

Input to be sought on needs and wants

By Russ Pankonin

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In September 2012, the Chase County Community Hospital board of trustees voted to pursue a \$13 million renovation project.

But in January 2013, they amended that motion, reserving the right to do a further review of plans and make additional changes.

Interim Hospital Administrator Gary Bieganski said Tuesday the board plans to restart the process, starting with an in-depth planning process.

The board had been working with a Grand Island architect who specializes in medical facilities. Bieganski said the architect was already on the 17th version of plans when the board decided in January to take a new look at the process.

He said several board members met recently with BWBR Architects, a St. Paul, Minn., architectural firm with expertise in planning of medical facilities.

The firm already works closely with the Grand Island architect and looks more at needs and wants versus drawing up actual plans.

Future needs

Bieganski expects to have a formal proposal from the planning firm in the next several weeks.

If acceptable, Bieganski expects the board to re-start the entire process, focusing first on planning for future needs of the hospital.

Bieganski said the firm will seek public input through questionnaires and focus groups to determine both wants and needs.

Input from hospital departments and their personnel will also be sought to identify particular needs within the facility.

In addition, BWBR will complete an extensive evaluation of the present facility.

Bieganski said the current facility is now 37 years old so it's prudent to look at the life cycle of existing mechanical and electrical systems within the facility.

Bieganski said Chase County was one of the first rural hospitals to design a facility with private rooms. That became a standard for new hospital buildings.

But today, as a Critical Care Access hospital, Bieganski said the focus has shifted in-patient treatment to about 80 percent out-patient treatment.

The current facility was designed as an in-patient facility.

The trend today leans toward fewer in-patient rooms, but enhancing them by making them bigger and more family friendly.

The larger room size also accommodates the amount of equipment used in the rooms today.

Bieganski said one of the biggest deficiencies in the present rooms is the small size of bathroom and showers, neither of which are handicapped accessible.

By working with BWBR, Bieganski said the board can better address the present and future needs for the long-term viability of the hospital. This will also include how to address the needs of specialty clinic doctors and other visiting services.

He said it's likely that BWBR will have a proposal for consideration at their next board meeting Aug. 22.

Draft included expansion

The plan approved in September 2012 included an expansion west of the clinic building for new patient rooms.

The north wing and part of the west wing of the existing structure were to be remodeled to include new labor and delivery rooms and new office space.

The remainder of the west wing and the south wing would house the CT scanner and a new emergency room.