stressors associated with their chosen careers that can and often do result in career-ending actions such as PTSD, depression, cumulative stress, domestic violence, failed relationships, alcoholism, substance abuse and even suicide.

The scheduled presenters are Tracie Paris, RN, BSN, and Sgt. Clarke Paris.



The Pain Behind the Badge: Winning the Battle is a mental health program that is used to help first responders, fire, hospital and military personnel, civilian employees and spouses and significant others deal with tragedies.

Paris is the creator and producer of the award-winning documentary film on police stress and suicide, “The Pain Behind the Badge.” He is the author of “My Life For Your Life,” also about police stress and suicide, and the children’s book, “Daddy, I Worry About You.”

To register for the event, please contact Sublette County Prevention Coordinator Trisha Scott at 307-749-5004 or Trisha.scott@wyo.gov.



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