

The Holyoke Enterprise

October 9, 2006

MMH, Foundation work on 'Building a Legacy'

Architectural drawings and material samples of the new Melissa Memorial Hospital are studied by Michael Curtis, vice president of The Neenan Company, pictured at left, and Steve Young, president of the East Phillips County Hospital District board of directors, at the Sunday evening informational program sponsored by Phillips County Healthcare Foundation. -Enterprise photo

By Angela Goldenstein

"We saw the need for a new medical facility. You might say we switched on the lights. We know the drill. We have to hammer away at it and be sure to be on the level with our people. We will have to scrape away the rough spots and smooth things out. We will pry away any mistakes along the way and stick to our determination. You all measure up to the work ahead with the strength of a brick wall. We will keep on truckin' as we climb the ladder of success. When we reach a smooth finish, as with plaster and paint, we can sit back and enjoy a job well done."

Richard Brown, president of the Phillips County Healthcare Foundation (PCHF) closed out a fundraising dinner Sunday, Sept. 24 with those simple words about "Building a Legacy for the Next Generation." That legacy comes in the form of a new hospital building for Holyoke. The new hospital, which will still be named Melissa Memorial Hospital, has been a project in the works for several years. Sunday's dinner, hosted by Phillips County Healthcare Foundation's fundraising committee, was served to over 200 people. Holyoke's original hospital was built in the 1940s as a 10-room hospital that soon outgrew its capabilities. It was in 1965 that the existing Melissa Memorial Hospital was built through the generosity of W.E. Heginbotham. Again, the facility has outgrown its capabilities.

Enter plans for a new facility.

Michael Curtis, vice president of the Neenan Company, was on-hand at Sunday's dinner to explain why Holyoke is in need of a new hospital. Neenan Company is the design/construction firm working with the hospital district to make the new facility a reality. Curtis explained the basic needs the current hospital is unable to provide due to several deficiencies. He listed six main reasons why a new hospital facility is in the best interest of the community, including:

- 1) correct building deficiencies;
- 2) provide new medical services;
- 3) ensure local patient care;
- 4) retain healthcare dollars;
- 5) retain and create jobs;
- 6) sustainability.

Curtis explained a number of issues plague the current hospital building, including poor heating/cooling systems, insufficient space, overcrowding, lack of privacy and inefficiency.

All of these problems, said Curtis, can be solved with the building of a new facility.

Old vs. New

Curtis gave square foot measurements for each of the "trouble" areas in the existing hospital, versus those estimated for the new building, showing an astounding difference. Currently, the imaging department, which has the most potential for growth, according to Curtis, is comprised of 634 sq. ft. The new department will more than quadruple in space, with 2,849 sq. ft. set aside for use. Surgery sits currently at 1,045 sq. ft. and will increase significantly to 4,240, again being a department with great growth potential. In the current lab, technicians are cramped into a 520 sq. ft. space, but can look forward to 1,570 sq. ft. in the new building. Other significant department comparisons include:

Emergency-current 1,805 sq. ft., new 2,738 sq. ft.
In-Patient Rooms-current 4,558 sq. ft., new 8,100 sq. ft.
Specialty Clinics-current 1,344 sq. ft., new 1,794 sq. ft.
Family Practice-current 4,038 sq. ft., new 5,150 sq. ft.
Admissions-current 4,827 sq. ft., new 6,366 sq. ft.

In addition, Curtis noted the hospital will be built to accommodate expansion in several directions. Even the parking issue will be solved, said Curtis, from what is now seven spaces in front of the existing hospital to 170 spaces in front of the new building.

The Road Traveled

Curtis explained the entire process of "Building a Legacy," included a number of things from day one, such as a feasibility study, strategic planning, financial operational modeling, existing and new site assessments, programming planning, and conceptualizing budgets and schedules. From there, the hospital district, including East Phillips County Hospital District (EPCHD) Board members, PCHF members, MMH administrator Arlene Harms, Chief Financial Operator Shelly Larson and other employees of the district, jumped on-board to start the ball rolling.



which
and

That ball rolled first over an audited operational plan. Then, designing a plan with Neenan Company. Along the way, Harms worked diligently on grant applications and a HUD federal loan application to guarantee funding. Harms and EPCHD board members chose HUD because it has a 26 1/2 year loan guarantee and carries a fixed rate and the receipt of the loan dollars will ensure the hospital won't have to ask for a taxpayer obligation. "We've done a lot of due diligence to make sure we can pay for this facility," said Harms. That diligence, she said, will ensure the project is worthwhile.

Funding sources

Of the \$18.2 million projected cost of the hospital campus, \$16.2 million will come from the HUD loan if it is approved, \$500,000 is estimated in community pledges and the remainder comes in employee/vendor contributions and grant funds. Grants from several organizations have come in and others are pending. Colorado State DOLA-EMI has committed \$600,000, Caring for Colorado will give \$50,000, Heginbotham Trust has pledged \$100,000, USDA is giving \$25,000 and Jack Petteys has committed \$10,000 in the form of an employee donation matching fund. Specifically designated for a hospital chapel, donations have come from Holyoke United Methodist Church and St. Patrick's Catholic Church, as well. Additional funds are anticipated from the possible sales of the current hospital building, a home donated to the hospital district and residential lots flanking the new hospital.

Holyoke youth on board with new hospital project

With a huge project last year totalling over \$26,000, Holyoke's FBLA students proved they are on board with the concept of a new hospital by donating all funds to the project. Students Kalin Noel and Elisa Sagehorn spearheaded that FBLA brainchild. This year, Noel and Debbie Moss are continuing that effort and will distribute materials to promote the new hospital project.

In addition, Braden Gift and Philip Krogmeier, through the Holyoke High School TV Productions class, have made a promotional video for MMH. Also, Challengers 4-H Club has presented the district with a \$500 check for the effort. PCHF president Brown commended the youth on their efforts, adding they have set examples we, as adults, should follow.

Foundation urging pledges by Sept. 30

Though the excitement of a new hospital building has remained a euphoria for all involved, a deadline looms. HUD, in order to approve the district's application for funding, has set a Sept. 30 deadline for the hospital to show optimal community support. Pledges are encouraged before the Sept. 30 cut-off, but will still be considered a huge part of the project at any time they are given.

The contributions do not have to be physically made by the Sept. 30 date, but can be pledged in order to make the difference on paper for the project. Contributors actually have up to 24 months to pay their donations in full. Members of PCHF and EPCHD board urge the community to come forward and give. As Harms said, "it's your family, your future, your care and your health."