

## SCSD9 enrollment is lowest in 30 years

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

**BIG PINEY** – Enrollment at Sublette County School District No. 9 (SCSD9) continues to decline, Superintendent Dr. Charles Jenks reported to the board of trustees on Sept. 20.

The district lost 28 students from the end of the 2021-2022 academic year to the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, Jenks said. Overall student numbers posted at the beginning of the new school year in September stood at 446, the first time in 30 years enrollment dropped below 450, he added.

District administration were able to dig through district records as far back as the 1991-1992 academic year when 640 pupils attended SCSD9 schools.

While the ninth and 10th-grade classes remained large, those grades will “exit” the district in two to three years.

A smaller kindergarten class and de-

creasing enrollment across other grades was “definitely a concern” in terms of school funding because the state’s model is tied directly to the average daily membership, Jenks explained to the board.

Despite the somber news on enrollment, Jenks praised principals at each school for “doing a fantastic job” getting the “school year up and going.”

Each principal deserved gratitude for filling their schools with “positive vibes, enthusiasm and excitement” for the 2022-2023 school year.

He also gave school administrators and teachers a shoutout for putting the professional learning communities program, or PLC, into motion. Jenks hoped the PLC leadership meetings would continue to involve teachers “at a higher level” to improve learning “from the ground up” for students across the district.



CALLY O'HARE PHOTO

**Dave Pauli, director of Wildlife Innovations Humane Society, leads a two-hour trap-release awareness workshop in the Lovatt Room at the Pinedale Library Friday night. More than 20 people attended the hands-on class, where participants learned the mechanics of furbearer and predator traps, such as footholds, snares and conibear body restraints, baiting methods and how to release a stuck dog. Attendees took turns helping a plush husky named Trapper using the common dog leash method, zip ties, trapper's tongs and a variety of cutting devices. Wyoming furbearer season began Oct. 1 but trapping of predatory species such as coyote, jackrabbit, porcupine, raccoon, red fox and skunk is legal year-round. Couldn't make the class but want to learn more? Visit [wyominguntrapped.org](http://wyominguntrapped.org) for more information and instructional videos.**

### Commissioners split Oct. 4 meeting between venues

**PINEDALE** — The Board of Sublette County Commissioners will split the Oct. 4 meeting between two venues, their regular room at the courthouse and the Pinedale Library. The Lovatt Room can accommodate up to 195 people.

The decision to move the meeting was made to accommodate the anticipated crowd for two hot-button topics, the requested conditional use permits and variances for Visionary Communication, LLC's towers and the conditional use permit requested by Jason and Melinda Moyes for Sanctuary Lodge near Rim Station.

The meeting begins at 9 a.m. in the commission chambers at 21 S. Tyler Ave. and reconvenes at 1 p.m. in the Lovatt Room at 155 S. Tyler Ave.

The meeting agenda can be found online at <https://www.sublettewyo.com/AgendaCenter>.

The public can attend remotely via Zoom using the following credentials, meeting ID: 884 4082 3644 and pass-code: 809987.

## Crunching the numbers

*Hospital district owner's rep comfortable with preliminary budget*

By Robert Galbreath, rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com

**PINEDALE** – Early estimates place the cost to construct a critical access hospital and long-term care facility at \$66,997,761, according to a preliminary budget submitted to the Sublette County Hospital District (SHCD) Board of Trustees by its owner's representative, Karl Lueschow of Lueschow Project Management, on Sept. 28.

Lueschow described the budget as a “living document,” subject to change in response to price fluctuations and other variables as the project progresses.

The initial expenditure came in at more than \$71 million. A round of value-added engineering shaved approximately \$4.5 million from the projected price tag, Lueschow said.

Based on the funding available, expenditures came in roughly \$540,000 over budget, or 0.8 percent of the preliminary budget, Lueschow's figures showed.

“For a \$66-million project, that figure is pretty insignificant,” Lueschow said.

Lueschow felt “comfortable” with the preliminary budget figures and stated that both the revenue and expenditure “looked good.”

