



Possible delay in USDA application

Boards appoint joint planning committee

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

PINEDALE – The Sublette County Rural Health Care District might have to wait until voters approve a new hospital district in November to apply for a U.S. Department of Agriculture loan. The USDA has changed their position on our loan application, he said. “Basically, we assumed we could go ahead and apply now and when the vote (for a hospital district) happened, the USDA could change the name on the application. Now they have decided that we can’t apply until after the vote happens.”

“We received news from Lorraine Werner last week that the USDA has changed their position on our loan application,” he said. “Basically, we assumed we could go ahead and apply now and when the vote (for a hospital district) happened, the USDA could change the name on the application. Now they have decided that we can’t apply until after the vote happens.”

The USDA hesitated because the \$20 million pledged by the Board of County Commissioners to fund a long-term care facility “is contingent” on the November ballot, Doorn stated. Doorn told the board that he received affirmation from Commissioners David Burnett and Tom Noble that the original language in the county’s motion tied the money to voter approval for a hospital district. Burnett and Noble confirmed these statements with the Sublette Examiner.

When contacted by the Examiner, Werner offered “no comment” on Doorn’s statement until the USDA and SCRHCD host further meetings.

Doorn encouraged the board to set up a meeting with the USDA to “look at our options.” Chairman Wendy Boman agreed to set up a meeting with Werner as soon as possible.

Joint planning committee

The freshly signed memorandum of understanding between the SCRHCD and Sublette Center requires the formation of a joint planning committee to work toward a merger and future hospital district.

Rachel Weksler, attorney for the SCRHCD, said that she met with the Sublette Center’s lawyer, Nick Healey, and agreed that a committee consisting of two members from each organization was “ideal.” She added that a fifth member representing the county would be “beneficial” to break a deadlock.

SCRHCD board chairman Wendy Boman supported the idea of adding a county commissioner. Bill Johnson disagreed and said, “I don’t want to let the county be the deciding factor.”

Mike Pompy added that the county did not want to get involved in decisions between the SCRHCD and Sublette Center. Marti Seipp also expressed concern with including the county, saying she did not want to “stir anything up.”

Tonia Hoffman disagreed, stating that the county is “an integral part of the project” and the merger depended upon its support.

Boman suggested adding a community member to the committee as a tiebreaker.



VALERIE WILLIAMS PHOTO

Members of Big Piney Legion Auxiliary, Dee Fox Post No. 78, made and decorated 200 wreaths that have been placed on veterans’ graves in Plainview Cemetery near Big Piney for Memorial Day. The wreaths will remain up for two weeks. Members who participated included Lois Nichols, who made all the bows, Luella Blackmon, Sue Kinikin, Valerie Williams, Lara Grinestaff, Gloria Willoughby, Tanya Greenwell, Lou Ann Heydt, Diane Davison, Kim Hering, Roberta Barron, Clarica Pinkerton, Glenna Johnson, Tara Porter and Sharlene Lozier.

Weksler responded that adding a community member would require a revision of the MOU, a step none of the trustees wanted to take.

“If we get good members on the committee, we’re not going to have a problem,” said Pompy. “This is set up for both parties to work together, not one person making decisions.”

The board passed a motion to appoint two members, Pompy and Hoffman, to a new four-member joint planning committee.

New ambulance

The board voted unanimously to allow

Bill Kluck, EMS operations director, to negotiate with an ambulance dealership in Salt Lake City to purchase a new ambulance from a Canadian company, Demers. The motion authorized a purchase price not to exceed \$150,000. Kluck told the board that he intends to use the new ambulance to replace a 19-year-old bus.

For complete information about the memorandum of understanding between the Sublette Center and Sublette County Rural Health Care District, see page 2.

Superintendent Garvey’s contract renewed

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

BIG PINEY – The Sublette County School District No. 9 board of trustees approved a contract to renew Kevin Garvey’s tenure as superintendent for the 2020-2021 school year. The four board members present – Chairman John Fear, Darby Hoffman, Cody Raza and Alan Vickrey – voted in favor of Garvey’s appointment after a brief executive session to discuss personnel.

The board named Garvey “interim” superintendent last year on May 21, 2019, after the trustees declined to hire two finalists for the position. Garvey previously served as superintendent for four years and was the district’s

special education director for longer than 20 years.

The board also approved initial teaching contracts to the following: Melissa Allen, Big Piney Elementary teacher, Judy Wigington, BPES teacher, Megan Chamberlain, K-12 English Language Learning specialist and K-5 reading interventionist, Kassidy Williams, LaBarge Elementary teacher and Abby Wolfley, special education teacher.

