

Kym Clift to replace Houser as CEO



Kym Clift

The Morrow County Health District Board, meeting Monday, October 26, in Irrigon, approved a \$190,000 CEO employment contract for Kym Clift to replace CEO Bob Houser as Morrow County Health District administrator starting mid-December. Houser plans to retire by the end of the year.

Clift is currently employed with Good Samaritan as vice president of operations at their Corvallis campus. She is a fellow of the Health Care Financial Management Association, a fellow of the American College of Health Care Executives, and a Certified Health Care Financial Professional.



Emily (Thompson) Jack

The board also approved a \$40,000 signing bonus for Dr. Emily (Thompson) Jack with \$20,000 paid now and another \$20,000 at the start of her employment as a physician with MCHD. Board Chair John Murray said he suspected she had already received employment offers from various hospitals and wanted to offer her incentives to work in her hometown. Jack, the daughter of Susan and Brian Thompson, Heppner, grew up in Heppner, graduated from Heppner High School and married a local man, Keenan Jack. Murray said Emily Jack currently has about year and a half of her residency left prior to becoming a physician.

Murray commented the board had indicated earlier that they wanted to "grow their own" and added, "And now we have the chance." "I whole heartedly believe

this is a win-win for our community," said board member Andrea Fletcher, via Zoom, commenting to the board that MCHD is in a "health shortage area." "It costs less to offer an incentive versus recruitment," added Chief Financial Officer Nicole Mahoney, who said physician recruitment generally costs about \$30,000-\$40,000.

Board member Aaron Palmquist, Irrigon, said after meeting with Jack, "I can't think of a better investment." Kris Jones, MCHD primary care services manager, added via Zoom, "This is a local asset we can't afford to lose."

Also at the meeting, Houser told the board he had met with Rusty Estes, EMS director, and Jamie Houck, chief nursing officer, regarding the "current shortage of EMS personnel" which sometimes results in the district not being able to transfer patients to other facilities "at certain times." Houser reported three people are enrolled in the basic EMT course and one in the advanced course, all of which will end the first part of December. He said another individual will also be testing with the group for the basic EMT, having taken the course earlier.

Houser also said after review of EMS regulations as well as the Board of Nursing regulations, RNs are allowed "to do transfers alone, depending on the severity of the patient being transferred." "I believe this course of action will get us through until the time that the four-five new EMTs join our ranks," Houser said, adding, "Young people just don't volunteer anymore."

In other business, the board:

- approved extending the contract with Dr. Betsy Anderson for one year.

- learned Houser recommended the board determine the need for recruitment of an MD or midlevel (nurse practitioner or physician assistant) at the Irrigon Medical Clinic, due to David Collins, PA-C leaving at the end of January. He said if the district does not recruit an MD or DO (doctor of osteopathy), "at least one more mid-level will be needed." Dr. Dan Hambleton indicated he would like to work at IMC one or two times a week. However, Dr. Russ Nichols pointed out that Dr. Hambleton working in Irrigon twice a week would

basically "gut" the Pioneer Memorial Clinic schedule and "PMC would have to recruit another mid-level to have adequate coverage." The district's contract with Amanda Fabian, PA-C, is up at the end of May 2021 at IMC and Houser said, "It was unknown if she will be renewing it at this time." According to Houser, it may depend on Fabian's husband accepting employment.

- learned from Houser the following employees are needed: an RN for Pioneer Memorial Hospital, an MA and clinic director for Irrigon Medical Clinic. He said an interview was held the week of October 19 for an IT director and recruitment for a Human Resources assistant is underway. He also noted with the upcoming retirement of Pennie Miller, the district will advertise for a Central Supply staff member.

- heard from Houser Lauren Harris, consultant, will be on site October 19-22, spending two days each at Pioneer Memorial Clinic and Irrigon Medical Clinic, "reviewing processes, schedules, etc." and will present a written report on her findings at the November meeting.

- learned from Houser the business office, consisting of Juli Kennedy, director, Staci Wilson and Dorothy Coffelt, has moved downstairs at PMH and Jamie Houck, CNO, and Mindy Smith, RN, have moved upstairs, giving Houck and Smith better access to the staff, emergency room and patients during the day.

- learned from Chief Financial Officer Mahoney the profit/loss statement for September showed a \$45,027 loss for the month, but a \$113,244 gain for the year, and a \$37,748 average monthly gain. Gross patient revenue was \$1,244,157 for the month, with an \$8,949 provision for bad debts and \$147,989 in contractual

and other adjustments for \$156,938 in total revenue deductions, plus \$185,460 in tax revenue and \$35,027 in other operating revenue for \$1,307,706 in total operating revenue. Employees' salaries and wages came to \$726,153, with employee benefits and taxes coming to \$241,869, with supplies and minor equipment the next highest expenditure at \$151,136. Total operating expenses were \$1,397,648 with a non-operating gain of \$44,915.

