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Study lists changes needed to keep Pioneer Memorial abreast of changing times

Improved management, more doctors, and new wing are recommended

Changes in management, new equipment, additional doctors and a new hospital wing will be required in order for Pioneer Memorial Hospital to "continue to effectively serve the health care needs of Morrow County."

These conclusions and others were outlined last Thursday by M.J. Blair, president of the Northwest Medical Foundation, in a report to the Morrow County Court, the Hospital's board of trustees and interested citizens.

Northwest was commissioned to survey the county's health care program and make recommendations towards improving it by the Morrow County Court last fall. A public meeting to go over findings in the 103-page report is tentatively scheduled for Feb. 13 at 7:30 p.m. in the Morrow County Courthouse.

According to the report, "the present situation that exists at Pioneer Memorial Hospital is not one that is unique to Heppner and Morrow County. This problem of antiquated facilities and organization is one that exists in many communities throughout the United States." Over the years, Pioneer Memorial's "facilities were not kept in a state of modern condition, equipment became obsolete and the management of the hospital did not keep up with the level of expertise needed within today's health care industry."

Continued tax support needed

"So, today," the report continues, "there exists a hospital, as well as an organization, that is obsolete to the times—that will require a considerable outlay of money as well as substantial organizational change to bring it to the point where it can continue to effectively serve the health care needs of Morrow County."

The report also concludes that "the community should not expect Pioneer Memorial Hospital to be financially self-sustaining...Northwest Medical Foundation does not see any alternative in the future for discontinuing the hospital's requirement for financial support. However, it is felt that by seeking additional physicians in the community, improving the current services, the fine tuning of current operations and a subsequent increased usage of the hospital...the hospital's dependence on tax support will most likely stabilize or at least increase at a diminishing rate."

In management recommendations, the Northwest report states that "it is imperative that the hospital obtain the services of an executive highly knowledgeable in the health care industry." Such an individual, the report states, should serve either as chairman of the hospital's board of directors or be a counseling member of the board. Another alternative would be to contract with a hospital management corporation, the report stated. At Thursday's meeting, Blair stated that another alternative was to place such an individual in the administrator's position.

In the report's summary of recommendations, it is stated that "hospital management in the future must be under the direction of well-qualified health care professionals, whether the guidance is through board relationships, consultative arrangements or management contract. The

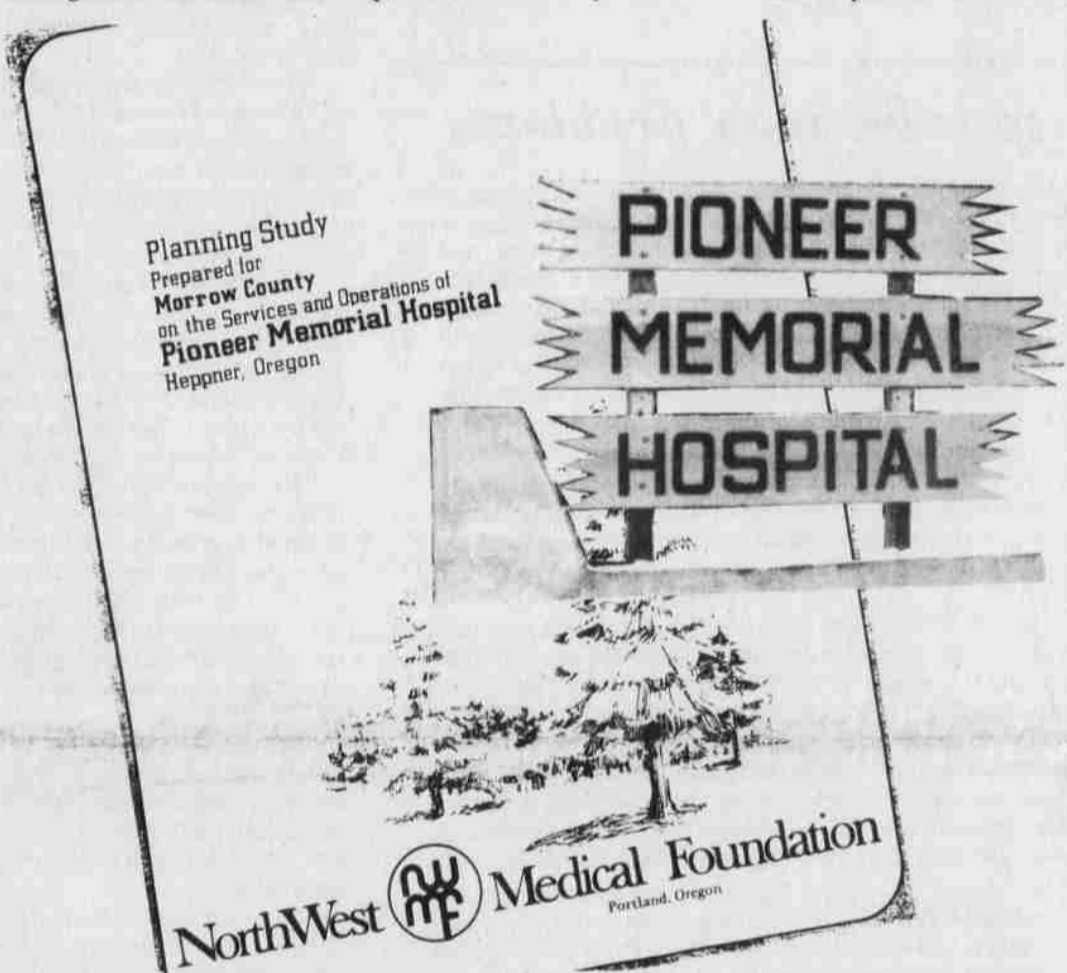
As a result, the uneven physician staffing has worked against the hospital, the report continued, since it "has caused certain citizens to seek regular medical care outside of the community...This loss of potential patients to other hospitals has negatively impaired the overall operations

