

LOCAL
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to Santa**
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LOCAL
**Wrestlers
dominate the mat**
See **B1**



Pinedale Roundup

Newspaper of the Upper Green River Valley, Est. 1904

DECEMBER 24, 2021

One Dollar

'Private property rights'

Commissioners explain their critical yes votes in rezoning JFR

By **Brady Oltmans**
boltmans@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – All three yes votes on the Sublette County Board of Commissioners that approved the resort rezoning of Jackson Fork Ranch explained their votes at the end of its Dec. 21 meeting inside the county commissioners' meeting room. And they did so with tense words brimming with something close to frustration and anger.

Tami Crosson asked the commissioners why they voted the way they did during the public comment portion at the end of the commissioners' meeting.

Commissioner Sam White fielded the question first. He said there was a big reason he didn't answer the question before. He said when the Roundup asked him for a reason he was inclined not to answer.

"Sounds like they've already made up their mind," White told the room.

He said his biggest reason was private property rights – for everybody. When asked about the rights of neighbors around the Jackson Fork Ranch, White asked what property rights of theirs were being infringed upon by the decision. Crosson responded that the issue comes when the property around it was bought when the Jackson Fork Ranch's property was zoned as agriculture.

Commissioner Tom Noble then offered his rationale. He said when zoning was created there were blocks of all types laid out and recreational services were a block that was applied for, not one established. So what happened was how the process of zoning works.

"So, it's anybody's right to apply for a recreational service," Noble said.

He also cited private property rights and that the 10 items referred to by zoning were created as guidelines and not a hard-line determination one way or another.

Chair Joel Bousman, who offered a brief explanation at the Dec. 7 commissioners' meeting when the vote to rezone 56 acres went through, offered some more insight into his decision to approve the vote. He said the purpose of planning and zoning plans were to offer growth in the county in a way that benefited the county and didn't negatively impact property rights while maintaining public health and safety.

Bousman said, for example, a neighbor builds a house next to his and installs a septic tank that pollutes Bousman's well. That was what planning and zoning rules were designed to prevent.

He said it's also always been the intent of the commission to not prevent an increase in population to the county. That happens by working with planning and zoning and possibly

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THE GUIDING LIGHT



BRADY OLTMANS PHOTO

The Christmas Tree in front of the Sublette County Courthouse glowed before Christmas and received the added benefit of – no not the north star – a beaming full moon in the Sublette County sky.

Hospital District purchases new ambulance to join fleet

Dr. Burnett approved as medical director

By **Robert Galbreath**
rgalbreath@pinedaleroundup.com

MARBLETON – Ambulances suffer additional wear and tear in rural, isolated settings like Sublette County. The medical units cover long distances to care for patients, eating up mileage and requiring frequent maintenance.

An older ambulance in the Sublette County Hospital District's fleet blew out its motor for the fifth time, EMS director Bill Kluck told the board of trustees on Dec. 15.

Board secretary and treasurer Kenda Tanner said the finance committee met with Kluck to discuss options to replace the aging vehicle.

Kluck conducted a nationwide search and located a 2014 model F450 ambulance in Minnesota with only 15,000 miles on the market for \$140,000.

An energy company in North Dakota put the ambulance up for sale. It was one of three vehicles purchased during the energy boom, Kluck said. The owners relied on one unit and were eager to sell the other two, he added.

Kluck estimated the price tag for a new ambulance was approximately \$250,000. The wait time for a unit

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Woman faces 4 felony charges, DUI after Dec. 8 collisions

By **Joy Ufford**
jufford@pinedaleroundup.com

SUBLETTE COUNTY – A Pinedale woman on supervised probation is again in jail after a series of incidents that started late Tuesday night, Dec. 7, after she ran out of gas and continued the next morning with her arrest on new felony charges.

On Dec. 7 at 11:50 p.m., Mariah Edwards, 28, (known as Mariah Culwell) called the Sublette County Sheriff's Office, saying she ran out of gas somewhere while driving to Pinedale with her two children. Deputies brought her gas and followed her to Daniel for more fuel.

