

New hospital district CFO to start soon

Written by April Peregoy

A new CFO has been hired for East Phillips County Hospital District by administrator John Ayoub, who informed hospital board members of the selection at the meeting Wednesday, May 27.

Greg Was will be stepping into the position in the early part of June, said Ayoub, who added Was is very qualified and has excellent experience working in rural health districts. Originally from Buffalo, N.Y., he is moving to Holyoke from Douglas, Ariz., where he oversaw three rural health clinics.

During his time there, Was used the NexGen Software that MMH is currently switching to, and Ayoub cited that as one of the benefits of hiring him.

However, to help ease the transition to a new CFO, Ayoub requested the hospital board pass a resolution to allow interim CFO Jim Rush to stay 30 more days and help Was.

Rush has been the district's interim CFO since January, following the resignation of Shelly Larson.

Ayoub also announced Melissa Memorial Hospital recently welcomed a new lab manager. Cliff Bonner joined the hospital staff Wednesday, May 27. According to Ayoub, he's originally from Georgia, but comes to Holyoke from Texas. He has worked in large, urban hospitals as well as rural ones. "He has a fantastic educational background," said Ayoub, "and was a high-caliber candidate."

He again emphasized the other lab manager, Deb Tatum, is not leaving, but rather stepping back a bit for personal reasons.

In his search to find a new CFO and lab manager, Ayoub contacted several different recruitment firms, agreeing to pay only the one who finds the candidates they hire. On Wednesday night, Ayoub asked the board to pass a resolution allowing him to pay the chosen recruitment firm a total of \$40,000 for both positions.

Possible new physician candidate Dr. John Hall, currently of Illinois, is expected to visit MMH June 12 to tour the facility and meet the staff. Ayoub said he has also initiated preliminary talks with another doctor, just in case things don't work out with Hall.

The administrator is also talking with a pharmacist out of Parker to see if he could step in as the new consultant pharmacist for MMH. The hospital's former consultant pharmacist, who worked for Banner Health, recently resigned his position.

In addition, a discussion was held by board members on Wednesday night regarding possible staff options. Ayoub said, over the past year, the district has seen an increase in patients. As a result, board members are looking at whether the current staff arrangements are sufficient for providing the best care possible, or if changes should be made.

Equipment changes planned

In May, Melissa Memorial Hospital officially made the switch to wireless service in preparation for its transition to an Electronic Medical Records system. Ayoub noted the wireless service is for NexGen software products only. People trying to access the internet from their personal laptops in the hospital will be unable to do so.

The new system will allow doctors to access their patients' medical charts right away from anywhere in the hospital and clinic. It will also allow the hospital to do its own billing rather than rely on another company to do it for them.

The transition to the new system begins this month.

EPCHD is also trying to improve its pager service since there are a few dead spots in the hospital. Ayoub said he hopes the problem can be fixed by simply moving the antenna, but

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added if that doesn't work, they may have to buy new software.

At Wednesday night's meeting, hospital board members approved the purchase of a storage unit to house the district's records. The unit will have temperature and air controls to help preserve the documents.

Ayoub said he is also in negotiations with another organization on the sale of the district's modular clinic.

Staff looks to improve disaster planning, patient satisfaction

The tornado siren that sounded Monday, May 25 turned out to be a blessing in disguise for the hospital, according to Ayoub. It was the first drill the hospital staff has run since the move into the new building.

"It provided us with an opportunity for improving tornado preparedness," said Ayoub, who added, as a result, a tornado drill was planned for the following week. Based on how that drill goes and the drill run on May 25, the staff will be looking at any possible changes that need to be made to improve its reaction.

Also in May, several hospital employees, including Ayoub, attended a live disaster planning and training session at Fort McClellan in Anasin, Ala. The session provided live staging of several different mock disasters and participants had to act out what they should do in those situations.

Ayoub also provided a monitoring report to the board Wednesday night on weekly care conferences being held every Monday. Staff members began holding these conferences last year to discuss patient satisfaction, the reasons people are visiting the hospital and patient statistics such as waiting times.

Ayoub said there has been great participation from the doctors and nurses in these conferences.

HUD requirement unmet

In the loan covenant EPCHD has with HUD on the new facility, there are nine requirements the district must make in order for HUD to consider it financially sound. One of them requires the district to have not more than a one-percent loss in operating revenue for two years.

While EPCHD has recorded a positive net income the last two years, that has included the addition of grants and donations, which are not calculated in operating expenses. Because of this, the district has recorded a loss in its operating revenue the past two years, therefore not meeting the HUD requirement.

Board members agreed Wednesday night to write a letter to HUD explaining how the district plans to meet these requirements in the future. Ayoub said the addition of new doctors and services has attracted more patients, and more revenue, for the hospital—information that will be included in the letter.

Also included will be information on the expected sale of the modular clinic and ways in which the district tries to keep costs to a minimum. Ayoub added he does not expect HUD to take any action against them at this time.

Other business

In other business, EPCHD board members:

- held a 10-minute executive session for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations.
- met new physician, Dr. Danielle McClellan, who will be joining the Family Practice Clinic in

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July. McClellan and her family happened to be visiting the town on Wednesday and stopped by the board meeting to say hello.

—discussed whether to give district employees discounts on medical care received at the hospital or clinic. The idea was brought up by a visitor in attendance at the board's April meeting. Since then, the district's attorney had a memo written up to help them with the issue. However, no decision was made Wednesday night.

—approved the Red Flag Policy mandated by the state to prevent identity theft.

—heard a report from the Community Linkage Committee on an educational session held at Highline Electric Association in May.

—noted Melissa Memorial Hospital Foundation is selling memorial bricks that will be on the clock tower being built as an FBLA project.

—filled out conflict of interest forms.

—took a practice board quality test as part of the 5 Million Lives Campaign.