

CLINIC

Continued from Page A1 amount of debt," said Nic Powers, CEO of Winding Waters.

Chantay Jett, executive director at Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness, said her organization may join Winding Waters in seeking financing as one entity.

"Two balance sheets are better than one," she said.

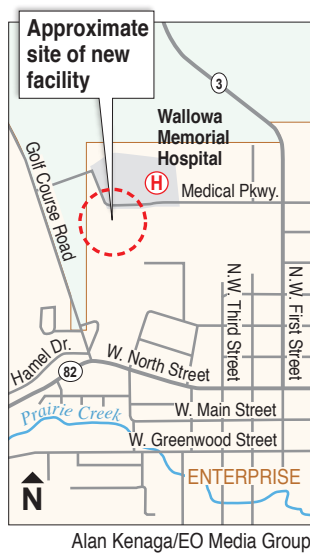
The project has also received the go-ahead from city of Enterprise planning and zoning officials, according to Jett.

"Everything is about where we expected to be this far into the process," she said.

On the drawing board is a 15,000 square-foot facility that would house medical services, mental health services, a teaching kitchen, child and family resource center and a dentist.

The clinic will be built so that an additional 2,000 square-feet can be added easily.

A groundbreaking was held this past summer at the 3.2-acre clinic site adjacent to the Winding Waters parking lot. It is



now being allowed to percolate to solve some of the high water table issues.

In addition to gaging potential final support, Wilson was also charged with bringing back concerns regarding the project that might have surfaced in his community conversations.

Wilson said overall, the center for wellness receives high marks, but he noted a troubling number of people said they

FUNDRAISER IN THE WORKS

Although few details have been determined, Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness is planning a major fundraising event Feb. 3 at the Wallowa Lake Lodge. The event would include a dinner and auction, as well as a raffle for a deer tag.

The center's executive director Chantay Jett said the plan was to auction off six to eight dinner or brunch events, similar to previous fundraisers that have featured "lunch with Gayle Swart."

Swart is a long-time county resident known for hospitality and a willingness to donate her time and talent.

"Everyone remembers those events fondly," Jett said. The event would be the kickoff to an annual fundraiser, such as the Wallowa Valley Health Care Foundation and other organizations hold.

The center's steering committee would help organize the events and in some cases host.

Committee members include Gay Behnke Angie Lundy, Bob Crawford, Nic Powers, Diane Daggett, Janet Graham, Carl Lincoln, Bridget Brown, Marla Dotson, Mike Wilson and Jett.

were unaware of the center's role in the community. Another area of concern is the stigma attached to seeking mental health services in the county.

Wilson said he had residents tell him they sought treatment outside of the county to avoid having their car sit in front of the clinic located adjacent to the Wallowa County Circuit Court building.

Jett said work has already begun on raising the center's profile in the community. A

branding and marketing company has been retained to identify goals for educating the community and creating a new logo.

The clinic employs 70 individuals in five locations with 14 separate programs and a \$2.9 million outlay total for salaries and benefits annually. Total money spent in Wallowa County is \$3.4 million, which is 70.19 percent of the organization's total expenses for 2016-2017.

"We believe in shopping local and have an account anywhere you can have an account in the county," Jett said. "We have a tremendous story to tell, we just have to get out there and tell it."

Among the strategies is a monthly guest column in the Chieftain in which Jett will detail each of the programs the center offers. See Page 4 of this edition.

Changing negative perceptions about seeking mental health services is a considerably bigger challenge, Jett noted.

The new integrated clinic will help because no one will know with certainty why a particular vehicle is in the parking lot. Winding Waters and the center have already been working to integrate medical care with mental health care under a federal grant.

Both Jett and Powers said it has been going well.

If a patient seeking medical care expresses a concern about an addiction, for example, a center for wellness counselor can be brought in seamlessly.

"It's a matter of addressing the whole body and not separating the head from the

body," Jett said.

Additional challenges will be documenting the need for the clinic and quantifying its economic impact on the community.

Jett said her staff has been barely managing being in five locations and said the cramped quarters have impacted morale in the operation. She said every effort would be made to operate as lean a clinic as possible, including office sharing and utilization of pod-based work stations. Supporters have also spent some time strategizing responses to possible opposition to the plan to build the clinic.

Wilson said he didn't detect organized opposition in his interviews, but said it's something that can come up in any capital campaign.

Both Jett and Powers said that as issues have arisen over the years in their operations, every effort has been made to listen to all sides and avoid being defensive and said that was how they would proceed with the clinic project.

Taxpayers would not be required to vote to approve any of the funding sought for the clinic.

State funding request for clinic will wait until 2019

By Paul Wahl
Wallowa County Chieftain

Timing can be as important as substance when requesting direct grant funds from state coffers.

Progenitors of a new integrated health services clinic are discovering that reality.

Wallowa Valley Center for Wellness and Winding Waters are planning to build a combined clinic in Enterprise and are hoping for as much as \$2 million in direct state aid. They had hoped to approach the legislature with the request in 2018; however, it is more likely it will be submitted in 2019 for a variety of reasons.

Those include Measure 101, concern over the state having improperly paid or

allocated around \$186.4 million in Medicaid funds and lingering uncertainty regarding additional funding for this past summer's wildfires.

Each of these could soak up any money that might be on the table to help fund the clinic, supporters of the plan were told recently.

In addition, 2018 is a short session for the legislature. With limited exceptions, the constitutional changes enacted through Measure 71 limit the length of legislative sessions beginning in even-numbered years to 35 calendar days. The 2018 session begins Feb. 5.

State Rep. Greg Barreto and State Sen. Bill Hansell, who represent Wallowa County in Salem, recently suggested the delay in hopes

of more favorable financial conditions.

Barreto and Hansell remain ardent supporters of the project, according to Mike Wilson of Westby Associates of Vancouver, Wash., financial consultant for the clinic who met with both legislators recently.

Both are also recommending the clinic up its request from \$1.5 million to \$2 million.

Both have said they appreciate the fact the funding request is balanced with a strong local commitment, rather than a hand-out.

Measure 101 will be on the ballot Jan. 23. It is designed to repeal five sections of legislation enacted to increase taxes on health care insurers and others to fund gaps in Medicaid. If the referen-

dum is successful, it would cause an immediate \$210 million funding gap for the state, which means projects like the integrated clinic in Wallowa County might be snubbed.

Another \$186 million gap may need to be filled in 2018 as a result of possible overpayments by the state to coordinated care organizations in the state.

Most recipients of Medicaid in Oregon are enrolled in what's called a coordinated care organization, or CCO. It is essentially a regional network of care providers who see Medicaid patients. The state pays the CCO on a per-patient basis each month.

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