Strategies for cutting costs during the value-added engineering process included

reducing plans for exterior design and landscaping and cutting back on the use of certain interior decor supplies, Lueschow said. The overall plan for the health-care campus, including “shell space” for an operating room, will not change, he added.

Sources of revenue for the project include the \$32-million loan approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture this spring and the \$20 million pledge from the county along with \$2.2 million in equity from the hospital district.

The SHCD has also applied for a \$10-million health-care infrastructure grant available through the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and allocated by the Wyoming State Loan and Investment (SLIB) Board.

SHCD trustees, administrators, county commissioners, Rep. Albert Sommers and Sen. Dan Dockstader met with several members of the SLIB Board to lobby on behalf of the project, Dave Doorn, SHCD administrator, told the Examiner.

The ARPA grant is still pending and the SLIB Board will meet on Nov. 3 to make a final decision regarding the hospital district's application, Doorn said.

The SLIB board's members include the “top five” individuals in the state's executive branch, said Kari DeWitt, SHCD public relations director and grant writer, including the governor, treasurer, auditor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Secretary of State.

Lueschow collaborated with Layton Construction, the SHCD's construction manager and general contractor, to draft the preliminary budget after Layton received bids from subcontractors for all items on the construction checklist, explained Doorn.

Lueschow and Layton selected the “best bids received so far” to determine the figures in the preliminary budget, Doorn said. Layton and the district have not formally accepted any bids at this time, he added.

The \$66.9-million price tag presented to the board was higher than the amount in the preliminary architectural report compiled by Davis Architects in 2020 that estimated at \$54,629,096.

Doorn attributed the increase in project costs between 2020 to 2022 entirely to inflation of materials and equipment. Certain markets

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# Developing a passion

*FNP Juli Forrester brings pediatric expertise to Sublette County*

By Robert Galbreath, [rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com](mailto:rgalbreath@subletteexaminer.com)

**MARBLETON** – Family Nurse Practitioner Juli Forrester’s path to pediatrics did not follow a straight line.

Forrester began her health-care career as an RN at the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic. Working in a rural setting required nurses to juggle a variety of roles, from taking a patient’s stats during routine office visits to assisting with trauma patients.

“You saw a lot of everything here,” Forrester said.

A hunger for learning and supportive colleagues in Sublette County encouraged Forrester to return to school to pursue a master’s degree and become a family nurse practitioner (FNP).

“We did a lot of primary care and emergency care (at the Marbleton Clinic), so I didn’t have a ton of exposure to pediatrics when I was working as an RN,” said Forrester. “When I went back to school to get my FNP, I did a rotation in pediatrics. It was where I felt I could learn the most.”

FNPs care for “people across their lifespan, from birth to death,” Forrester said. Upon graduation, however, Forrester accepted a job working with a pediatrician in Green River.

Dr. Connie Fauntleroy proved to be a “wonderful mentor,” knowledgeable and passionate about her young patients, and made a “huge impact” on Forrester’s future.

Forrester developed a natural rapport with young people and realized she found her calling in pediatrics.

“I really feel like I had an ability to communicate with the kids and their parents and really understand their needs,” she said. “Kids can’t always tell you what’s wrong with them. I was able to connect with the pediatric population. They’re my people. Pediatrics is just where my heart is – taking care of kids in a family setting.”

Forrester will return to Sublette County in October as a part-time provider offering pediatric care for the Sublette County Hospital District (SCHD), filling in a crucial gap in local health care with her expertise.

“My niche is pediatrics, so I’m thankful for the opportunity to bring some of that care here,” she said. “I lived in Sublette County and had kiddos, and there weren’t any specialists in pediatrics. This will hopefully be a good benefit for people living here to feel comfortable seeking care for their kids locally.”

**The route less traveled**

Initially, Forrester expressed interest in studying athletic training or physical therapy. The Green River High School graduate married a former Big Piney High School Puncher and moved to Sublette County.

Forrester landed a job at the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic, working in medical records at the front desk.

