

St Maries Gazette Record, Thursday, May 27, 2010 – by Chris D’Angelo

## Hospital work continues

Work to design and construct the new hospital and clinic in St. Maries is moving forward as scheduled. After selecting an architect earlier this month, trustees of Benewah Community Hospital will soon decide on a construction management firm to build the facility.

Construction of the project, which could cost as much as \$28.5 million, is expected to begin later this year.

NAC Architecture of Spokane has entered into a joint venture with Gresham, Smith & Partners, a Nashville-based company, to serve as project architects, according to hospital CEO Brian Nall. As for the construction management firm, Mr. Nall says “there is no formal board approval yet.” However a decision is close. “The building committee met and has interviewed three finalists,” Mr. Nall said Monday.

At the top of the committee’s list are Polin & Young Construction of Hayden and Robins & Morton Construction of Tennessee. Should the two firms be chosen, they would also serve as a joint venture for the project.

Having completed topographical surveys of the property, the hospital is in the process of doing “geo-techno soil surveys,” according to Mike LaPlante, chairman of the hospital building committee and a member of the hospital board.

Original plans called for the new clinic to be built over the top of the present facility. Upon completion, the old facility would be demolished and the area would become covered parking underneath the new building. A second plan is now being considered, one which would call for the temporary relocation of the clinic in order to demolish the present building and construct the new facility in its place. This proposal is attractive because it would reduce the time it takes to build the new facility. “We want the construction project to have the least (amount of) phases as possible,” Mr. Nall said. “That way we’ll get the most bang for our buck.”

Regardless of which plan is adopted, Mr. Nall says he expects the hospital will break ground by the end of the year. “We’re at where we wanted to be at this point,” he said. “Each day brings new challenges to overcome but we’re taking them on one at a time and we’re pleased with the way things are going.”

At the peak of construction, Mr. Nall said he expects the project will employ approximately 200 qualified construction workers. Included in the overall project are an expanded emergency department, a new clinic, new private patient rooms and bathrooms, modern exam rooms, updated medical equipment and 75 additional covered parking spaces.

Mr. Nall says the project will bring the 50-year-old hospital building into the 21st century. “The community is going to have a dynamic and good quality project once we’re finished,” he said. The new hospital will be located across the street from the post office and operations will continue through construction.