

Sublette County Special Hospital District

Special Meeting / Hospital Management

Monday, March 29th, 2021 5:00 pm

Southwest Sublette Pioneers Senior Center

Board Members in Attendance

Tonia Hoffman – Board Chair
Jamison Ziegler – Vice President
Kenda Tanner – Secretary/Treasurer
Wendy Boman – Trustee
Brendan Fitzsimmons – Trustee

5:00 Call to order

-Pledge of Allegiance

-Set Agenda – Tonia asked to move the Public Statement to the top of the agenda after the Executive Session.

- Executive Session –

-Public Statement, SHD Board

Tonia Hoffman read a statement prepared by Abbi Forwood of Crank Legal describing how Dr. Fitzsimmons' expressed opinions in both public meetings and a newspaper editorial that the search for a Management Partner was flawed and needed to be redone. At no point did he clarify that these opinions are his personal ones and not a reflection of the board. He also called into question that the merger between SCHD and Sublette Center was moving forward, when in fact it is. His questioning of the process as a Board member was not appropriate.

-Public Comment/Discussion

Tami Crosson spoke in favor of St. John's, citing Star Valley didn't have enough detail and that an unofficial poll of the public that she conducted supported St. John's as the most popular choice. She was disappointed that no financial information was included, so that cost was unable to be a part of the conversation. She also cited that the only reason Dr. Fitzsimmons might run for a board knowing he would have to eventually resign is that his Administration must not be listening to him. She cited how frustrated Dr. Fitzsimmons must be to write that letter to the editor. She supports Dr. Fitzsimmons' suggestion to scrap the whole process and do a national search for a Management Partner.

Dave Racich – speaking as a concerned citizen and not as a member of the Rural Health Foundation. Wants to know if we have developed a contract with whatever management team selected and the amount of time it will take to get it finished. He would like to see it signed, sealed and finished.

His personal opinion is that Star Valley is a good fit, being smaller and helps us reach into the Western part of the state.

Sherrie Escobar with the Green River Valley Health Foundation is disappointed by the last few weeks. We are supposed to be doing something for the betterment of the community. We all need to grow up and make a decision on what is best for the County and best for this Hospital.

Dave Doorn spoke up as an individual and noted that the process was a lot of hard work and he appreciates everything that went in to making it happen. He supports whatever decision the board makes.

Joan Mitchell stated that we elected this board and trust them to make a good decision for the future hospital. We should trust the hard work that the board has done and with St. John's being out we need to move forward. It isn't fair to the two remaining candidates to redo the whole process. She wants everyone to know she is 100% behind the board.

Cindy Van noted that Dr. Fitzsimmons didn't sign the letter to the paper as a Board member. She thinks Dr. Fitzsimmons has every right to put in the paper how he feels. She found his comments thoughtful and it spurred her to do more research. She then realized that EIRMC is a HCA facility, and doesn't want her tax dollars going to Wall Street through HCA. Also doesn't want to see the decision delayed. Wondering if the District had used Wyoming consulting services to find more resources for the project.

Marilyn Jensen said that the Sublette Center submitted their letter expressing their concern that they couldn't recommend one or the other and wanted them to hold off so they could do more research. After the Zoom meeting with Lorraine Werner, Marilyn felt that she had more info about what the USDA requires. She brought that to the Sublette Center board and after some discussion they decided to stick with their original decision not to recommend a Management Partner.

Doug Vickry spoke as a longtime resident, watching healthcare go from Doctors who were involved in the community and play football with the kids. He doesn't know if we need to back up and wait a second on picking a Management partner, but this is a major undertaking. It's the last time we'll have this opportunity. We can't be battling amongst ourselves. Star Valley would be the best choice in his mind, due to their size. He spent 11 days in Jackson with COVID, and knows the benefit of a small hospital, not a national chain.

Emily Ray spoke as an individual, but appreciates the work that went into this. She says no matter who they choose, we will work hard together to make this work.

