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WTIC Posted - $22.25

THE SNYDER DAILY NEWS

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Home Of Tywayne Rivers

Between county, hospital board...

Bill-payment bickering continues

By Wade Warren
SDN Managing Editor

A request to speed up payroll checks to emergency room physicians again opened up the legality question of when Cogdell Memorial Hospital board members approve bills for payment.

Dr. Mark Weaver asked fellow board members to consider exempting the paychecks of the ER physicians from the process of the hospital financial committee certifying the checks because of the delay in paying ER physicians for their services.

The certification process sometimes causes a three-week delay in the physicians getting their payroll checks, hospital controller Selina McGuire added. "With the board's approval, maybe we can speed up the process."

Board member Stanley Martin made the motion to okay the exemption, and Dr. Weaver seconded it.

Before a vote was taken, which was not on the posted agenda, board member Dink Foree said the exemption would be illegal.

"It's a violation of the law," said Foree.

"I disagree with you Dink. We've received an attorney general's opinion, but I don't believe it was the lawmakers intent to have a board review each bill for payment."

"I don't think the way we certify bills is illegal," countered Weaver.

"It's in the state statutes that the board must certify the bills before payment," replied Foree.

"I don't believe that," said Weaver.

"Well, it's there in black and white," said Foree.

"I'm perfectly willing to go to court to defend our process," Weaver added. "It may be the only way to resolve this."

"That could happen," said Foree.

After his appointment to the hospital board a year ago, Foree first questioned the legality of the board okaying bills for payment after the fact.

The board then changed the process and a financial committee, composed of two hospital board members and the county auditor, now reviews each bill, and then certifies them for payment.

Board president Jim Bob Cave referred to a statement County Judge Ricky Fritz made in commissioners court Tuesday prior to appointing a new board member.

Fritz said a meeting was held with County Attorney Mike Hartman, Cogdell attorney Mike Reed and a representative from the attorney general's office concerning the way the bills are paid.

"It was stated in the newspaper that there was this meeting. To my knowledge, it never occurred, and if it did, the results were not given to me," Cave said.

"I'd like to ask each commissioner here if they think it is illegal," Cave said.

Precinct 4 commissioner Chloanne Lindsey, Precinct 3 commissioner Howard Limmer and Precinct 1 commissioner Ralph Trevey were all at the meeting.

Lindsey said she did not feel the commissioners could even discuss the matter since it was not an agenda item.

Limmer said he was certain the board could not act on the exemption motion since it was not listed on the agenda.

Cave said he was in agreement and the motion and second were withdrawn.

Weaver then told the commissioners that "at some point, the county commissioners will have to tell us if we're violating the law."

"I'm going to ask every month until you tell us how you feel," Weaver said in directing his statement to the commissioners present.

"The board is doing what is necessary to run the hospital smoothly," Cave said. "Some time or another, common sense is going to have to be used (in the bill-paying process). I don't feel a single member of this board is trying to violate the law."

Martin, who along with Cave was re-appointed to the board Tuesday by the commissioners court, said he was thankful for the appointment, and added the hospital has an opportunity to grow and be an area-wide health provider.

"But the only way this is going to happen is if we get past this petty bickering," Martin said. "We need to get past being vindictive."

Directing his comments to the commissioners, Martin said communications between them and the hospital board is a two-way street.

"From here to the courthouse, and from the courthouse to here. Let's get past this childish bickering...this is done past ridiculous," Martin said.

"I feel like a 56-year-old man being chastised by a bunch of second graders," added Cave.

The board is expected to consider the exemption for the emergency room physician paychecks when it meets on Jan. 27.

In the only action item this morning, the board approved the November financial statements as presented by McGuire.

McGuire said the average daily census for November was 16.3, an increase of three over October.

McGuire reported the hospital had a cash balance of $2.3 million at the end of November.

Cave presided at the meeting and all board members were in attendance to include Weaver, Martin, Foree and E.D. Walton.

CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES — Construction on a 22,000 square foot Best Western motel on East Coliseum Drive continues. Workers with Danny Flatt Backhoe are shown putting up a marker for a water line. Pictured from left are Brandon Allston, Bubba Doty, Dewayne Williams and Ray Cargal. A completion date is set for June. (SDN Staff Photo)

Local year-end bank deposits remain same level as in 1998

While some experts predicted that large sums of money would be pulled from banks because of Y2K fears, year-end deposits at Snyder financial institutions remained the same as last year.

Total deposits in the four Snyder banks on the final day of 1999 were $223.3 million, the same figure that was reported on the last day of 1998.

Snyder National Bank and American State Bank both reported year-end deposit gains when compared to the previous year.

Snyder National deposits were $92.2 million, an increase of $4.4 million when evaluated against the close of 1998. When compared to the third quarter of 1999, SNB deposits were up $3.5 million.

American State Bank deposits were $20.2 million at year's end, an increase of $3.1 million when compared to the last day of 1998. The year-end deposit figure for ASB increased $100,000 since the close of the third quarter when deposits were $20.1 million.

Deposits at West Texas State Bank totaled $78 million, a drop of $5.7 million when compared to the end of 1998, and a drop of $200,000 since the close of the year's third quarter.

Texas Savings Bank reported year-end deposits of $32.9 million, a decline of $1.8 million when compared to the close of 1998, and a drop of $600,000 since the end of 1999's third quarter.

