

Three Rivers Hospital

Community Forum

October 22, 2015

Minutes

Three Rivers Hospital convened a public community forum at 5:09 p.m. Thursday, October 22, 2015 in the Liberty Bell High School Library, 24 Twin Lakes Road, Winthrop WA 98862.

A quorum of the Board of Commissioners was present, including:

Vicki Orford, Chair
Mike Pruett, Member
Cherri Thomas, Member

Others present:

J. Scott Graham, Chief Executive Officer
Melanie Neddo, Chief Operating Officer
Terri Orford, Business Development Coordinator
Jennifer Marshall, Administrative Assistant
Dr. Allison Fitzgerald, M.D.
Bud Hufnagel
Joanne Hufnagel
Ann McCreary, Methow Valley News

Welcome

T. Orford began the forum by welcoming residents. She introduced the board members and S. Graham.

Presentation

S. Graham explained the history of the hospital and the services offered. The presentation (see attached) outlined finances, issues with reimbursement from Medicare and Medicaid, possible effects on the community if the hospital closes, efforts Three Rivers is making to improve services and quality, and capital needs.

M. Pruett noted that it can be difficult to effectively staff ERs in rural areas. Going with a group like Coast to Coast allows the hospital to offer more consistency to patients. The goal is to have a stable group of predictable providers, and so far there has been favorable feedback from staff and patients. One resident asked what Coast to Coast does. It's a physician-owned group that staffs with board-certified physicians. They work with hospitals in rural areas nationwide. Dr. Fitzgerald believes the physicians are doing a great job and are committed to involving the medical staff.

S. Graham explained the levy propositions. One resident asked how much money the one-year levy would raise. Based on the current number of taxpayers in the district, the temporary levy would generate about \$1.8 million. Another resident asked how long this levy would take the hospital into the future if it passes. With the planned improvements, the hospital building could last at least 30-40 more years. What would the cost be for a new, modern facility? S. Graham said it cost \$21 million to build the new Coulee Medical Center in 2009. B. Hufnagel, past administrator, estimated it would cost upward of \$30-40 million now. The hospital is working with an energy efficiency and construction company named McKinstry to assess all of the needed repairs. One resident pointed out that upgrading the HVAC system would also help the facility save money on energy costs.

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Q&A

One resident stated that everyone has a common interest in having a good facility in Brewster, because residents and visitors here are taken to Three Rivers. As we saw this summer, during fires Three Rivers might be the only accessible hospital.

The resident asked how many beds there are in Brewster, Omak, and Tonasket. Three Rivers' average daily census for the last six months has been about 4.5 inpatients. Our cap as a Critical Access Hospital is 25 beds. Tonasket has similar volumes and beds. T. Orford thinks Three Rivers and North Valley hospitals may see an increase in swing bed patients, and less acute care, as patients want to recover closer to home from larger facilities where they had procedures done.

Many people now don't seek health care because insurance costs are much higher.

One resident asked if the hospital administration has any inkling from the community as to their support for the levies. S. Graham has heard a lot of neutral comments and some supportive comments, but not a lot of negative. There are people who don't want to pay higher taxes. The resident said he would much rather pay for a one-year levy than a debt service over a period of time, like bonds. He also thinks the levy lid lift amount is reasonable.

Dr. Fitzgerald asked about the votes needed to pass the levies. The one-year excess levy requires a supermajority vote of at least 60% to pass, while the levy lid lift needs a 50% simple majority vote.

S. Graham thanked everyone for coming and asking questions. He ended the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Vicki Orford, Chair

Tracy Shrable, Secretary

Mike Pruett, Member

Cherri Thomas, Member