

Old building to be sold; first MMH knee surgery performed

Written by April Peregoy

Following a 35-minute executive session during their meeting Tuesday, April 7, members of the East Phillips County Hospital District Board approved the contract with High Plains Center for the Arts on the sale of the former Melissa Memorial Hospital property.

MMH administrator John Ayoub reported the Center for the Arts group's bid of \$200,000 was chosen because it was the highest of the two that were submitted. It also came with \$10,000 earnest money included in the contract.

He added the contract is contingent upon the removal of remaining equipment and records that are still in the building.

More exciting news was given to the board Tuesday night by Ayoub in his administrator's report. In March, Dr. Michael Hajek, an orthopedic surgeon who runs a specialty clinic at MMH, performed the hospital's first real knee surgery—a miniscus removal.

The surgery was done in the operating room and was arthroscopic (minimally invasive with the use of a camera and special tools for operating within the knee).

According to the administrator, the surgical department is also planning its first full knee replacement surgery. It will be done with a full team led by an orthopedic surgeon.

In order to perform the surgery, the hospital is taking steps to develop its surgical program. They include making sure all the equipment and tools necessary are in place, working with anesthesia to make sure they have everything they need, having providers visit with the surgeon and anesthesiologist to ensure the hospital can provide the follow-up care, training the surgical team and all of the accounting/billing and other logistical pieces that go along with a new service/surgery.

Another step was taken during March to get the new Electronic Medical Records system going as well. EMR cabling was installed throughout the clinic and hospital, putting the district one month ahead of its original schedule.

Ayoub noted the EMR system will be used and maintained in the clinic, but will allow a patient's medical chart to be pulled from anywhere in the hospital if needed.

Staff and web site updates

In staff news, EPCHD allowed an extension on the contract it has with interim CFO Jim Rush. Ayoub reported there is an applicant he has chosen for a second interview, but added he and the board agree they do not want to rush the process of finding and hiring the appropriate candidate.

MMH also continues to look for a new lab manager and is now looking for a physical therapy assistant as well.

Dr. Robert S. Pace, an allergy and immunology specialist, will no longer have a specialty clinic at MMH. Ayoub said Pace simply did not have enough patients in the area to justify his travels to Holyoke from Greeley every month.

Tim Johnson, director of the MMH radiology dept. and safety officer, will now wear two more hats in addition to his current titles: chemical safety officer and web master.

Ayoub was recently notified the new hospital building will undergo another state survey sometime in the near future, this one to be done by Colorado Dept. of Environmental Health. The survey will study how the hospital deals with hazardous waste disposal.

In response, Johnson was named the chemical safety officer. Ayoub said he is not at all worried about the survey as the hospital already takes great care in the disposal of hazardous waste, and he sees it as a good learning opportunity.

Apparently a man of many talents, Johnson will also act as the hospital district's web master.

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On Thursday, April 23, MMH will launch its new web site which will be more user-friendly and contain updated information.

The web site address will remain the same, www.melissamemorial.org. Ayoub said Johnson was chosen to maintain the site because he also happens to be very good with computers and technology.

Other business

In other business, EPCHD board members:

- held a 10-minute executive session for the purpose of discussing matters required to be kept confidential by Federal or State law, rules or regulations.

- heard comments from visitor Gib Becker about the possibility of creating a policy that would allow hospital employees a discount for healthcare as a benefit of their employment.

- received a report from Julie Vernon on the business offices.

- reviewed the Treatment of Patients policy report and a report on the policy saying people in the district should have the knowledge necessary for a healthy lifestyle. Both reports were written by Ayoub.

- approved a resolution authorizing UBS to provide the district with monthly statements on its money market account, rather than quarterly.

- heard a report and update from Dr. Dennis Jelden, chief of staff.

- are working with MMH Foundation to plan staff activities for Hospital and Healthcare Week, May 11-15. On the agenda already is a T-shirt design contest and a local massage therapist is coming in one day to offer massages at a discount to the staff. An appreciation night at the Peerless may also be an option.

- were given a report from the Quality Care Committee. It recently invited a patient to talk about his/her experience at MMH. Mostly the patient expressed gratitude for the care received, but a couple of suggestions were made.

Progress continues to be made on getting public opinions with the comment cards that are found in several places around the hospital building and clinic. Utilization of the comment cards is encouraged.

- were notified by the Community Linkage Committee that it still continues to work on contacting local organizations who would be interested in sponsoring medical education classes. Those interested are encouraged to contact Sheryl Farnsworth.

- received updates from the hospital and medical staff bylaws committees. The hospital bylaws are scheduled to be approved at the April 28 board meeting.

- will hold a special board meeting on Friday, April 24 at 12 noon to review the 2008 budget.