In other board news:

• The trustees voted to approve a bid from Lewis Bus Group for a new 72-passenger bus in the amount of \$128,613. Two companies

submitted bids to the district.

• Big Piney High School Principal Jeff Makelky stated that the project to replace the concrete around the high school is going “full steam.” Construction has moved to the west side of the building, but Makelky said crews will leave a lane open for the graduation receiving line.

• Big Piney Middle School principal Scott Carpenter reported that the logistics to move teachers in preparation for the renovation of the middle school were underway.

• Garvey discussed the logistics for various summer programs and told the board

that any plans to reopen schools must get approval from state and county public health officials.

Garvey confirmed to the Examiner that the county and state okayed driver’s education and credit recovery for the high school. Because there will be more than one person in the car for driver’s education, students will be required to wear masks.

The district is “reviewing our ability” to host summer school and Kindercamp further down the road, Garvey said. The district hopes to schedule these programs later in the summer if public health restrictions ease.

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County debates broadband choices

By Holy Dabb, hdabb@subletteexaminer.com

PINEDALE – While Union Wireless has invested in laying fiber to Pinedale, it is unclear if Sublette County can use the competition to trim its \$13,932 monthly expense paid to CenturyLink for Internet services.

IT Systems Engineer Michael Christie asked the Sublette County Commissioners for direction during the May 20 commissioners' meeting.

The county has a metro Ethernet set up through CenturyLink that connects 15 separate county facilities.

Christie said the county is being overcharged, CenturyLink offers limited support and speeds are slower than available in other locations.

While Union is offering to connect the Courthouse, Public Health, Road and Bridge, Pinedale Fire Hall, Library, Maintenance and the County Attorney's Office

right away, facilities such as the Fairgrounds and Marbleton Sheriff's Office may need to wait two or three years to get connected.

Union estimated the cost for seven of the 15 facilities would be \$7,555, which is more than paid CenturyLink for the same seven facilities, but the speeds offered would be 10 times faster.

County Attorney Mike Crosson said his office needs the higher speeds. As the Sublette County Sheriff's Department has gone with body cameras, he said his office must provide defense attorneys with the videos. Uploading the videos takes a staff member hours.

Christie said to go with Union Wireless the county will need to keep its communication systems with CenturyLink for a couple more years to ensure connectivity – especially between the dispatch center in

Pinedale and the backup dispatch center in Marbleton.

"I don't want to pay twice," Christie said.

He added, it still is unknown if the Decision Summary on file with CenturyLink is legally binding. In fact, he only learned one day before the meeting who the county's customer service representative is with CenturyLink.

Commissioners asked Christie to continue researching and to come back with a proposal before budget. Commissioner David Burnett said the commissioners can't make a decision without complete information.

"CenturyLink has never had to answer questions before," Christie said.

In other actions:
 • Commissioners rescinded a motion passed during the May 5 meeting to update

Planning and Zoning rules. Several residents turned out, saying the comment period on zone changes was shortened to 14 days, not giving the public enough time. Others said they felt moving items for outdoors uses was catering to a proposed resort application.

Dennis Fornstrom said he shortened the notification period to meet needed advertising deadlines and prevent two-month delays between when the Planning and Zoning Commission meets and the County Commissioners meet. He added, a lengthy notification period just meant people forget the issue.

After rescinding the rule changes, commissioners asked Fornstrom to work with Deputy County Attorney Clayton Melinkovich and take the rules back to Planning and Zoning for a public hearing.

Sublette Center and RHCDC commit to hospital district

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

PINEDALE – The long-awaited memorandum of understanding that followed months of wrangling between the Sublette Center and Sublette County Rural Health Care District was signed and released last week.

The Sublette Center voted to accept and sign the MOU at a meeting on May 18. Sublette Center board Chairman Patty Racich signed the agreement that day. At a special meeting on May 12, the SCRHCDC voted, 4-1, to accept the MOU. Chairman Wendy Boman signed the document on May 21.

Under the MOU, both parties commit to working together to merge "their respective health care operations" to "create a new health-care system ... owned, operated and governed by a newly created Wyoming special hospital district."

This document is not a legally binding merger and does not allow one party to purchase the other. The document is an agreement between the parties to cooperate on the project to form a hospital district and "publicly support" its creation on the November ballot.

Compromise on finances

During negotiations this winter between the Sublette Center, SCRHCDC and Sublette County Board of County Commissioners, the idea to form a new hospital district emerged as a compromise to break the deadlock between the agencies.

