Columbia Health District Board Makes Decisions

The Columbia Health District Board of Directors took several actions Feb. 3 to stop a tax for a hospital, while protecting Public Health Services and beginning work on a countywide Health District.

With a motion made by Vice Chair Gary Heide, the Board eliminated any tax for a hospital, but set a levy of $.0771 per $1,000 to protect Public Health services from having to absorb CHD Board costs.

The lower levy would cover the costs of the CHD Board, such as maintaining public access to records, the annual audit, election costs, other costs of doing business as the Public Health Authority and acting as the Board of Health for Columbia County.

Heide also directed staff to begin investigation of a Columbia Health District that would be contiguous with the boundaries of Columbia County, and continue to serve as the Public Health Authority for the county.

"I want to look at the possibilities of replacing the district with a countywide district for public health services only," said Heide.

The motion passed unanimously.

Resolution 2011-01

Earlier in the meeting the Board approved Resolution 2011-01 that memorialized the actions taken since the passage of Measure 5-209: 1. The hospital project shall remain abandoned; 2. CHD shall continue the public health authority through an intergovernmental agreement with Columbia County; 3. The District will attempt to sell the hospital property and 4. The District will prepare and adopt a supplement budget for the current year to effectuate the Resolution.

The Resolution was adopted unanimously by the Board, as was a calendar for the Supplemental Budget.

Supplemental Budget

Thalia Piano, Fiscal Manager, explained to the Board that since the hospital project and all its expenses are closed out, she is preparing a supplemental budget, rather than a "budget revision," which normally happens mid-year. She said she is continuing to budget for minimal costs associated with maintaining the site, including security, wetland and irrigation system maintenance.

A tax limit of $.38 per $1,000 was passed by voters in 2004 to build a hospital. In November 2010 voters approved Measure 5-209, reversing their support of the hospital, following the State of Oregon's proposed denial of a certificate of need.

Land Committee Appointees

In other business, the Board appointed four community members to the Land Disposition Committee – Larry Karnoski, Pat Cunningham, Ellen Lager and Dan Garrison. They join two board members, Heide and Lisa Galovich.

Karen Ladd, Public Health Administrator, reported to the Board that the new Governor's proposed biennial budget is out, "and we are waiting for more information from the State on how Kitzhaber's proposed budget impacts our programs."

The Board approved a budget calendar for the upcoming year and accepted the Annual Audit report for FY 2010.

The Board also moved from two meetings a month to one business meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month, 5:30 PM in the public health meeting room at 2370 Gable Road, St. Helens. Chair Jay Tappan said that because the Board's work has been reduced, there is no reason to schedule work sessions every month. They also accepted the resignation of Board Member Laura Tomanka, who wrote that she had stayed on the board through the end of the hospital project, but now had pressing family issues.

Free Child Safety Seat Check-up

Columbia County Safe Kids, in partnership with Alliance for Community Traffic Safety (ACTS Oregon) and several community partners will hold a child safety seat check up event on Thursday, February 10, 2011, from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The free clinic will be held in St. Helens at the St. Helens Fire Station, 105 S. 12th Street, St. Helens.

The clinic provides an opportunity to have a child safety seat checked by a certified technician, who can correct misuse, help with installation and teach you how to correctly install the seat. Technicians can also check for seat recalls. There is no cost to have a technician check your child safety seats. Please plan to spend 30-60 minutes at the event.

Additionally, through a grant funded by the Oregon Department of Transportation, Columbia County Safe Kids is also able to provide low-cost child safety seats to families in need. Families who receive Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) should contact their worker about payment for a seat. For more information about the clinic or the Columbia County child safety seat program, please contact the Commission on Children and Families at 503-397-7211.

Flu Shots Available

Although it is late in the season, it is not too late to get an annual flu shot.

Public Health has plenty of flu vaccine available and is encouraging people to get their shots if they haven't already. Immunity begins about two weeks after a shot, which would protect people during the winter/spring flu season.

Anyone wishing an appointment or more information can call Mary Altenheim, immunization coordinator at Public Health, 503-397-4651, ext. 2016.

Vernonia Schools had a home removed from the new school construction site in late January. The home was being transported to Scappoose, but ran into some trouble crossing the green bridge on Highway 47 in Vernonia. The structure was too tall to fit the clearance on the bridge and, after becoming stuck, workers had to cut away parts of the building before they could proceed, delaying traffic for almost an hour.