- Personal Statements, Sublette Special Hospital District Board

Dr. Fitzsimmons feels like the road to this decision has been hell. He feels we are wandering blindly. He knows that the rest of the board is displeased with him and he acknowledges that and respects that, but he's not going to refrain from saying what needs to be said. That's who he is. He's talked about the process having problems all along and is worried that a defective process will make a defective product. We had three choices and we lost one. It unnerves him that St. John's and Tom Lubneau left at the same time. As for questions of this being above board and he can only call it likes he

sees it. So much of this process has been invisible to him, and to think about his feelings. He felt like the Board was working under a pressure to make a decision for the USDA application, but that decision isn't needed to submit the application. He would like to make the motion to restart the process. Of the two choices EIRMC causes a conundrum, because he trusts Jeff Solis, but not HCA. Their model is to make money. Our model is something different. The other problem with HCA is the nursing home. It's been made clear to him that the nursing home is central to this project, which he doesn't agree with. If it was up to him he would build a Hospital without a nursing home, but Sublette County won't do that. That's just reality. And HCA doesn't focus on nursing homes or really like running them. He thinks the biggest reason that the previous proposal got shot down is that it didn't include a nursing home, so we have to focus on our merger with the Sublette Center. In light of that, Star Valley knows how to run both CAHs and nursing homes, and he's impressed with their CEO. He prefers Star Valley. Winston Churchill once said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others. He knows he's caused a great deal of trouble the past couple of days, and he probably should apologize for it but he's not gonna. With that said, whatever the Board does tonight he's 100% behind. He's going to join Dave and Emily in saying the Board has done a hell of a lot of work.

Kenda Tanner would like to thank the three hospitals for taking the time to meet with them over the last 6 months. She felt there would be a clear front-runner early on, but to her there wasn't. Any one of the three would be an outstanding partner. While it's unfortunate that St. John's dropped out, the remaining two partners are both excellent. It's extremely difficult to balance all the stakeholder interests in this project, and with that in mind she feels Star Valley would be the best fit. Their successful CAH with a nursing home attached, which is what we are striving to become. In her opinion, they have rural healthcare figured out in Wyoming and we could learn a lot from them.

Jamison Ziegler said that this process has been a lot juggling the needs of all the stakeholders, and in looking at all the elements it always come down to fit. It's unfortunate that St. John's dropped out and it's unknown why our original legal counsel is no longer our counsel. It comes down to a question of fit and with the remaining two there is one that is the right size, in the same state, and that has the potential to share Provider opportunities. It's also the right time for that group, which is Star Valley, as they are currently tackling a construction project. They also have some training, not on the level of EIRMC, but on a lot of levels EIRMC feels too big. The other piece of the fit is the Sublette Center, which is an important piece and the importance of carrying on that legacy. Star Valley has walked the walk that we are about to walk, and they will know the pitfalls that await us, which is comforting. And while the financial elements have been kept private, Star Valley (after initial fees) only wants a 1% piece of the pie, compared to EIRMC wanting 3.4%, which is a big difference. That is going to be critical. Our Critical Access Hospital is going to be funded by taxpayer dollars. We may get to the point in the future that we can get away from relying on taxpayer funds and reduce the mills needed, but that 3.4% will affect how quickly we reach that point. Trust was the final point, watching the different styles. EIRMC and St. John's brought their A games, almost like having a professional football team come when you are a High School team. Star Valley sat among the SCHD board and wanted to hear their thoughts. It felt like a more natural fit.

Wendy Boman said that the whole board has taken this task very seriously and listened to folks that have strong opinions on one facility over the other. It made the decision very difficult. Wendy thought that after St. John's that Star Valley was the best fit, but EIRMC offers many things Star Valley can't. There were also a lot of staff in favor of EIRMC, but that needs to be weighed against staying in

Wyoming. If we chose EIRMC they wouldn't own us, we would still be in charge. They could offer help with HR, etc and lots of training. Wendy is leaning towards EIRMC due to the staff opinion being very important.