Finances and assets remained at the center of the gridlock and led to different proposals at the conferences.

The SCRHCDC initially offered to buy the Sublette Center and operate a long-term care facility, the clinics and a proposed critical access hospital under the ownership of the rural health care district.

The Sublette Center proposed a new

senior health care district, hinging upon passage of legislation in Cheyenne this winter. In the meantime, the Sublette Center would request permission from the county to form a "county memorial hospital." Under this plan, the Sublette Center and SCRHCDC would remain separate agencies under the umbrella of a joint powers board.

Once the SCRHCDC and Sublette Center agreed to draft an MOU, conflict continued over real estate. At the initial meetings between the boards, the Sublette Center's attorneys expressed concern about committing real estate and finances to a project with an uncertain future.

At a special meeting hosted by the SCRHCDC on Feb. 12, the trustees discussed the draft. They disagreed with proposals in the MOU that would hand ownership of the Marbleton Clinic back to the county. The trustees also disputed the Sublette Center maintaining control of some assets as a separate entity, including Aspen Grove, in case the hospital district project fell apart.

The SCRHCDC trustees believed that both sides had to place all assets under a new hospital district, responding with "all or nothing" at the Feb. 12 meeting.

The final version of the MOU signed and released this month requires both parties to transfer "all of property, operations, assets and liabilities to the hospital district," if voters approve it in November.

Once a hospital district is approved, all facilities, including a proposed critical access hospital and long-term care facility, EMS and both clinics, would be "owned, operated and governed" by a new hospital district board elected that November.

The transfer of each agency's property is dependent upon the creation of a hospital district and adoption of bylaws by a

newly-elected hospital board. Until then, each organization will maintain control of its assets.

Governance

The final, signed version of the MOU establishes a "joint planning committee" consisting of "an equal number of representatives" from the SCRHCDC and Sublette Center.

The MOU gives the joint planning committee the ability to "plan and approve all arrangements" for the creation of a new health-care system under the governance of a future hospital district board. The committee is empowered to "negotiate and approve ... management services, major equipment and key personnel matters, financial arrangements and facility site planning and design."

Following its meeting on May 20, the SCRHCDC approved a motion to create a four-person joint planning committee with two representatives from the Sublette Center and SCRHCDC boards.

The committee will not operate as a public board, Dave Doorn, administrative director for the SCRHCDC, explained to the Examiner. Two representatives from the SCRHCDC do not constitute a quorum that would require a public meeting.

The MOU does contain a clause that all "final actions" made by the joint planning committee must be approved by both the SCRHCDC board of trustees and the Sublette Center board. The Sublette Center is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization and its board can operate privately.

The SCRHCDC board of trustees requires public meetings to approve actions or contracts made by the joint planning committee. If the joint planning committee were to approve the purchase of five new ventilator machines, this action would still have to go before the

SCRHCDC board at a public meeting.

The joint planning committee can assist with the USDA loan application to fund the critical access hospital. Another clause in the MOU allows the SCRHCDC "to continue its loan application" as a rural health care district "with the intent that the loan be transferred to the hospital district."

The issue of waiting to apply for a loan until the formation of a hospital district was a sticking point for members of the SCRHCDC board.

Other key points








If voters OK a hospital district in November, the SCRHCDC "will remain in existence until the next general election," when voters can decide to dissolve the organization. During the period between the approval of a hospital district and the hospital district's first tax levy, the SCRHCDC is required to "turn over all taxes levied on its behalf" to the hospital district.

In case voters do not approve the hospital district in November, the MOU and any transactions or contracts made on its behalf "shall be deemed terminated." The Sublette Center and the SCRHCDC can still pursue a separate merger agreement.

The reversion clause contained in earlier drafts – allowing the county to recapture the clinics if certain terms are not met – is not included in the signed MOU.

The MOU can exist as long as both parties work "in good faith efforts" toward "the merger" to create a new health-care system within one year of the signatures, in the case that assets are transferred to form a hospital district or both parties mutually agree to terminate the MOU.

Both parties are responsible for legal and consultant fees they incurred working toward the "consummation" of the MOU.

Weather for Sublette County, WY						May 26 - June 1	
Today	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	
 <p>64° 41°</p>	 <p>66° 37°</p>	 <p>72° 41°</p>	 <p>79° 44°</p>	 <p>78° 48°</p>	 <p>86° 48°</p>	 <p>84° 45°</p>	
Precip: 54% Wind: WNW at 8 mph UV Index: 8 Very High							