

Hospital board prepares for new Colorado provider fee legislation

Written by April Peregoy

Preparations are already being made by the East Phillips County Hospital District (EPCHD) Board for new provider fee legislation introduced by Governor Bill Ritter during the last week of February.

The new legislation was discussed at the EPCHD's board meeting Monday night, Feb. 23.

Called the Healthcare Affordability Act, the new bill proposes charging hospitals provider fees, amounting to \$600 million total, to increase the amount of Medicaid reimbursement money that the state receives from the federal government.

Colorado Hospital Association (CHA), the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing and the Governor's Office have been working together for more than nine months to develop the proposal. It is also supported by many of Colorado's medical organizations.

With these provider fees, Colorado can leverage state funds to draw down federal funds at a dollar-for-dollar match to provide coverage to more than 100,000 Coloradans. The plan expands the Children's Health Plan Plus program for kids and pregnant women up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level. It also raises reimbursements for inpatient and outpatient services up to the maximum allowable rate under Medicaid.

Supporters say the increased coverage and reimbursement will reduce the number of uncompensated care incidents—one of the main reasons for cost-shifting to the private sector and the insured.

However, not all hospitals will earn back the money they pay for the provider fees. Smaller hospitals are especially at risk to lose money, according to Melissa Memorial Hospital administrator John Ayoub.

To prevent individual hospitals from suffering under the new legislation, CHA is developing a cooperation mechanism that will allow the funds to be more evenly distributed.

The secondary redistribution pool is a voluntary program that hospitals can participate in to reduce the likelihood of losing money. Through the program, CHA will take money from participants who receive a large amount of it and give it to those who would otherwise lose the money.

Ayoub recommended the EPCHD approve a resolution stating the district will participate in the CHA program, and the board followed his advice.

Updates on new CFO,
physician searches

Progress is being made in the search to find a new CFO as well as a Family Practice physician, reported administrator Ayoub to the EPCHD board at its meeting Monday.

Though no official hiring has taken place yet, Ayoub said he has narrowed the applicant list for the CFO position down to three possible candidates. Interviews are expected to take place within the next week or two, after which Ayoub said he and the board will make their final decision.

An interested physician is coming to Holyoke in April for an on-site interview, according to Ayoub. Dr. John Hall from Illinois has shown an interest in the position, and Ayoub is working to get him in touch with current staff at Family Practice, as well as incoming physician Dr. Danielle McClellan.

In other staff news, MMH is now looking for a new full-time lab manager as well. According to Ayoub, Deb Tatum will continue to work at the lab, but will be taking some time off for personal reasons.

EPCHD, MMHF join forces
to meet mammography goal

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One of the goals of the EPCHD board is to one day be able to offer mammograms at MMH full-time. Currently, they are only offered at the hospital through a mobile clinic.

There are two needs that must be met to make this happen. One is the acquiring of the necessary machinery and equipment. The other is a trained staff member who can perform the mammograms.

To meet the second need, EPCHD is joining forces with Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation to raise money for a scholarship that will be used to train one of the staff members in mammography.

During Dandelion Daze in June, the old hospital building will be opened up for a garage sale-type fund raiser. Ayoub said anything that's still left in the building will be for sale and the money raised will go into the scholarship fund.

Phone survey to take place

A community phone survey, similar to the one held two years ago, will take place later this year, according to Ayoub. It will ask residents questions on various topics about the hospital. The answers will provide the district with hints, tips and suggestions to improve services, as well as comments on satisfaction with current services.

Credentials approved

A long list of credentials that needed to be approved by the board was granted Monday night, pending medical staff approval.

Two-year reappointments included the following: Eric Trefelner, MD—Radiology; Stephen Treat, MD—Cardiology; Carol Deslauriers, CRNA—Anesthesia; Dennis Jelden, MD—Family Practice; Michael Myers, MD—Radiology; Gary Rath, MD—Cardiology; and Doreen Pecar, CRNA—Anesthesia.

New appointments were Lin-Wang Dong, MD—Cardiology; Stephen Volin, MD—OB/GYN; John Harris, MD—PADNET; Maurice Lyons, DO—PADNET; and Gary Bauerle, MD—PADNET.

Those not seeking reappointment included Paul Freda, MD—General Psychiatry; Kathy Meyer, FNP—Family Practice; Robert Devita, CRNA—Anesthesia; Scott Taylor, DPM—Podiatry; and David Slamowitz, MD—Sleep Studies.

Other business

In other business, EPCHD board members:

- agreed to postpone the March board meeting until Tuesday, April 7.
- held a 46-minute executive session.
- approved a five percent raise for administrator John Ayoub, retroactive to January, 2009.
- heard a report from Dietary Manager Linda Alberts.
- received updates on the progress of the hospital and medical staff bylaws committees.
- reviewed a summary of issues brought up by a patient survey conducted by Quality Care Committee. The committee also reviewed with board members its balanced scorecard strategy, and looked into how the quality of each department within the hospital can affect the overall quality of the hospital.