Tonia says it is obviously a difficult decision across the board. If someone has told her 5 years ago that she would be sitting here tonight she would have laughed. She never imagined she would be part of this conversation. She had very strong feelings about the situation at hand a few years ago and thought that things needed change significantly before she could accept the ideas about healthcare in Sublette County. This has been nothing less than a journey. She will be the first to say that her mind had to open to new ideas that were uncomfortable to her in the beginning. If we are not learning, we can become stagnant. We must be willing to take steps that are uncomfortable to make things better for future generations. It can be painful to take steps that involve risk, but it's also painful to stay where we are at. Now we're here. We've made some change and some progress in the right direction. We have a long way to go yet, but we are taking steps towards a stronger and more secure system of healthcare that will sustain us for years to come. With this progress decisions must be made. The one we are facing tonight is one of the most fraught that we will be facing for some time. The partner will play a pivotal role in the future of our community. We as a board have had to deal with the withdrawal of one of the potential partners with whom we have a significant history. She does think it's beneficial to reiterate that we don't think our choice will have a real impact on the day-to-day decisions at our existing facilities. It will not change which providers are available or who are visiting providers are. She lists the benefits of both remaining partners, which are many. This process has been a lonely one. There are forces from every side pushing one way or another. It has been suggested the process was flawed, too quick, too slow, too much input, too little input. She can only say that they have done their best to do right by their community. They have been researching and learning about these facilities for 5 months. Presentations were open to the public and they solicited input from employees, public, community leaders, elected officials and business leaders. Her goal is to sit back and watch as objectively as possible. We want a partner that will help us stand on our own two feet. This project became real when the vote passed. Whatever your personal feelings are, she hopes you will rally behind us. She hopes the decision we make will create a new sense of excitement about the project. Tonia mentioned she has lost sleep about this and fretted. She eventually realized that it wasn't coming easily because her professional and personal opinions vary. From a personal standpoint, Star Valley feels right. It's a good fit, they've walked the walk as Jamison said. From a professional standpoint she takes strongly the opinion of the boots on the ground. The employee surveys were 75% for EIRMC, so in that regard she will vote for EIRMC. It's important to note this isn't forever, it's a partner to get us on our feet. The contract will have a set time limit on it.

-Closing Statements and Vote, SHD Board

Tonia asked for a motion.

Dr. Fitzsimmons made a motion that we restart the Management Process. Without a second, the motion dies.

Jaimson motioned to select Star Valley as the management partner of the SCHED, contingent on the negotiation and final board approval of an acceptable management contract. Dr. Fitzsimmons' seconded the motion. Jamison, Dr. Fitzsimmons, Kenda voted in favor. Wendy and Tonia voted nay. Motion passes 3 to 2.

Tonia said she would entertain a motion to adjourn.

Dr. Fitzsimmons said he had something else to say. He's not done throwing molotovs and being rude, sorry. When he ran for this board, he didn't really know what he wanted to do. He thought there was a bunch of things that he could do. He also ran because there was a time when they couldn't fill the ballot. So, he ran and there were certain things that he wanted to do and they haven't been able to do those things. He feels like this vote was the big key thing of everything. He feels like there isn't anything more useful he can do on this board, so he wants to give them his resignation and ask that they put out a call for applicants to fill it. This has nothing to do directly with that letter. He understands you guys are upset about that. Sorry about that, but he did what he thought was right. He's gonna resign from this, for a lot of reasons, as we go forward, he would have to recuse himself from more and more things. He didn't recuse himself tonight, but he's going to recuse himself from everything else by resigning.

A member from the public brought up the difference between Governance and Management. "Truly take that to heart. You are here to Govern. Let your Management team manage."

Tonia said that Dr. Fitzsimmons' resignation was duly noted and thanked him for his service.

Dr. Fitzsimmons said thank you and made a motion to adjourn. Kenda seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment –

Tonia Hoffman, Board Chair

Date