

Hospital/board passes audit

The Cheyenne County Hospital Board met in regular session on Thursday, July 31, with the chief financial officer for Great Plains Health Alliance there to present the audit.

Dave Dellasega, officer, advised the board as they looked at the audit and financials in the year to come, to look at cash flow instead of the income statement. The critical access status has been important for the small hospitals and they all still need public financial support.

Last year Medicare underpaid the hospital which caused the board to transfer more money than usual. There was more charity written off and the board will tend to see more charity write offs in the future. This is viewed as a community benefit.

The decrease in doubtful accounts or bad debt is due to the funneling of people to the charity care instead of bad debt. There was no system in place to track payments on the in-house bad debt accounts where now the central billing office can track and send reminders if it has not been paid.

In 2007 the total outpatient visits were up but were slower in the in-patient side. Not as much contract labor was used, which is a good thing.

The expenses went up. A lot was due to the hiring of Dr. Rebecca Al-lard, Tyler Raile, Kristle Raile, both physician assistants and Kim Zweg-gardt, anesthesiologist, which are all high salary positions which were added in just one year.

A full-time employee figure per adjusted occupied bed was figured on a percent of salary expense. Cheyenne County Hospital was higher than average, coming in at 50.9 percent and the Great Plains Health Alliance average is 49 percent.

A decrease in charges can make more money on the bottom line. This is why the CAT scan charges were dropped. The key is determining which departments to make decreases but in the long term it will be beneficial to the hospital.

A letter to the board showed that there were no unusual issues with the audit.

President's views

Board president, Jerry Toler, said he wanted to look at alternatives and options that might be opportunities for new services or of benefit to the community that could be offered by the hospital.

One thought would be to discuss positives, negatives and logistics of offering alternative medicine to our community. This might include acupuncture, acupuncturists, and meditation. He said that he has been asked about this particular issue and felt that it warranted discussion.

He has learned that there are some local residents that go out of town for these services and that Medicare pays for some of this type of service. Traci Neitzel, board member, said that the county already has two massage therapists, three chiropractors and one she believes does acupuncture. She feels there are already these small businesses trying to grow and does not want to hinder them. She said she feels that the board is here to focus on our medical doctors. Jane Young, board member, said she personally doesn't want to see the board/hospital spread too thin.

Mr. Toler said he is interested in looking at all the opportunities and would like to carefully explore them.

Financials

The St. Francis Clinic net patient service revenue was up as were the expenses. The Bird City Clinic was also up in the net patient service revenue but was down in expenses.

Administrator's Report

Mr. Lacy reported that the hospital was not awarded tax credits for the obstetrics room remodel project. A discussion was held on how to proceed. He said that there are several deficiencies in the building that affect work issues and patient flow. He suggests having an architect do a facility improvement plan.

We know that the kitchen has to be remodeled, he said. We have privacy issues in patient rooms on surgery days. Mrs. Neitzel said she agreed to have the architect go through and visit with each department and see what would make things more efficient and what the costs will be. The architect can put this into plans and stages and a cost estimate. Mr. Toler said the board could not stall on the kitchen project, it needs to be done, he said. No action was taken.

Mr. Lacy announced that Mila Bandel, registered nurse, has been hired as the county health nurse. She will be starting this new position in September. Mrs. Young asked if Mrs. Bandel would continue to work on the floor. Mr. Lacy said since county health is part-time she would be used in both places.

Mrs. Neitzel asked if Brenda Hays had been replaced. Mr. Lacy said that a nurse from the Kansas City area had been hired. There are currently three people in nursing school with the hospital's support. Jackie John, area director for Great Plains Health Alliance, suggested identifying some of the scholarship efforts with former board member, Swede Calnon's name since he was passionate about training our own staff.

The administrator said congress overrode a veto on bill HR 6331 which included in it the reference lab issue. This will make it possible for the hospital to recover its' cost of doing business for patients who have blood drawn at the clinic, nursing home, in home health, and Bird City after Jan. 1.

Mr Lacy requested that the board approve the addition of shore power necessary to make MRI service available on site, by truck, once a month. We have not had this service for over 10 years. It requires a 5-year contract in which is paid per case. The cost to get the electrical connections is \$5,000. This would be put in on the west end of the hospital. The board approved the cost for the connection.

Earlier, the hospital had two babies born in the same day. The hospital did not have a second fetal heart monitor, which measures the mother's contractions and if there are changes in the baby's heart rate. One was rented from a neighboring hospital.

