

Center: Wev's stinging comments come at a sensitive time

Continued from Page A1



Colin Murphey/The Astorian

The crisis respite center in Warrenton is for sale.

CEO, countered. "What we had done is worked ourselves into being in a really unworkable situation with Clatsop Behavioral Health."

Wev's stinging comments come at a sensitive time for regional health care and mental health administrators in the Oregon Health Plan, the state's version of Medicaid for low-income and disabled patients.

GOBHI and Portland-based Moda Inc. are competing with the Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization to oversee the Oregon Health Plan in Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook counties.

The Oregon Health Authority is expected to award the contract in July, and it is possible the state could allow both to serve the counties.

The competition has drawn concern from county commissioners and some health care and mental health providers who question whether it makes sense for the region to have two coordinated care organizations.

Launched by the state in 2012, coordinated care orga-

nizations essentially function as regional health care managers, working with providers to improve prevention, manage chronic illness and reduce costs in Medicaid.

The jockeying over the past several months has hinted at the potential for disruption.

The Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization, for example, has chosen CareOregon to administer financing for Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare — Clatsop County's mental health contractor, which operates the crisis respite center — start-

ing in June. GOBHI has long held that role.

"The state is requiring coordinated care organizations to 'double down' on better integration of care and benefits between medical and behavioral health services in 2020," Mimi Haley, the CEO of Columbia Pacific, said in an email about the switch. "This integration, now, allows us to propel the kind of coordination that our members expect and deserve."

Earlier this year, GOBHI announced it would put the crisis respite center build-

ing on Marlin Avenue up for sale. Bonnie Thompson, the director of health system improvements at GOBHI, also stepped down from the board.

The coalition behind the respite center had intended to put the operation of the facility out for bid this year, inviting competition to Clatsop

Behavioral Healthcare. But Monica Steele, the interim county manager, said that process is on hold given the uncertainty over the building sale.

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has the first option to buy the respite center. The agency is interested in purchasing the building and preserving crisis care and residential treatment at the 16-bed facility.

"It's a valuable service to our community," Amy Baker, the agency's executive director, said. "We've seen some really impressive successes with clients."

Campbell, GOBHI's CEO, said GOBHI remains in the coalition behind the respite center. But he tried to explain to Wev on Wednesday night why a broader role was unworkable.

GOBHI was charged with overseeing Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare's performance, owned the building

that housed the respite center and had a vote on the board.

"We simply stepped back from taking a decision-making role or having a vote, to try to give some space to all that was going on around the respite center at that point in time," he told county commissioners.

GOBHI only expected to own the respite center building for a year or two, he said, before selling it to Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare or another provider.

Campbell insisted "we in no way, shape or form intended to pull the rug out from under the coalition."

Wev wasn't buying it. "I'm sorry. I simply believe that you pulled the rug out on us," the commissioner said, adding the moves had caused GOBHI "a lot of ill will in the community."

"I'm sorry for doing that," Campbell said. "I apologize on behalf of myself and the (GOBHI) board."

Trial: Copell, Wilkins will be sentenced in June

Continued from Page A1

Howard Vinge, 71, was beaten to death inside his RV in September 2016. His body was dumped several days later down an embankment along U.S. Highway 30 east of Astoria.

Copell and Wilkins, who had lived with Vinge for about two months before his death, took his RV and a sedan. The couple abandoned the RV after it broke down on U.S. Highway 26 near Hamlet and drove the car to Arizona, where they were arrested.

Copell and Wilkins both face a minimum of 25 years in prison. They will be sentenced in June.

Beau Peterson and Scott McCracken, who are deputy district attorneys, prosecuted the case. The Clatsop County Major Crimes Team investigated.

"Beau and Scott did a great job," District Attorney Ron Brown said. "They worked really hard."

Brown also credited the major crimes team for gathering the voluminous amount of evidence that helped lead to the guilty verdict.

Alexander Hamalian, Copell's attorney, said he will likely appeal.

Copell had an earlier charge of hindering prosecution dismissed. Oregon has no statute for aiding and abetting after the fact, Hamalian said, and a question for the higher courts could be whether the case should have proceeded after the hindering prosecution charge was dropped.

"I would be pretty shocked if there wasn't an opinion one way or another offered by the Court of Appeals, if not the Supreme Court," he said.

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