

Hospital board reviews 2013 audited financials

Written by Kyle Arnoldy

There were several positive takeaways for the members of the East Phillips County Hospital District after Rick Steen of Eide Bailly presented the 2013 audited financials Tuesday, April 29.

Steen noted that the hospital has 245 days worth of cash on hand, meaning that if revenue stopped, operations could continue for 245 days. Steen stated that this is a good indicator of a strong balance.

Current assets were down from \$5.4 million in 2012 to \$5.1 million in 2013. Melissa Memorial Hospital administrator John Ayoub pointed out that this was due to an outstanding claim from Blue Cross Blue Shield for around \$800,000. It was paid in April and would have made a big difference last year, but will make a big difference this year, according to Ayoub.

The assets side of the balance sheet looks strong, Steen said, with revenue up a little over 9 percent and operating income up nearly 50 percent from 2012. Steen also noted while most hospitals he sees are between 50-60 percent for charges realized, MMH is at 89 percent.

Operation margins and price adjustments continue to be areas Steen suggests MMH look into. Two other areas that were identified and have been discussed in the past deal with the preparation of financial statements and the segregation of duties. With MMH being a smaller facility, the segregation of duties is more difficult than it would be at a larger hospital.

Additions and departures announced

Before digging into the details of Tuesday night's meeting, board members presented Sheryl Farnsworth with flowers and a plaque to thank her for her nearly nine years on the board.

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With Tuesday being her last meeting, board chairman Steve Young said her service to the hospital board is greatly appreciated.

Ayoub also informed board members that the new physician, Alison Lauber, will be settling into town around Memorial Day weekend. She is expected to begin at MMH in June.

The news of the addition to MMH was followed with news of another departure.

“As one provider joins us, it is with a heavy heart that I let you know that Dixie Ishee has tendered her letter of resignation,” Ayoub said.

Ishee offered at least a 60-day notice in her resignation to make the transition as easy as possible. Ayoub mentioned that Ishee wrote a nice letter of resignation, making sure to state that she was not unhappy with the organization or the community.

Instead of finding a new family nurse practitioner to replace Ishee, Ayoub stated that the hospital will shift its strategy and look for a fourth provider instead of a third FNP.

Administrative update

In other business, Ayoub addressed a few operational topics. He noted that the interim tag has been removed for Pat Notter, who is the chief nursing officer.

“I think she has set a good direction for the nursing staff, has implemented a good team concept in terms of nursing leadership and she is certainly well-trusted and well-respected. I have been

pleased with the job she has done,” Ayoub said.

Emily Stevens has been acting as the interim lab manager. Ayoub stated she has signed a contract for no longer than six months to provide solid leadership while the hospital continues to search internally and externally for someone to fill the position more permanently.

Sheri Knight, who has been with the organization for over a decade and signed on as a registered nurse in January, will be stepping in as the director of services. Ayoub said she will provide excellent leadership.

Concerns with patient numbers, credentialing expressed

Board member Gary Rahe noted his concern with the financial standing of the organization if visits continue to be low. At the clinic, patient visits are under budget by nearly 200 visits per month, according to Rahe, and he raised questions about how this will affect the financial well-being of the hospital.

Rahe stated that the clinic is not busy but he has heard it is hard to get appointments. While Ayoub stated he isn't too worried about the financial aspect right now, the waiting to get in is what concerns him.

Part of the problem could be that the district is a bit short-staffed—missing three back office personnel and two front office personnel. Ayoub said the problem is more of a public perception issue than a financial issue. Patients need to feel reassured they will get in when they need to and not have to wait for hours before being seen.

Ayoub said it may be too early to say patients are going elsewhere, and hopefully the public is

just healthier right now. Other board members expressed surprise that Rahe had heard of troubles getting appointments.

Issues also rose when the board discussed credentialing for 18 positions. Farnsworth stated she was concerned with the liability that could fall on the board's shoulders. While she had no specific issue with any of those slated for credentialing, she was worried that not everyone on the review committee had the opportunity to view all candidates.

When voting to approve the credentialing, Farnsworth cast the only vote in opposition as members Young, Woody Woodhead, Rahe and Harlan Stern voted in favor of approving credentialing.

Credentialing was approved for Christine Gal, M.D., radiology; Richard Kaplan, M.D., radiology; Gary Kliewer, CRNA, anesthesiology; Emily Lampe, M.D., teleneurology; Theodore Alkousakis, M.D., dermatology; Judd Jensen, M.D., teleneurology; Carolyn Langdoc, M.D., ENT; James Schiefen, D.O., general surgery; Randy S. Taylor, M.D., ENT; James Quillan, M.D., cardiology; Lyle Barksdale, M.D., pathology; Russell Bartt, M.D., teleneurology; Harold Chapel, M.D., cardiology; Judith Corey, M.D., radiology; James Meyer, M.D., sleep study interpretation; Krishna Murthy, M.D., allergist; and Michael Myers, M.D., radiology.

Other business

In other business April 29, board members:

—held two executive sessions, lasting a total of 79 minutes, for the purpose of personnel. A third executive session for seven minutes was held to discuss strategies related to ongoing negotiations.

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—noted the next board meeting will be Tuesday, May 27.

Holyoke Enterprise May 8, 2014