

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

DOH Officials Plan Visit to Local Hospital

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POMEROY, WA – The Commissioners of Garfield County Hospital District met in special session yesterday to receive more information from the districts’ accountant and architect concerning options for the districts aging hospital facility. Under increasing pressure from the Department of Labor and Industries to improve the facilities electrical system, the district is evaluating a number of options before proceeding with any plan of action.

The concern of the Department focuses on electrical systems in the hospital building which was originally constructed in 1948. The issues are not related to the replacement of an emergency generator in the building earlier this year. Electrical inspectors with the state want the facility to upgrade the entire facility to meet current hospital grade electrical standards or cease using the facility for patient care. Officials with the District argue that, as old as the facility is, there is simply no way those standards can be met without extensive and costly renovation of the existing structure. “This is an old building” said CEO Andrew Craigie. “It was built to different standards. The codes for hospitals today require larger rooms, sinks and toilets in every room, piped in medical gases, and proper air exchanges. This building was just not constructed to meet those requirements.”

At the invitation of the District, inspectors from the Department of Health Construction Review Services office will be visiting the hospital May 11th to perform an assessment of the hospital facility. DOH is the facilities licensing division of the state responsible for issuing licenses to hospitals in Washington. The District filed a request for technical

assistance with DOH in order to get a clear understanding of the expectations from the Department. “We have some concern that the electrical inspector may be pushing us to make changes that are unreasonable given the age of this facility. By having a definitive assessment by DOH, the division that actually licenses hospitals, we expect to have the facts to guide our decision process” said Craigie.

After getting the update from staff and hearing further analysis from the districts’ accountant, the Commissioners put further discussion of options on hold in order to give DOH time to complete their assessment and report their findings back to the District. “We may just be biding time. It is clear that this facility has outlived its useful life as a hospital. Eventually we will have to do something to replace this building.” It may be tuff medicine but the information from the state will help us understand what has to be done and on what timeline” added the Administrator.

In order to keep things moving the Commissioners gave the district administration the approval to proceed with the formation of a Hospital Facilities Advisory Committee. The committee will be a community based advisory group charged with reviewing the options, polling community members and presenting recommendations to the Board of Commissioners should the need to proceed with facility improvement or replacement become necessary. Interested community members are encouraged to contact Andrew Craigie if they wish to serve on the advisory committee.

Also on hand at Thursdays meeting were representatives Apollo Sheet Metal of Kennewick, the contractor charged with installation of a new air handling system for the districts’ long term care building. Company representatives seemed confident that the job can be completed on time and within budget. The replacement is on a fast track in order to beat the spring and summer heat. The complete installation will cost the district

close to \$155,000. The system specified for the facility was chosen, in part, to accommodate alternative uses of the long term care facility should this figure into the future plans of the district.

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Contact: Andrew Craigie 509-566-4120 or 509-254-3248