A refurbished fetal heart monitor like the one at the hospital would cost \$6,494 and a new one is \$10,500. The used monitor does include 1-year parts and labor. The board approved the purchase of a used monitor.

Currently the EGD and colonoscopies are owned by Cheyenne County and Rawlins County. It was in the budget to purchase one for Cheyenne County which saves on the wear and tear of taking them back and forth from one facility to another. To purchase two colonoscopies and one EGD scope would

be \$26,000 or \$24,000 depending on which facility buys the other one out. It was approved to us up to \$26,000 to purchase scopes, with the money coming from funded depreciation.

Editor's note: The above article was taken from the hospital board minutes.

BRIDGE

Continued from Page 1

put in. Mr. Beikman said he still thought there should be a low-water crossing without a culvert.

Mr. Flemming said the first big rain, the culvert held up well, but it was during the second rain that the problems occurred. Had there been more time for the dirt to pack in, he didn't think there would have been the problem.

We would never, Mr. Beikman said, get enough money to put the bridge back in. There isn't enough traffic or people living in that area to get a grant.

Mrs. Holzwarth said that she had been told that when a road is classified as "minimum maintenance," then there is no liability to the county. She said she had heard that the bridge would have probably lasted for several more years.

Mr. Beikman said the state engineer bridge inspector had said the bridge did not meet federal standards and condemned the bridge. The county was to take it out.

Yes, Mr. Flemming said, there is no liability on a road that is posted as a minimum maintained road. However, on a bridge which has been deemed unsafe, the county is liable.

When the water went through, it had washed out the fence the county had previously put in for Mrs. Holzwarth and Mr. Weeden after the bridge had been removed. They wanted the county crew to put

the fence back in as the water had washed some of the posts and wire down stream. The commissioners were reluctant to put in the fence again but Mr. Flemming said, this time, he will put it back in.

Earlier, when the bridge was in place, Mrs. Holzwarth said, the cattle went from one pasture to the other pasture by going under the bridge. With the bridge out and the fence down, Mr. Weeden wondered who would be liable, he or the county, if the cattle got out. The commissioners had no comment.

Club Clip

Lawn Ridge 4-H June

The meeting of the Lawn Ridge 4-H Club was called to order by the president, Heidi Yonkey, on June 17, at the clubhouse. Tristan Archer led the flag salute. Six members and two leaders answered roll call. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved. Bailey Merklin gave the treasurer's report. Penny Archibald gave the leader's report.

Christy Wurm reported on the Tree Planting Committee and the pre-fair fun party was talked about.

Under old business, window paintings for the fair were discussed.

Under new business, Fourth of July "thank you" for a clinic in Iraq was walked about. Members moved and it was seconded to send a goodie bag to this clinic and colored Fourth of July pictures for them.

Taylor Archibald gave a project talk and announcements were read. Bailey led the 4-H Pledge, and the meeting was adjourned.

Archibalds served refreshments.

July

The Lawn Ridge 4-H Club enjoyed a trip to Trenton Lake on July 17 to the 19th. After waiting out the storm, members cooked hamburgers and hot dogs. Friday the 4-H'ers played in the water and later that afternoon drove to McCook to eat and take in a movie. After returning to camp that evening, they all ate s' mores and enjoyed the campfire.

August

The Lawn Ridge 4-H Club held their club tour on Wednesday, Aug. 6, at the fairgrounds.

Members went around to all the projects and everyone took turns telling about their projects.

Sunday afternoon, after eating and cleaning up the food stand, the club held the August meeting.

Heidi Yonkey called the meeting to order. Ten members and two leaders answered roll call.

There was no old business or new business discussed. The leaders reminded everyone to get started on record books.

A thank you and congratulations was given to the members and parents for all the hard work that was put into the fair.

Valerie Wurm, reporter

PHONES

Continued from Page 1

The budget was approved.

Out-of-district student

A letter had been received from Doyle Easter who now lives in Bird City. He asked that his son, Jordan, be allowed to attend the St. Francis schools. The board approved, waiving all tuition charges. Jordan is a previous student in the St. Francis schools.

BOND

Continued from Page 1

ing events and other events such as graduation and alumni gatherings, but will also have an indoor walking track and a room for community gatherings. There will be a place for a concession stand for indoor as well as outdoor events.

With the new gym, there will no longer be a need to play in the grade school gym which is too small and confining for fast moving high school sports. There is also the possibility that regional tournaments will be held in St. Francis.

In the next few months, there will be more information concerning the proposed gym.

T-Minus

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