“I remember one day, an emergency walked through the doors,” she said. “One of the nurses came out and handled that situation so well. That was when I knew I wanted to go into the nursing field.”

Inspired by Amy Wiig, a nurse at the clinic, and physician Dr. David Burnett, now medical director at the SCHD, Forrester entered nursing school and graduated as a registered nurse.

An RN position opened at the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic, and Forrester leapt at the opportunity to return to a familiar setting. She quickly settled into her new career.

“I loved being a nurse – just that personal touch and the flexibility that comes with the job, because you can do so many different things,” she said.

A desire to further her education led Forrester to enroll at Frontier Nursing University in Kentucky to pursue a master’s degree in nursing and a career as an FNP.

The university was the “first midwife college in the country” and “focused on underserved and rural communities,” Forrester said.

“That was a big draw for me.”

Graduate school combined “didactic learning” in the classroom with clinical hours in a variety of settings, from pediatrics to women’s health and psychiatric care, explained Forrester.

Training to become an FNP “builds upon your working knowledge as an RN” to develop the skills to make clinical decisions as a provider, Forrester added. Her wealth of experiences as an RN at the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic, where “anything could come through the door,” gave Forrester a leg up at graduate school.

“Working in Sublette County was a huge asset to my knowledge base,” she said.

Following graduation as an FNP, Forrester practiced with Dr. Fauntleroy, a pediatrician in Green River with years of experience in the field.

“I was intimidated at first because Dr. Fauntleroy was so smart,” said Forrester. “I wanted to learn and she wanted to teach, so we developed a beautiful relationship. She taught me so many little things, little subtleties that you look for in kids, that I didn’t necessarily learn in my didactic course work that I never would have been attuned to.”

Dr. Fauntleroy also possessed the humility to admit when she was stumped by something new or unique, and taught Forrester to collaborate with others to find the answer.

**Therapeutic communication**



ROBERT GALBREATH PHOTO

**Family Nurse Practitioner Juli Forrester, FNP, APRN, joins the Sublette County Health team as a pediatrics provider.**

“Kids are not going to tell you everything. You really have to be good at getting that information from them to puzzle-piece things together.”

**Juli Forrester, FNP, APRN**

A successful practice is based on maintaining communication between the provider and patient. Forrester relies on a concept called “therapeutic communication” or “shared decision making” with her young patients and their families.

Caring for children can be a challenge, especially when they are in pain or ill.

“Kids are not going to tell you everything,” said Forrester. “You really have to be good at getting that information from them to puzzle-piece things together.”

Part of therapeutic communication is the ability to explain complicated medical concepts at a level the child and their caregivers can understand, Forrester said.

Therapeutic communication also means listening to questions and giving patients and their family the information necessary to make informed decisions about their own health care, she said.

Developing rapport with each child involves meeting them on their unique individual terms. Take drawing blood, for example.

“Most kids hate getting their blood drawn,” said Forrester. “You have to learn each child’s style, because some kids are

very black and white and want to know everything that is happening and others just say, ‘Okay, it’s just going to be a little prick.’”

Forrester also emphasizes preventative care in her practice and the importance of catching potential medical conditions when children are young to try and avert serious illness or complications in the future.

“You intervene early so you’re not seeing somebody down the road when they are maybe 30 (with certain medical conditions) and it was something you could have addressed when they were much younger and could have made a difference,” she said.

In addition to Wiig, Dr. Fontleroy and Dr. Burnett, Forrester gave a shoutout to her husband for his support over the years.

“He’s always been the one to let me chase my dreams, even if sometimes they might seem far-fetched.”

When not at work, Forrester enjoys spending time with family and outdoor activities like hunting, fishing and running.

To make a pediatric appointment with Juli Forrester, FNP, APRN, contact either the Marbleton-Big Piney Clinic at 307-276-3306 or the Pinedale Clinic at 307-367-4133.

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# Hospital district

Continued from **Front Page**

like mechanical systems spiked by up to 30 percent during the period, he added.

