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Gazette Times

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Health district considers $70,000 payment to new Boardman migrant clinic

Morrow County Health District Board member Ed Glenn asked the MCHD board to write a $70,000 check from the district to the newly-established migrant health clinic, Columbia River Community Health Services in Boardman. Glenn also suggested several alternatives, such as a $35,000 payment to CRCHS or $12,000 monthly payments.

Glenn, who is also on the CRCHS board, told MCHD that since Dr. Robert Boss is no longer working as a private health care provider, and has joined with CRCHS, MCHD no longer has a contract with Dr. Boss and should instead pay that money to CRCHS. MCHD currently has a contract with Dr. Boss to provide medical services in Boardman for approximately $144,000 a year (approximately $12,000 a month). Dr. Boss had earlier told MCHD that if he joined with CRCHS, he would terminate his contract with MCHD.

The MCHD Board acknowledged that they had pledged $70,000 to CRCHS and wish to fulfill their pledge, but, with the exception of Glenn, indicated that they first wanted a financial statement from the migrant clinic and proof that CRCHS is indeed operating and has received a federal grant to begin operations. "I'm really reluctant to write a check for $35,000, especially for something we're not sure exists," said Mills. "I think we have to get some documentation," Mills said. "We can't just arbitrarily write them a check." "These are public funds," added MCHD CEO Victor Vander Does.

Glenn told MCHD Board that the clinic opened Jan. 3 and is in dire straits, since they have not yet been able to access federal monies. "I am quite certain they (CRCHS) have a tremendous cash flow problem," said Glenn, who added that he was concerned about the clinic being able to make payroll in January. According to Glenn, CRCHS received none of Dr. Boss' receivables in the transfer of clinic operations from Dr. Boss to CRCHS. He also said that Dr. Boss is renting his medical facility to CRCHS.

Glenn accused the board of trying to get out of its promise and obligations to the north end and the sentiment was somewhat echoed by board member John Prag, Boardman. Board Chair Larry Mills, accused Glenn of having a conflict of interest in representing both boards.

The majority of the board agreed that the health district must determine the status of its contract with Dr. Boss before agreeing to pay monies to CRCHS and suggested that the CRCHS CEO come before the MCHD Board at the next meeting.

Also at the Monday night meeting Prag, who has been on the board four years, submitted his resignation, effective Jan. 10, as he is moving out of the district to the Tri-Cities area. Glenn, who was recently elected the mayor of Boardman, also indicated that he may not run for re-election for the MCHD board because of other obligations, as did Ken Matlack, Irrigon, who was recently elected Morrow County Sheriff. The board decided to advertise the positions, with the intent of filling the spots with people who reside in the resigning board members' areas. "I'd like to see that every community has a representative," said Mills. The MCHD Board plans to interview interested candidates at the next meeting. Candidates must register their intent to run for election by March, with the election of new board members scheduled in May.

In other business, the board:

-learned that the district had a $43,000 deficit for November for a loss of over $116,000 for the year and an average monthly loss of over $23,000.

-learned from Vander Does that the hospital will terminate medical staff privileges for Dr. Kenneth Wenberg at the end of the week unless he is able to obtain malpractice insurance for his private clinic, Willow Creek Clinic in Heppner, by that time. Dr. Wenberg will still be employed as an emergency room physician at the hospital and is covered under the hospital's malpractice insurance in that aspect. This action does not affect Dr. Wenberg's medical license, which is still in effect. Vander Does said that if Dr. Wenberg obtains the insurance, he may reapply for medical staff privileges.

-learned that the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners' granting of a license for a physician's assistant who plans to work for the district is nearing approval.

-approved a contract addendum with the Willow Valley Assisted Living to clarify issues concerning funds during a profitable year. MCHD clarified the contract to state that the assisted living center would be able to keep monies received from grants and bequests, rather than those going to the health district.

County officials sworn in Jan. 3

The newly elected Morrow County officials were sworn in on Monday, Jan. 3 at the Morrow County Courthouse in Heppner. (Back Row L-R): Judson Coppock- surveyor, John Wenholz- commissioner; Kenneth Matlack- sheriff; Greg Sweek- assessor; Terry Tallman- county judge; (Front Row L-R): Charlotte Gray- Justice of the Peace; Gayle Gutierrez- treasurer; and Bobbi Childers- clerk.

Winter snow and temperatures hit Heppner

Chad Doherty, with the City of Heppner, works on shoveling snows that began in Heppner last week. The temperature also dipped this week, down to around 20 degrees Tuesday afternoon.

ALL NEWS AND ADVERTISEMENT DEADLINE:
MONDAYS AT 5:00 P.M.

Pool Calcutta to be held for accident victim

A Pool Calcutta fundraiser will be held on Jan. 16 at Bucknum's in Heppner for Damien Wilhelm. Wilhelm is recovering from injuries sustained in a car accident.

There will be 16 teams, with single elimination, at $5 per stick. A sign-up sheet is a Bucknum's. A team auction will be held at 1 p.m., with Calcutta action beginning afterwards.

For more information, contact Cindy or Crysti at Bucknum's at 676-5274.

Town and Country Jan. 13

"All of Willow Creek Valley and Morrow County is invited to attend the annual Town and Country/Chamber Awards Banquet on Thursday, Jan. 13," says a Chamber spokesperson. A no-host social hour will be at 6 p.m., followed by a prime rib dinner at 7 p.m. The theme is "Together We'll Thrive in 2005."

CenturyTel is sponsoring entertainer Marty Campbell. Campbell is known for his songs about your life, cowboy poetry about people you know and funny stories about your neighbor. His performance at the Newport Chamber of Commerce Annual Awards Banquet was highly acclaimed.

Ken Grieb will do the honors as Master of Ceremonies. The Man, Woman, Educator, Business, Youth of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards will be announced. The Morrow County Fair and Oregon Trail Pro Rodeo Court will also be recognized. As tradition, some lucky person will go home with jewelry donated by Randall and Marlene Peterson of Peterson's Jewelers.

Morrow County Livestock Growers and Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District are holding daytime meetings, open to the public. All are welcome to attend.

Banquet tickets are available at Bank of Eastern Oregon in Heppner and Ione, Murray's Drug and the Heppner Chamber of Commerce.

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