Because she is on supervised probation, a deputy asked her to stop at the sheriff's office and submit a urinalysis, according to Sgt. Travis Bingham.

At 2:31 a.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 8, Culwell went to the sheriff's office for the UA, which was not immediately evaluated.

"That has to be sent off to labs for confirmation on any results," Bingham said in an email.

So Culwell drove away. About an hour later at 3:30 a.m., a man called dispatch and said someone crashed into his truck in the Pinedale Best Western parking lot.

Deputy Danielle Cooper and others responded to find Culwell slumped over the steering wheel of her red Ford, saying she couldn't get out or answer questions. She then shifted into reverse, backed into a tree, drove out of the parking lot and east down Pine Street with Deputy Cooper behind her with lights and sirens.

Deputy Krystal Mansour and her K-9 in another patrol vehicle at the east end of Pinedale turned to block Pine Street but quickly moved as Culwell drove at her. Culwell allegedly hit the rear driver's side, then continued on Pine Street and crashed into a boulder.

The damaged car traveled into Ridley's parking lot where Culwell was arrested and taken to the Pinedale Medical Clinic.

At 5:20 a.m., Bingham and another deputy deployed the SCSO drone to map the scene for Wyoming Highway Patrol's crash investigation.

At 5:30 a.m., Culwell's blood was drawn at the clinic, she was checked out and taken to jail.

New charges

Culwell is now charged with four felonies – alleged aggravated assault and battery with a deadly weapon, aggravated attempt to elude police, aggravated attempt to flee causing more than \$10,000 damages, causing bodily harm to

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Hometown

Holiday Wishes

With gratitude for your support and companionship, we wish you a merry Christmas.



Memorial Hospital

OF SWEETWATER COUNTY

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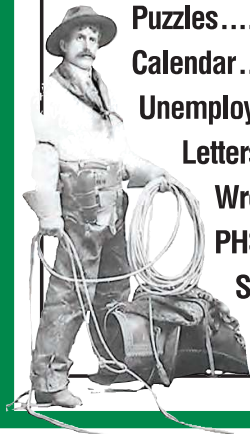


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THE ROUNDUP, ROUNDED UP

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Getting down in the dirt

Utility companies butt heads over digging

By Brady Oltmans

boltmans@pinedaleroundup.com

PINEDALE – The Sublette County Board of Commissioners were approached with a no-dig request from Pinedale Natural Gas during its meeting on Dec. 21. The request, an unconventional one brought to commissioners, was made because the utility company was starting to butt heads with Union Wireless – who has been digging to install fibre-optic cable in Pinedale since the summer.

Coincidentally, representatives from Union Wireless were at the meeting, making the second consecutive commissioners' meeting after a long discussion on the morning of Dec. 7. So they heard each other's issues.

It was explained of the dire consequences if a gas line is hit during the winter. After locating the issue, a crew would initially defrost the service spot, excavate the gas line and dig 3 feet to repair the gas line break, as well as purge air from the section so it's pure gas that flows through. However, at that point, that leaves gas lines with only about 24 hours' worth of gas pressure. Because of repair times, all customers could be without gas heating for days after. That includes county entities, schools, businesses and residences.

That's why, as Steve Shute of Pinedale Natural Gas explained, the request was made.

"You have to turn off gas to every single riser," he said. "You have to restore service to 1,800 risers and check pilot lights."

There haven't been any recent incidents of Union Wireless hitting a Pinedale Natural Gas line during its digs, but there was an instance in the summer where a PNG tracer wire was hit and left.

It was also brought up that when Union representatives request a location for PNG lines, it's a blanket request of hundreds of locations and some digs aren't done until months later. That's where a large portion of PNG frustrations came in, Cory Rakley of PNG said.

Tony Kelly of Union Wireless apologized for those frustrations. He said he was not made aware of the trace wire hit or the frustrations from Pinedale Natural Gas. Kelly said they could continue to do certain work in the winter but to altogether stop digging would delay progress on installation dramatically.