citizens and their health needs will result in an ever greater division between the north and south parts of Morrow County, with the probable eventuality of split votes eliminating a primary source of financing the health care program..."

When questioned whether it would be possible for North-

The report did include a wide-range survey of community attitudes regarding the hospital, which showed, among other things, that the public has a high regard for the hospital, and "speaks in a commendatory way with respect to the quality of hospital personnel and the level of care provided by them." The report also indicated that the public expressed "a generalized feeling that the services of the hospital are very limited in scope. "Particularly mentioned," the report stated, "were the X-ray facilities as being inadequate and criticism of the conversion of the surgical suite into an emergency department."

A condensed summary of the report's findings is expected to be available for public distribution prior to the Feb. 13 public meeting. The hospital's board of trustees and the county court are expected to meet within the near future to discuss the ramifications of the report.



needs that suggest this plan are most recognizable today and will become more acute with each passing year. This factor, above all others, will do more for the betterment of the hospital...than any other element under discussion in this report."

It should be noted that Northwest Medical Foundation provides management contracting service, and is interested in performing that task for Pioneer Memorial.

More doctors crucial

In terms of doctors needed to serve the hospital, the report stated that the best combination would be one family physician, a second family physician who is also qualified to perform surgery, and an internist. The recruitment of these physicians, according to the report, "should be pursued aggressively."

Heppner's current physicians, in interviews with Northwest personnel, stated that they felt no additional doctors were needed in Heppner, Blair said. But, the Northwest report concluded, obtaining the appropriate mix of physicians in Heppner should not be left "to chance or to the caprices of private health care professions."

According to the report, "the single most overriding factor relating to medical care in Morrow County is the qualifications and availability of physician personnel. Over the years there have been varying numbers of physicians serving Morrow County. At times the availability of medical care has varied due to the number and specialties of physicians and their respective qualifications and interests. This has had a marked impact on the hospital, both in patient activity and financial viability."

and finances of Pioneer Memorial Hospital."

In North Morrow County, Northwest recommended recruiting one family physician and a nurse practitioner or physician's assistant. The report suggested recruiting an additional physician and a part time nurse practitioner for Condon. Fossil should be served by a full-time nurse practitioner resident, with Condon's doctor available for part-time service, the report suggested.

Gilliam and Wheeler County medical needs were taken into account in the report, according to Northwest's recommendations, since the Condon and Fossil areas have traditionally been a part of the hospital's service area. The Condon and Fossil areas, the report concluded, "must be included in the overall plan for their medical well-being, as well as for the economic benefit of Pioneer Memorial Hospital and the overall health care plan of Morrow County. A close relationship between Wheeler and Gilliam counties will be an advantage and benefit to them both and will greatly benefit Morrow County as well."

As far as North Morrow is concerned, the report stated that Irrigon and Boardman area residents "should not be expected to utilize Pioneer Memorial...on a regular basis," since hospitals in Umatilla, Hermiston and the Tri Cities are more accessible. "It's just a matter of geography," Blair told those attending Thursday's meeting.

However, the report noted that it was important for the county to recruit a physician to staff the Boardman clinic. "The Boardman-Irrigon communities," it stated, "must be served in a special way by the health facilities and personnel directed by Morrow County...Ignoring or giving less than careful attention to these

west to recruit the recommended mix of physicians and nurse practitioners, Blair responded that it was "extremely likely."

Pioneer Memorial "should continue as an acute-care hospital serving the general, medical, surgical and obstetrical needs of the south part of Morrow County and also the citizens of Gilliam and Wheeler County..." the report concluded.

