

Pawnee County Commissioners meet with Hays hospital officials regarding SJMH

(re-printed from Jan. 12, 2010 Tiller & Toiler)

The Pawnee County Commissioners and Pawnee County Attorney John Settle met today with several officials from Hays Medical Center and Wichita

attorney Scott Paleki to discuss the status of the negotiations with CKMC and Catholic Health Initiatives regarding the transfer of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital to Pawnee County.

The parties also dis-

cussed issues relating to the operation of the hospital for the benefit of the citizens of Pawnee County and several recommendations and observations of Hays Medical Center officials regarding the physical condition of the SJMH

building and equipment as well as the St. Joseph Family Practice Clinic building.

Hays Medical Center is expected to enter into an agreement with Pawnee County to provide for management and opera-

tion of the facilities and in that regard the parties also discussed issues relating to the needs of Pawnee County citizens as well as Hays Medical Center.

The Pawnee County Commissioners are con-

fidant that the needed infrastructure and all required agreements on behalf of all parties involved will be in place in time for the planned transfer of the SJMH facilities on March 1, 2010.

March 1 deadline still in sight

County Commissioners and Larned City Council meet in joint session

(re-printed from Jan. 19, 2010 Tiller & Toiler)

BY JUDI TABLER

They are looking tired; even exhausted. They look meeting-ed out. But they are making progress and won't stop until it's accomplished.

On Monday, the Larned City Council met in a joint meeting with the Pawnee County Commissioners to discuss the progress and the process being followed to accomplish the transfer of St Joseph Hospital to the Pawnee County Community.

Commissioners Arlis Atteberry, Kathy Bowman, and Donna Pelton wel-

comed the City Council and thanked them for all that they were doing to assure continued health care in Pawnee County.

Those present were Ruth Searight, Pawnee County Clerk, Don Gaddert, Larned City Manager, Bob Pivonka, Larned Mayor, and Larned Councilmen George Elmore, Gary Rainbolt, Anthony Moore, Dennis Wilson, and David Zecha. Pawnee County Attorney John Settle and Larned City Attorney Jerry Larson were also in attendance.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss with the County Commis-

sioners the process and possible options available to fund the hospital acquisition as well as future operations. Because of the potential confidential nature of some of the issues to be discussed the City requested that both bodies move to executive session. There was some discussion of the process and requirements of a joint executive session before both governmental bodies took the action required to move into executive session pursuant to the attorney-client exception.

In meeting with John Settle after the Commis-

sion and City came out of executive session, this reporter asked if "the process was slowing down."

Settle responded, "There is certainly no slowing down going on. The attorneys for Pawnee County and Hays Medical Center met with officials of Central Kansas Medical Center and Catholic Health Initiatives and their attorneys all day last Friday as part of the process. Additional meetings may be necessary and if so they will occur on a very short timetable. Pawnee County as well as Hays Medical Center officials are still on schedule and

doing everything possible to accomplish the community's goal of saving their hospital. It appears that CKMC and CHI are also working hard to complete the transfer and we are very thankful for that".

Settle added, "The Commission will continue aggressively pursuing the completion of both the affiliation agreement with Hays Medical Center

and the agreement with CKMC and CHI that will accomplish the transfer of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital as well as the new clinic building previously operated by St. Joseph Family Practice; all with the March 1 deadline in mind."

Specific information discussed in the executive session was not open for comment.

March 1 closing date still planned

County signs agreement with Hays Medical Center

(re-printed from Feb. 23, 2010 Tiller & Toiler)

The Pawnee County Commissioners signed an Affiliation Agreement today during open session of their regular Monday meeting. The agreement details the terms of the relationship that will exist between Pawnee County, Hays Medical Center, St. Joseph Memorial Hospital and HaysMed Partners - Pawnee County, Inc., once the long awaited transaction concerning the transfer of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital occurs.

The Pawnee County Commissioners have worked for several months with the Pawnee County Community Health Organization and Hays Medical Center to establish the community infrastructure needed to accomplish the goal of acquiring St. Joseph Memorial Hospital and the new medical clinic building which will be operated for the benefit of the citizens of Pawnee County.

The Affiliation Agreement signed by the commission today provides for the structure required by Medicare and Kansas Department of Health and Environment regulations concerning the operation of a rural Critical Access Hospital provider such as SJMH continues to be. The agreement's terms also protect the interests of the citizens of Pawnee County during the future operation of the facility by HaysMed Partners - Pawnee County, Inc.

Hays Medical Center is expected to execute the agreement later this week and under the terms of the agreement will provide for management and operation of the facilities. The Pawnee County Commissioners have been careful to include in the terms of the agreement provisions that will insure the hospital is operated with the community's needs foremost and so that the citizens of Pawnee County will never again face the prospect of losing their community's hospital.

The Pawnee County Commissioners anticipate that all necessary documents relating to the required agreements on behalf of all parties to the transaction will be in place in time to meet the planned March 1, 2010 closing date for the transfer of the hospital and clinic facilities.

Larned hospital open under new management

(re-printed from March 5, 2010 Tiller & Toiler)

BY DAVE RANNEY

Thursday, March 4, 2010

The 25-bed hospital in Larned is under new management and Mayor Bob Pivonka said he couldn't be happier.

"It's very good news," Pivonka said. "Everybody who's been involved in this is satisfied. Things are proceeding as well as anyone expected."

Earlier this week, Hays Medical Center assumed operational responsibility for St. Joseph Memorial Hospital.

"I think they'll do a real good job," Pivonka said.

The Larned hospital had been owned by Central Kansas Medical Center (CKMC) of Great Bend, which in turn is owned by the Denver-based Catholic Health Initiatives chain.

Last June, CKMC officials announced they would close St. Joseph by Sept. 30, saying the hospital had lost money for several years.

The Pawnee County Community Health Organization (CHO) opposed the closing, saying it would put the city and county's residents at risk.

"Early in August attorneys Scott Palecki and Jay Fowler of Wichita recommended we request the help of Kansas Attorney General Steve Six," said Pawnee County Attorney John Settle. "Scott and Jay had come up with a novel legal theory they hoped would help save the hospital," added Settle. "Getting the AG to join us was an important aspect of their strategy."

During the entire process which began last June

Hays Medical Center had been involved with the effort to save health care in Pawnee County. The effort was successful and HMC assumed management of the Larned hospital at 12:01 a.m. March 1.

"That was part of the deal," said Pawnee County Commissioner Arlis Atteberry. "According to KDHE and Medicare regulations there couldn't be a break in services. When the CKMC people left, the Hays Medical people had to be there to take over."

The arrangement, Atteberry said, allowed the hospital to maintain its critical access designation.

The federal designation allows the hospital to bill Medicare for 101 percent of its outpatient, inpatient, laboratory, physical therapy, and post-acute care

costs. The designation is designed to keep small town hospitals economically viable and to ensure that people in rural areas have access to emergency and primary care.

Earlier, CKMC officials had resisted transferring the designation, saying it was assigned to the building and would expire when the hospital closed.

"It was made pretty clear to us that without a critical access license the hospital wouldn't make it," Atteberry said.

"People need to understand that if we'd let the license go, we'd never get it back," he said. "Once it's gone, it's gone. You can't get another one."

Hays Medical Center has agreed to lease the building and equipment for five years.

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