Commissioners stepped in. Tom Noble cited Shute, who previously said they can locate and account for 90 percent of lines, that if they can't account for where lines are that would be an engineering issue. Noble said he's worked to increase broadband in his years on the board, a large-scale endeavor that was powered largely by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Both companies provide public utilities and benefit the community, commissioners said. Chair Joel Bousman said that both companies could work it out since upper management from both companies were present. Commissioners said a no-dig order was not an option because of all the utilities in the county that rely on digging.

That discussion ended with the two companies getting together in the courthouse hallway to exchange information and get on the same page.

Cemetery talks

Members of the Upper Green River Cemetery District, including Renne Reed, asked the commissioners to change the deeds on cemeteries in Cora, Silver Creek and Daniel from the county. That wasn't much of an issue, although the deed on the Daniel

cemetery is in unknown possession. The last known entity overseeing the cemetery is no longer in existence. Commissioners ultimately granted that request. It was determined that the cemetery district would be responsible for insurance on its buildings and equipment as of the next renewal date on April 1.

District members also mentioned to the board of commissioners that they are in talks with the Town of Pinedale for inevitable expansion of the Pinedale Cemetery.

Space in the Pinedale Cemetery is running out, with double the amount of plots sold this past year. At the current rate, all the plots in the cemetery will be purchased within the next two years.

"If you want to be buried in Pinedale, you better hurry up," Reed said.

There are talks of five additional acres being freed north of where the critical access hospital is planned for construction. Of those five, it was said three would be available for development, opening up 200 plots to buy some time.

An email from Pinedale Mayor Matt Murdock explained the history of the cemetery and its policies. After reading that email during the meeting, Chair Bousman suggested the cemetery district and town meet with commissioners to discuss the best path forward.

Other items:

- Commissioners approved a transfer of funds during the meeting. These were proposed budget adjustments to compensate for purchases or revenue throughout the year that were not on the initial budget. A total of \$91,900 for former Road & Bridge vehicles sold at an auction were moved to a depreciation account for budget reserves. There were \$609,621.83 left in the fire warden's budget at the end of last year so that was moved to the fire reserve capital budget. There was the budget error in someone's salary that was corrected by just over \$8,000. Planning & Zoning hired a new employee and had its budget supplemented \$44,360.08 for that. Exactly \$5,000 was moved out of the visitor's center fund to pay for a documentary film. Finally, \$87,594 was received through Enviromedial rent payments that were transferred to economic development.

- Redistricting continues, with three possible options. Two of them would keep Sublette County whole while the third, which is unlikely to gain enough support, would take 94 voters out of Sublette County from the south.

- Commissioners agreed that Sublette County would join the ongoing opioid settlement after it was determined nearly \$200,000 would go to the county for improvements in drug treatment, prevention and intervention.

- Deputy county attorney Clayton Melinkovich said delegation agreements have been reached with the Sublette County Hospital District regarding Public Health and Veterans Services offices. Commissioners said they'd once again send a letter of support, along with a preference for payment on a loan, to U.S. Department of Agriculture's Lorraine Werner, who contacted the board. District administrator Dave Doom said they don't need that preference now, as the loan committee in Washington, D.C. is expected to rule on the loan application for a critical access hospital in January. He also cleared up rumors, which Commissioner Doug Vickrey wanted to address. Doom said the new medical director of clinics Dr. David Burnett was hired for \$2,000 for each clinic per month.



Weekly Weather Forecast

Pinedale, Wyoming • Dec. 24 - 29

Today

Sunrise: 7:48 a.m. **Sunset:** 4:50 p.m.

High: **25°** Low: **10°**

RealFeel® 26° 3°

Day: Cloudy with a bit of snow.

Night: Partly to mostly cloudy.

Saturday

High: **31°**

Cloudy with a flurry possible.

Low: **9°**

Sunday

High: **26°**

A chance for snow and flurries.

Low: **1°**

Monday

High: **21°**

Snow or flurries possible.

Low: **4°**

Tuesday

High: **26°**

Cloudy, snow showers possible.

Low: **10°**

Wednesday

High: **28°**

A chance for a snow shower.