In order to do so, and to meet state codes, Blair said that a new wing would be a necessary addition to the hospital's west side. Remodeling the current structure would also be necessary. "We believe the hospital (the building itself) cannot continue as it is," Blair said. "In fact, I think the state wouldn't allow you to, after a while." Blair said his firm had not included a cost estimate for the proposed wing in its report.

Ullman seeks bill forcing Navy payment for use of Boardman Bombing Range

Oregon Congressman Al Ullman introduced legislation Monday that would require the federal government to make payments in lieu of taxes for Navy use of the Boardman bombing range in northeastern Oregon.

Ullman introduced the measure on the opening day of the 96th Congress.

The legislation would include the 47,500-acre bombing range in the existing program of payments in lieu of taxes for federal lands. It would result in annual payments of about \$5,000 to Morrow County.

"This tax-exempt land provides no benefits to the state or Morrow County, but requires expenditure of county funds for highway maintenance, police protection and related services," Ullman said.

Fatality, drug arrest, stolen car among week's police and sheriff's news

A 17-year-old Hermiston girl was killed Friday when she was struck by a pickup truck while hitchhiking along I-80 near the Boardman interchange, state police said.

The victim was identified as

Leona Rose Sturtevant of Hermiston.

Police said Miss Sturtevant was hitchhiking with a female companion when she apparently walked into the path of a westbound pickup driven by

David Jones Jr. of Portland.

No charges were filed. The accident was investigated by the Arlington detachment of the Oregon State Police, assisted by Boardman city officers.

Noel G. Harshman Jr., 22, of Heppner, was lodged in Umatilla County Jail Thursday on a charge of manufacturing a controlled substance—marijuana.

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Morrow County wilderness is topic of Jan. 31 slide presentation and discussion

"The Last of Morrow County's Wild Land," a narrated slide show presented by Heppner's Beryl Stillman, will be shown Wednesday, Jan. 31, from 7 to 9:30 p.m. in the Heppner Elementary Multi-purpose room.

Stillman, a spokesman for conservation interests and the state project manager for the Elk Foundation, said his slide presentation can help the public visualize areas that will be affected in the Forest Service's upcoming land use plan for the Heppner District of the Umatilla National Forest.

Slides will include the wild-

life, plants and landscapes found in the Heppner District. Stillman will give his interpretation of how the Forest Service's land use plan will affect these resources.

By viewing his presentation, citizens should be better equipped "to make up their own minds" on proposed Forest Service land use planning, Stillman said. Stillman stated that current land management proposals "may soon greatly diminish any opportunity for you and especially your children to ever see wildlife like this in their natural environment again in Morrow County."

In addition to covering

alternatives to the proposed land use plan, Stillman will give a presentation on the

RARE II roadless areas. The slide show is free and open to everyone.

Inside:

Heppner's flood plain

A look at Heppner's flood plain—with and without the proposed Willow Creek Dam—appears on the front of the Gazette-Time's second section this week.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials were in town last week to deliver the new flood plain designations which will be used by the Flood Insurance Administration. Corps officials also spoke on the proposed Willow Creek Dam project.

Our reps in Salem

The Oregon Legislature, meeting in its 60th session, made committee assignments this past week and area legislators are sitting on some important committees. Page 12 and 13 offer an overview of the legislature's opening days.

The week in sports

The Heppner High School Fillies continue to push Pilot Rock in the Columbia Basin Conference Girls Eastern Division standings after last weekend. Coach Sheri Brock's Fillies are 5-1 in league play; Pilot Rock is 5-0.

Results of area high school games and other sports news appears on pages five and six of the first section.

Heppner Elementary, Jr. High discipline policy meet tonight

Discussion of a new Heppner Elementary and Junior High School disciplinary policy will be the subject of a meeting scheduled for tonight (Thursday) in that school's multi-purpose room.

Concerned Parents—a citizens' group formed recently to assist area schools and educators and youth—set the meeting for 7:30 p.m. On hand to discuss the new policy will be Principal Don Cole and district staff members who were instrumental in formation of the policy. They will examine the steps in development of the policy as well as clarify the student conduct code and the discipline options available to school personnel.

The disciplinary policy is an outgrowth of a teacher in-service work day held last year, according to Cole. "Since that time, teachers in the elementary and junior

high school have spent countless hours working on the policy," said Cole, "and we feel it provides consistency throughout the two buildings and clearly defines discipline problems."

Infractions are broken down into three categories: major, such as public vulgarity, profanity, purposeful vandalism, use or possession of drugs and alcohol and skipping school; minor infractions which include disruptive conduct, minor vandalism, theft and cheating; and petty violations such as accidental vulgarity, wearing of hats, etc.

The code outlines suspension and expulsion penalties, or conference needs with parents, as the student infraction warrants.

The presentation by district school personnel will be followed by a question-answer period.