

Sandra Palmer going back to David City area after year and half here

By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

A new administrator is being sought for Imperial's senior services care facilities—the Imperial Manor and Parkview/Heights.

Sandra Palmer, who's held the position the past year and a half, is returning to a position in David City that she left shortly before moving to Imperial in March 2012.

Until a hiring is made by Rural Health Development (RHD), the company that manages the facilities here, Mike Harris will serve as interim administrator.

Harris has been here before in that capacity.

Palmer's last day is Friday. She will return as administrator right away on Monday at St. Joseph's Villa and Court in David City, another RHD-managed facility.

Palmer said she left the position at St. Joseph's before to take an administrative job at a for-profit facility and found out quickly she preferred the not-for-profit senior care centers.

"I like the more resident-centered care," she said.

And this (Manor, Parkview/Heights) is a resident-centered care facility," she said.

However, when she came to that conclusion in 2012, the job at St. Joseph's was filled. But, RHD was seeking an administrator in Imperial, so she accepted it.

She said this week she hasn't regretted that decision, and has been happy as administrator here.

However, her family is back in the David City area, including her husband and grandchildren.

In her job here as administrator, Palmer has attended meetings of the city council each month.

She gave her final report at this week's meeting Monday night, reviewing the facilities' 2013-14 budget during the required public hearing.

The Manor and the Parkview/Heights facilities operate on a different budget year than the city, starting July 1. The city starts its budget year Oct. 1.

Palmer said their expenses will be up about \$90,000 in the coming year due to several factors including Obamacare, and rising costs for food, other insurance and supplies.

She said they try to watch staffing costs closely, which like most operations, take a big chunk of the budget dollar.

She told the council and mayor Monday one positive factor in staffing costs is that she included zero dollars for "agency" nursing for 2013-14.

This past year, the facilities budgeted over \$35,000 for "agency" staff, which includes nurses and LPNs hired from out of the area due to staffing shortages here, and come with a much higher cost than an employee.

Palmer said CNA classes offered through Mid-Plains Community College have helped bring in additional staffing, and they have recently hired new RNs and LPNs after "aggressive recruitment" through advertising and word-of-mouth.

Having a daycare on site, added a couple of years ago, has also helped keep staff, she said. Those who work at the Manor or Parkview/Heights and all city employees get a break on the

daycare rates, 50 percent of what the public pays, she noted.

While the daycare operates at a loss, Palmer said it helps keep staff at the facilities.

Obamacare and its penalties have also affected the budget, Palmer told the mayor and council. All employees at the facilities are offered health insurance, and pay 30 percent of the policy cost for employee-only coverage. Palmer said the budget is affected by employees who choose not to take the insurance because they will be charged penalties due to the health care law.

In some cases, it's cheaper for the employee to go to the health exchanges. However, Palmer said the facility still gets penalized, although there are four to five conditions in the law regarding this issue.

To cover that, and other additional taxes due to Obama-care, she added \$40,000 more in this year's budget.

Included in the 2013-14 budget are three percent room rate increases across the board. Room rates have not increased since 2010, and that was a recommendation from their auditor, she said.

Staff salaries will also increase by varying percentages, up to three percent, she said, based on evaluations.

As the council reviewed a list of maintenance wishes in the Manor and Parkview/Heights budget, they discussed the request for a new 23 h.p. mower with 48-inch deck, at a cost of \$13,000.

Council member John Arterburn asked whether the city's mowers for the parks could be utilized there, instead of "doubling up" on mowers.

"We're all part of the city, let's be more efficient," he said.

Cemetery board member Jason Francis was at the meeting and noted when he worked in the city's grounds dept., they mowed the Manor grass in the summer, and also said the cemetery has two mowers. Another suggested a cheaper model might be looked at.

Mayor Dwight Coleman agreed, saying "we should look into it."

After the discussion, the budget was approved on a 3-0 vote.

As in previous years, the Manor and Parkview/Heights budget asks for no property tax dollars.

City to start budget work

The council and mayor will meet Monday, July 22, starting at 5 p.m. in the council chambers for budget work.

City Clerk/Administrator Jo Leyland said they won't know the new city valuation figures from the county until Aug. 20.

The city is held to a lid of no more than a 50-cent levy per \$100 of property valuation. As a whole, the city is under a 45-cent lid but gets an extra five cents due to inter-local agreements it operates under for some of its services, such as the solid waste agency with the county.

In her preliminary work, Leyland said she left all property tax requests in each department the same as the 2012-13 year. The city's utility department contributes money to the General Fund, as well, and that figure was also left the same in next year's budget.

At Monday's work session, the council will begin a department-by-department review of their individual budget requests.

In other business Monday, the council approved the city's economic development program's semi-annual report and approved the Airport Authority's request of \$13,000 in property taxes to

support its 2013-14 budget.

That's up \$3,000 from last year due to some airport hangar maintenance repairs needed, Leyland told the council.