- received the following reports: Pioneer Memorial Hospital had five admissions in September, five swing bed skilled admissions, 14 admitted for observation, one admitted for hospital respite, one swing non-skilled admission, 679 total outpatients, with 81 emergency room encounters, 106 x-ray/ultrasound tests, 33 CT scans, one MRI scan, 40 EKG tests, three lower endoscopy procedures, 26 respiratory therapy procedures.

- Home Health had 129 visits; Hospice had four admissions and two deaths; Pharmacy had 2,342 drug doses for \$98,734 in drug revenue.

- Heppner Ambulance had 29 page-outs with 21 transports for \$32,932 in revenue; Boardman Ambulance had 39 page outs with 19 transports for \$37,848 in revenue; Irrigon Ambulance had 21 page-outs with 14 transports for \$23,628 in revenue; Ione had two page-outs with no transports. There were seven life flights.

- Pioneer Memorial Clinic in Heppner had 398 patient visits in September, with 13 new patients, 28 seen by a nurse, 21 no-shows and 37 cancellations; Irrigon Clinic had 452 patient visits with 12 new patients, 176 seen by a nurse and 66 no-shows; Ione Clinic had 56 patient visits, 13 seen by a nurse and zero no-shows.

Schools to reopen Wednesday

Due to Morrow County reporting less than 30 new COVID cases over the past three weeks, and only five cases last week, Morrow County and Ione schools will be able to open using the metrics for low population density counties. Schools will reopen Wednesday, October 28 for in-person learning.

Morrow County schools reported that all schools will be open, but each school will have a slightly different schedule and offerings for their students. Schools will open using the hybrid instructional model and will work toward transitioning students who want to remain using virtual learning to the online program.

The Ione school reported they will still need to require masks and social distancing and will be

disinfecting the facilities often as protocols require. Elementary will attend from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Secondary still remains complicated with the restricted number of people in classrooms and the desire to keep electives available.

Low population density counties are counties with a population density of less than six people per square mile as stated by the Oregon Department of Education.

Do You Have Adequate Cash Reserves?

By Greg Smith

I'm sure many have heard the phrase, "Cash is King." Having adequate savings not only protects a business from unexpected crises like we have been experiencing for the past several months but can reduce an everyday emergency to an easily solvable problem or mere inconvenience.



Greg Smith

While the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected many businesses, this has not been the case for every owner. Some of those we have surveyed report that sales are similar to last year or even record breaking and a percentage of those are considering expanding their operations.

There are several reasons for this. Perhaps they were able to quickly pivot as in the case of some restaurants which rapidly expanded their take-out capabilities. Other types of businesses shifted to online platforms to maintain or increase sales. Some, like grocery stores, greenhouses and hardware stores found themselves in the right business at the right time, benefitting from high demand for their goods and services despite the shutdown. Certainly, the Paycheck Protection and Economic Injury Disaster Loan Programs provided an important lifeline, as well. In most cases, the number one reason businesses are weathering and even thriving during this storm is because they saved enough money to pay three to six months of their expenses even though sales dwindled.

It is more important than ever that cash reserves be established and replenished. To ensure adequate savings, owners should consider it a fixed expense. The adage, "Pay Yourself First," comes into play. Money should be placed in a separate account and a guide established to address what constitutes an emergency specifying when those funds are to be utilized. Savings should always be replenished as quickly as possible to ensure adequate cash is available to meet expenses.

Owners shouldn't be discouraged when they realize the large sum of money needed to have adequate savings. Even a few hundred dollars saved monthly can add up in a year and any amount saved is better than none.

Those businesses which have seen record sales need to be cautious because as the economy returns to "normal," sales may decrease to pre-Covid levels. Owners should curtail spending, build up their reserves, and revisit their business plans monitoring cash flow and sales projections.

Finally, entrepreneurs considering starting a business should reflect on the types of businesses and industries which have been successful and the likely reasons they are rebounding during this crisis. Start-ups need to make certain they are not undercapitalized and might consider waiting for the economy to stabilize prior to launching their business.

Greg Smith is the director of the Eastern Oregon University Small Business Development Center located at 1607 Gekeler Lane, Room 148 in La Grande, OR. If you are seeking free, confidential business advising, please call 541-962-1532 or email cousbdc@gmail.com.

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