

NOTICES: Residents asked to leave home

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Although legally defined differences exist between nursing home care and assisted living, family members of the affected residents say that Marathon, the company that originally managed WVSL, assured them that even if their loved ones' needs exceeded the care parameters offered by WVSL, the residents could live out their days at the facility, as though "grandfathered in."

In a May 25 letter addressed to Wallowa County Health Care District board members and the Wallowa Memorial Hospital administrator (Larry Davy), members of two of the affected families named a Marathon employee whom they said made the families that promise.

In March 2014 the health care district contracted with Artegan, a Vancouver, Washington-based firm, to succeed Marathon as WVSL's manager. While Artegan co-owner Warren Page and Jennifer Olson, WVSL executive director, have yet to discuss the situation concerning former nursing home residents with the Marathon employee who was named, both say that no written record of any such promise exists. Olson also said the person named was actually only an independent intermediary working for Marathon through the transition phase from the old nursing home, and not a permanent Marathon employee.

"We've tried to make it a point to keep our residents at WVSL as long as we can, but at some point, we can't do it anymore, then we want to find the best suitable care," Page said. He also said it was a coincidence that the three residents happened to arrive at their respective higher care needs at the same time.

Both Page and Olson said this is the first time that WVSL residents have reached a care level beyond the level the facility can provide. Olson said that the 30-day notification letters did not come out of the blue. "We've been having these conversations with the families for about six months. We have policies and procedures because we know it's incredibly difficult to find resources here. We don't walk up to people and just hand them a letter and say 'sorry,'" Olson said.

The families who wrote the May 25 letter asked that the issue be placed on the agenda at the June 22 Wallowa County Health Care District board meeting.

Olson thinks some community involvement might be a good thing. "There is still a number of people that we're missing serving. There's a large base of people that both (Joseph assisted living center) Alpine House and us cover, but there's still a number of people who need higher care than we are unable to serve. Maybe it's time we all get together and figure out what to do."

LODGE: Piece of history for sale

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They advertise widely and, for instance, currently have advertisements for Wallowa Lake Lodge in both the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

"We have a good track record of selling properties," said NW Realty Marketing CEO John Rosenthal. "We've got the environmental report, zoning plans, a pretty good package (of information) on the property. The way we add value is by telling the story of the property and exposing it to a broad base of potential buyers."

Rosenthal tells the story of Wallowa Lake Lodge in a lush, full-color, 20-page, on-line magazine.

"I think it's one of the best (advertising packages) I've done in 28 years," said Rosenthal. "There was a good story to tell on this. This is probably one of the more interesting properties I've sold. It's amazing."

That amazing story went out in 20 bid packages in early June and about 75 individuals asked for catalogs before the ads in the NY Times and Wall Street Journal came out.

Rosenthal expects to sell Wallowa Lake Lodge just as he has the large timber tracts he made his bones on when he first started. "I often have far more buyers than properties to sell them," he said.

Oregon property is easy to sell, he said, and as for Wallowa Lake Lodge, he's pleased with the historic and cultural value of the property.



Courtesy photo

The Wallowa Lake Lodge lobby.

ty (it was featured in the PBS Special "The Great Lodges of the National Parks"), the resort commercial zoning (condos, conference halls, more commercial business sites are all possible), the fact that it sits right on the edge of one of the premier fishing lakes in the United States, that it is adjacent to the most popular state park in Eastern Oregon, the fact that the Wallowas are one of the Seven Wonders of Oregon — and beyond all that, he thinks it's priced low and ready to boom.

"I think if you were to have to replace that property today you would be at nearly twice (the starting bid price) — not counting the price of the land," Rosenthal said. "I think Steve Larson had a legacy there of what he wanted; he did very little marketing. I think a new owner would expand marketing."

Whichever way the new owner goes, the lodge is an easy entry property. A management team is already in

place — and booking a record number of visitors this year.

Cosgrove said 2015 is "shaping up to be the best year we've had since 2008."

"The reservation book is very full and June business is way up," Cosgrove said. "July, August, and September take care of themselves, but we're booking in October already."

The Seven Wonders campaign has been a big plus for the lodge and Wallowa County in general, Cosgrove said. "Seven out of 10 of your reservations are people who have never been here before or haven't been here for 10 to 20 years," she said. "Of course, we have many, many guests who are clockwork regulars — that's always wonderful."

Potential buyers will begin arriving the weekend of June 20-21 for scheduled inspections of the property, but they are expected to fit into the ambiance and will not be disrupting the experience of regular guests, said Cosgrove.

Cosgrove and the core

WATER: Project bid lowers costs

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The 57 new fire hydrants will improve the city's Insurance Services Office (ISO) fire rating, eventually resulting in lower insurance rates on homes in the district, according to City Administrator Michele Young.

"The city ought to be really, really happy," said City Engineer Troy Baker, "You got a good bid and a good contractor."

Oregon revised statutes require that Baker investigate Warrington Construction to make sure that proper licensing, record of performance, own-

ership/access to needed equipment and personnel, and reputation for responsibility were all up to snuff. Baker found the company to have "excellent references and an excellent track record."

As a result the city signed the required "responsibility determination form" on June 8 and Baker departed immediately to submit the form to the Oregon Construction Contractors Board.


Other bidders now have seven days to protest the award, after which time Warrington Construction can begin preparing for

the project.

The Davis Bacon Monitoring Award in the amount of \$15,000 went to North East Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD). NEOEDD will monitor wages for workers on the project.

The organization recently monitored the Wallowa City Water Project. "We've been doing a lot of Community Development Block Grant Administration work, lately," said Sara Miller, economic development specialist for NEOEDD.


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staff are hoping that, whatever their broad plans for the property may be, the new owners will continue to preserve the lodge. Zwerling has assured them that most of the potential buyers are thinking of doing just that, Cosgrove said.

"I want to assure people that the current acting owner, Marc, is doing his very best to get the lodge sold to someone who wants the lodge to continue intact," Cosgrove said. "A wonderful thing about the lodge is that it's so unique and special and — despite being smaller than some National Parks lodges — grand in scope; it's a piece of history and we're doing our best to preserve it."

But preservation doesn't preclude a full house and plenty of activity. Staff just finished a big landscaping project, re-grading and sur-

facing of the parking lot, and repainting the surface of the lodge to prepare for the season.

As much as they love visitors, this isn't work done just so that newcomers can admire the lodge, Cosgrove said. The lodge is a Wallowa County treasure and locals are encouraged to continue to enjoy it as their own.

"We're open seven days a week for breakfast and dinner throughout the season," Cosgrove said, "and that's open to the public, so we would love to see more locals come up and eat with us. We have the best restaurant staff — our food is five-star. Our head chef, Norman Senn, is magnificent."

The Wallowa Lake Lodge Auction catalog on the site rmnw-auctions.com, can be reached directly at tinyurl.com/qghqgh8.

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