Low: **5°**

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Pinedale Roundup

Macks conserve family ranch on Jack Creek

BONDURANT – Building on three generations of stewardship to protect agricultural heritage, Wyoming’s big game migrations and essential open space just northeast of Bondurant, the Mack family is conserving 280 acres along Jack Creek in the Hoback Basin.

The Green River Valley Program of the Jackson Hole Land Trust (JHLT) announced the new 280-acre conservation easement, formalized on Nov. 22.

The unique topography and location of the Jack Creek easement support livestock grazing and a mosaic of diverse habitat types, including open grassland, riparian willow shrubland, wetland, sage-steppe and stands of mixed aspen and conifer forest.

Thanks to the Mack family, who purchased the ranch in 1948, the ranching operation is carefully managed with sustainable practices, efforts that are noticeable in the health of the land.

“I’ve spent my summers on this ranch since I was a teen and have always loved the balance between our cattle and the abundant wildlife that also needed this land,” said Jo Mack, rancher and wildlife artist. “Our family finds value in preserving part of the migration corridor for wildlife while allowing grazing for the domestic animals that are part of our ranching heritage.”

Conservation of this property contributes to the ecological viability of the Jack Creek

watershed and Hoback River corridor by protecting headwaters and providing habitat for important species, including native cutthroat trout. Approximately 1.25 miles of Jack Creek run through the ranch, combining with several freshwater springs to create almost 60 acres of wetlands. Coupled with open pastureland, the riparian corridor provides prime habitat for a variety of native birds like great blue herons, neotropical migrant songbirds, sandhill cranes, waterfowl and shorebirds.

Working lands play an integral role in preserving the open spaces which sustain Wyoming’s wildlife. Surrounded by the Bridger-Teton National Forest, the ranch lies at the northern end of the 150-mile Red Desert to Hoback mule deer migration corridor. In addition to mule deer, the property also supports pronghorn and elk migrations and provides crucial winter habitat for moose. The legacy of ranching and agricultural stewardship in Sublette County has ensured that big game species can still follow their historic movements across the landscape. The new conservation easement protects these uses in perpetuity, which in turn will help the culture and tradition of working lands in the region continue to thrive.

“Jack Creek is incredibly important to our regional wildlife populations, and it is also an important part of the vibrant ranching community around Bondurant,” said Jackson Hole Land Trust’s Max Ludington. “We are



COURTESY PHOTO

The Macks’ Jack Creek easement conserves the tradition of working lands and protects 280 acres along crucial migration routes.

thrilled to partner with the Mack family on this very important conservation easement. The Mack family has thoughtfully stewarded this property for over 70 years and this easement ensures the key conservation and agricultural values they have worked hard to preserve will be protected in perpetuity.”

The easement would not have been possible without our generous funding partners: the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service Agricultural Conservation Easement

Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, North American Wetland Conservation Act with funds allocated through a partnership with Ducks Unlimited, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Knobloch Family Foundation, and the Joe Albracht Memorial Migration Fund.

In addition to the public funding, the landowner generously donated a portion of the easement’s value.

HOSPITAL

Continued from 1A

to arrive fresh off the assembly line was around 18 months, he said.

The finance committee looked into rebuilding one of the older ambulances in the fleet, harvesting parts from an out-of-service unit, Tanner said. Quotes to remount an aging vehicle ran higher than the cost to buy the 2014 ambulance Kluck located, Tanner added.

Kluck said EMS experienced longer wait times to receive maintenance on older buses.

Kluck and Tanner recommended the board to purchase the gently used 2014 F450 ambulance. Trustees complied and unanimously voted to amend the budget to buy the unit for \$140,000.

Trustee Dave Bell thanked Kluck for doing his “due diligence” in searching the market to locate what board chairwoman Tonia Hoffman called a “phenomenal deal.”

Dave Doorn, SCHD administrative director, stated the purchase allowed the district to operate two relatively new ambulances.

Aging ambulances remained a “major concern,” Doorn said. He and Tanner encouraged the board to come up with a plan to replace other units running well in excess of 100,000 miles.