Lueschow expressed optimism that commodity prices, particularly lumber and wood, are “stabilizing.” Products are more readily available as supply chain issues are reduced, he added.

Steel suppliers are “searching and hungry for work,” Lueschow told the board, and he hoped the improving steel market would have a positive “ripple effect” on other goods.

Doom thanked Lueschow, Davis Architects, the Sublette Center and SCHD for working together to cut the original \$71-million expenditure down to \$66.9 million.

Lueschow briefly reviewed the construction timeline with SCHD trustees. Plans for demolition of the old ballpark and public health building are slated to start this fall, along with the relocation of the irrigation ditch.

### Contract with Chartis

Trustees passed a unanimous motion to engage with The Chartis Group, a health-care consulting firm, for \$125,000 to develop policies the district will need to operate as a critical access hospital.

Chartis requires an initial minimum fee of \$125,000, said Mike Hunsaker, chief operating officer for the SCHD and Star Valley Health (SVH), the SCHD’s management partner.

Hunsaker stressed the need for up-to-date policies to address an array of issues, from board governance to compliance with state and federal health-care regulations, patient and visitation rights, human resources, laboratory and radiology.

The new hospital in Riverton contracted with Chartis to develop its policies and create flowcharts and budgets, Hunsaker told trustees. Star Valley Health also used Chartis during the construction of its critical access hospital, he added.



COURTESY DAVIS ARCHITECTS

The architect's rendering of the entrance to the emergency room and critical access hospital.

Hunsaker characterized SVH’s experience with Chartis as positive. He said the company had a “great reputation” and was “on top” of state and federal regulations.

The “sky is the limit” as far as the services Chartis offers to help hospitals get off the ground, Hunsaker said. The company employs physicians, nurses, attorneys and chief medical officers as consultants.

Policies protected staff and provided a level of comfort to patients that providers and employees are following current regulations.

Leah Moeller, the SCHD’s attorney, told trustees sound policies were crucial to “fall back on” during litigation. A “correctly done” set of policies would “pay off in the long run,” she said.

SCHD Trustee Dave Bell raised concerns about an outside company he was not familiar with potentially interfering with clinical staff in Sublette County. He asked Hunsaker if Chartis was able to travel to Sublette County

and spend time with staff and develop a proposal based on local needs.

While Hunsaker was not able to commit to an onsite visit by Chartis, Zoom meetings were certainly possible. Opportunities existed for the SCHD to have “extensive conversations” with Chartis to develop a scope of work that fit Sublette County, Hunsaker added.

Doom described the process of writing policies as a “monumental task.” Sharon Rutsch, SCHD clinical services coordinator and laboratory director, was willing to take the lead in working with Chartis, he added.

The process of “merging two groups of people” – SCHD and Sublette Center staff – requires a volume of new human resources policies, Rutsch noted. The delay in construction over the winter months provided a good opportunity to begin the process of working on policies with a company like Chartis, she said.

Hiring an outside consultant to develop

policies came as a “relief” to SCHD employees rather than a burden, said DeWitt.

Dawn Walker, administrator at the Sublette Center, told trustees state and federal health-care regulations are constantly changing, forcing her to spend significant time outside regular work hours to write policies. Poor policies lead to penalties and liabilities down the road, Walker added.

### Additional SCHD updates

The Sublette Center’s attorney Nick Healey submitted a draft of the latest merger agreement for the SCHD’s lawyers to review. Moeller said she and her staff were going through the fine print before redrafting certain items and sending it back to the Sublette Center.

The SCHD trustees passed a unanimous motion to transfer \$500,000 from its reserves to its regular account to help the SCHD financially until it receives a significant tax payment expected from the county in November.

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## Weather for Sublette County, WY

Oct. 4 – Oct. 10

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 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>64°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>33°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>68°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>35°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>67°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>34°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>66°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>35°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>61°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>29°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>62°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>30°</b></p>	 <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>63°</b></p> <p style="font-size: 1.5em;"><b>29°</b></p>
<p>Precip: 0%                  Wind: WNW 7 mph                  UV Index: 4 Moderate</p>						