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Finalists for PMC role to be revealed

Announcement may come in July

POCATELLO — The finalists chosen from several health care systems looking to partner with Portneuf Medical Center could be revealed early next month, an official said Wednesday.

Joe Lupica, president of Stroudwater Capital, said a document called a summary of terms is currently being developed to send to those systems still in the running to partner with PMC. Stroudwater Capital is a consultant firm hired by the county to help find options for the county-owned hospital in the midst of funding uncertainty.

“We want to make sure that we have a clear understanding of their expectations and they have a clear understanding of ours before we announce who the finalists are,” Lupica said.

Lupica, who in the past has declined to say how many health care systems have proposed partnering with PMC, is also silent regarding the number still in the running. He did say representatives from some of those systems are currently conducting second site visits to get more detail about PMC’s operations.

PMC was in the midst of the first phase of a project to consolidate its east and west campuses at its Hospital Way location in early 2007 when a 2006 Idaho Supreme Court decision required future bonding to be put in front of Bannock County voters for approval, thereby making funding subsequent phases difficult.

The Bannock County Commission, to aid in determining the feasibility of the hospital’s plan to finance the project, hired Stroudwater. Earlier this year, Stroudwater determined that PMC could not finance the consolidation project through bonding for several reasons, including a reduction in the hospital’s bond rating late last year.

A few days after Stroudwater’s report, The Bannock County Commission, PMC’s hospital board and a citizen’s advisory committee agreed that the best route for the hospital was to convert it to a private, 501(c)(3) nonprofit and seek out a partner to provide capital.

Proposals from those potential partners were received last month, and negotiations to fine tune possible agreements have been ongoing since then. Lupica said the process is allowing PMC and the Bannock County Commission to take the very best about each system’s proposal and incorporate those attributes into the other proposals.

“We are trying to take the best of each (proposal) and raise them all to a high level,” Lupica said. “We are trying to raise all the proposals to a high standard that will make the decision both difficult and rewarding.”

Lupica said he expects the number of potential partners to be reduced to two or three by early July. “The candidates will then have the opportunity to meet the public in small and large venues,” he said. The finalists to partner with PMC, through a series of public meetings, will then be reduced to a preferred partner.

Dissolution of Bannock County’s governance over PMC, the hospital’s conversion to a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and the preferred partner would then go in front of voters. County officials have said they anticipate those items will be on the November ballot.