New medical director

Following a lengthy executive session, Hoffman announced the board’s intent to offer a contract to Dr. David Burnett as

medical director over both the Pinedale and Big Piney-Marbleton clinics. The goal was to improve “cohesion” between medical staff at the clinics, Hoffman added.

Providers at the Hospital District typically fill the medical director role, and hiring someone from the outside would lighten providers’ load and provide a fresh set of eyes, Doorn said.

Burnett emphasized his past experience as a physician serving Sublette County for many years. He looked forward to finding ways to improve patient care and exploring “new directions” to help SCHD staff and providers navigate the difficulties and changes they faced.

Burnett said he was happy to “do anything I can to sustain the hospital project.”

“I’m glad to help and I will give it my best effort,” he added.

Reelection of board officers

Hoffman opened the floor to select officers for 2022 on Dec. 15.

The board passed a unanimous motion to retain the current officers – Hoffman as board chairwoman, Jamison Ziegler as vice-chair and Tanner as secretary-treasurer.

USDA and vaccine mandate updates

Due to the holiday season, the SCHD’s loan application to build a critical access hospital through the U.S. Department of Agriculture was expected to go before the national board in January, Doorn reported.

Hoffman stated that progress on building plans and the merger between the SCHD and Sublette Center were on hold pending a final decision from the USDA.

Hoffman updated the board on the federal vaccine mandate for health-care employees working at facilities participating in Medicare and Medicaid. The mandate raised concern and discussion at the Hospital District’s November board meeting.

The U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Missouri, issued an injunction on Nov. 29 halting the federal government’s requirement that health-care workers without a valid exemption receive vaccinations by Jan. 4.

The ruling covered 10 states, including Wyoming. The injunction is temporary, and legal action around the proposed vaccine mandate is ongoing. On Thursday, Dec. 16, the Biden administration asked the Supreme Court to intervene and allow the federal government to enforce the vaccine mandate.

Hoffman stated the injunction “bought time” for the SCHD. She and Bell continued to work with the district’s attorneys to “be proactive” and plan for the possibility the injunction against the mandate might be overturned.

SCHD administrators had collected and filed employee exemption requests in preparation for any changes, Doorn added.

Staffing shortages continue

The nationwide struggle to find nurses

remains a problem in Sublette County.

Vicky Marshall, nursing manager, said the district “continued to do the best we can” to recruit nurses. Several of the few candidates applying chose to accept higher-paying traveling nurse positions, Marshall said.

Marshall thanked EMS staff for stepping up to help in emergency room situations.

The Hospital District was down to four RNs to cover both clinics and be on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, Marshall told the board.

“We are getting tired,” she said.

Doorn reported progress on plans developed by Sharon Rutsch, clinical services coordinator and laboratory director, to retrain laboratory staff in the district as certified medical laboratory techs through Casper College.

Rutsch came up with the idea to allow laboratory staff to continue their work for the clinics while furthering their education without the need to leave Sublette County.

Doorn and Rutsch visited the laboratories at Casper College to make sure facilities in Sublette County were “in line” with the program’s requirements, Doorn said.

Rutsch’s idea was attracting positive attention from the state, and Doorn told the board he hoped to use the model to retain and train radiology staff and nurses in the future.

Street Talk

What is your favorite Christmas memory?

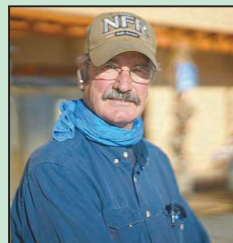
By Terry Allen



When I was 6, I woke up to a snowmachine in the driveway.
Hollie McAdams,
Big Piney



Putting up the Christmas tree this year.
Paisley Ogg,
Pinedale



I was 6 and our parents got us bazookas, and we shot the balls off the tree.
Ed Mackey,
Big Piney



Playing five-finger fillet with my cousins when I was 12. I’ve got some scars.
Tanner Roberts,
Pinedale



When I got my first Pokemon last year.
Cameron Petersen-Cuadras
and Jigglypuff,
Pinedale