Total loans in Snyder were reported at $104.9 million, an increase of $8.4 million since Dec. 31, 1998 when combined loans were $96.5 million.

Loans at West Texas State Bank totaled $45.5 million, an increase of $6.8 million over the figure reported at the close of the previous year. Total loans were up $2.8 million when compared to the end of the third period of 1999.

Year-end loans at Snyder National totaled $28.3 million, an increase of $1.8 million when compared to the end of 1998, and a decrease of $200,000 since the third reporting period of 1999.

Texas Savings Bank loans totaled $31.1 million, a drop of $200,000 from a year ago, and an increase of $1.1 million since the close of 1999's third quarter.

First American Bank does not report individual branch figures.

Reno okays decision to send Elian home to father in Cuba

MIAMI (AP) — The U.S. government's decision to send 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez back to Cuba sparked angry protests in Miami, a rally in Cuba attended by Fidel Castro and comment from the White House. But Attorney General Janet Reno today said she approved of the decision.

Elian simply went to school on Wednesday, spending the day the decision was made in first grade as reporters staked out his location and the international tug-of-war over his future raged on. Protests continued today with a traffic tieup on a major highway.

"He doesn't know what is going on," said Marisleysis Gonzalez, a cousin. "We don't want to make him feel bad."

On NBC's "Today" show this morning, she said the boy hasn't been told of the decision because it may not prove final. Referring to his survival two days at sea, she said, "There's been a miracle. I still have hope there will be another one."

"It's very hard for us to tell him he has to go back," she said.

Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Doris Meissner announced the government's decision Wednesday, saying the boy and his father, Juan Miguel Gonzalez, had a "close and continuous relationship" even though the boy's parents were divorced.

Meissner said the elder Gonzalez "made it very clear that he wants Elian returned to him as soon as possible." She said the child must be back in Cuba by Jan. 14.

The decision was denounced by lawyers for the boy's U.S. relatives, who asked Reno to reverse the decision and planned to ask a federal judge for a restraining order.

At her weekly news conference today, Reno virtually closed the door on any chance she would reverse the INS decision. "Based on all the information we have to date, I see no basis for reversing," Reno said.

Attempt to get food stamps results in grand jury charge

A 37-year-old Snyder man, indicted by the Scurry County grand jury Tuesday for falsifying statements in order to obtain food stamps, was arrested Wednesday night.

Rudy Duckworth was arrested at his residence at 931 N. Ave. Q by deputies.

The indictment charges that Duckworth reported two persons were living in his household who were actually living elsewhere.

THE SDN COLUMN

By Roy McQueen

The feller on Deep Creek says, "The good ole days is when you dialed a number and actually got to talk to a real person."

You can tell the New Year has arrived. All those ads offering help to shed unwanted holiday pounds have returned in force.

Across the FAX machine came a diet that may be worth trying.

A doctor in Las Vegas says that watching show girls can actually help you lose weight.

A physician to entertainers in Las Vegas for 11 years, he is the doctor behind a new video called, "The Las Vegas Showgirl's Fat-Burning Workout and Weight Loss Secrets."

Four hand-picked show girls and their instructor reveal their unique fat-burning workouts, plus sizzling bun and thigh routine.

The doc says it is guaranteed to make your blood rise regardless of whether you're participating in the workout or merely watching it. Described as a way to lose weight in a sexy and dynamic routine, the doc says the message is that getting fit can be fun.

Watching the video may indeed be good for increase heart palpitations, but close watching may result in eyestrain.

The video may be more economical than going to the beauty shop – especially if you choose one of those places frequented by Hollywood stars.

CBS is refusing to pick up the tab for making Jodie Foster look her absolute best.

The actress recently appeared on "60 Minutes II," and sent the network a bill to pay for her $12,000 hair and make-up makeover. Yep, you read it right, twelve thousand bucks.

Network executives are asking for more documentation before the bill can be paid.

Now we understand the concept of getting an estimate before body repair work is done.

Politics are in full force. We liked the following story, and you can change the political party to fit your individual leanings.

It seems that during a holiday gathering, two neighbors got into a debate about presidential politics.

One guy was asked why he was such a dedicated Republican. He answered that his father and grandfather before him were both Republicans, and he was carrying on the family tradition.

The neighbor was stunned. "That's it? What if your father and grandfather had been horse thieves?"

"Well," replied his neighbor, "I suppose then I'd be a Democrat like you."

ASK US

Q.- How much of the $55,000 loss at the WTC golf course was the buyout of the previous ground superintendent's contract?

A.-Half of the $20,195 settlement, that included unused vacation time, was charged to golf course operations.

FORECAST - ALMANAC

Snyder Temps: High Wednesday, 60 degrees; low, 25; 7 a.m. Thursday, 25; no precipitation; total for 2000, .11 of an inch.

Area Forecast: Tonight, fair skies. Low, 20-25. NE wind 10-20 mph. Friday, partly cloudy. High near 50. E wind 10-15 mph

Jordan Gafford
Partly Cloudy

Sunset: 5:57 p.m.
Sunrise: 7:44 a.m.
Of 5 days in 2000, the sun has shone 5 days in Snyder.

TODAY'S THOUGHT

Before proceeding, one must reach.
—West African Proverb