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PMC hands over \$1.5 million tax check

County leader lauds hospital's new governance

POCATELLO — Bannock County Commissioner Larry Ghan said Tuesday that he and then fellow commissioners Steve Hadley and Lin Whitworth were faced with a “hundred-year decision” when deciding the future governance of Portneuf Medical Center two years ago.

He said they not only got it right through their diligent process, but that they created a governance plan that is now a model for others throughout the country are asking about.

“We achieved a very innovative outcome,” he said, adding that he gets calls from around the country asking him to discuss the process Bannock County went through.

Ultimately, PMC’s governance, as approved by voters in the fall of 2008, included turning over the hospital’s assets to the Community Benefit Organization, a joint venture owned 77 percent by LHP Hospital Group and 23 percent by a retooled Portneuf Health Care Foundation.

Representatives on the CBO board, however, are equally distributed between PHCF and LHP.

Ghan made his comments Tuesday at a reception during which PMC officials made a presentation of the hospital’s \$1.5 million property tax payment to Bannock County officials.

Dan Moen, LHP’s chief executive officer, said he hoped voters were pleased with the outcome of the partnership.

“As a result of the joint venture, the county didn’t give up control of the hospital. We share governance,” he said. “We at LHP know that while health care is a big business, we also know the best decisions regarding health care are made locally.”

In addition to hospital officials, several community members key in the process were also in attendance at the Rosewood Reception Center Tuesday night, including members of the citizens advisory committee who were acknowledged for their work.

Later in the evening, Norm Stephens, PMC’s chief executive officer, said the transition of governance went as smoothly as he has ever seen it go, and touted what he called a good partnership.

He said everyone is eagerly anticipating the completion of the new hospital, but in the mean time, PMC is pressing forward with the changes it can make today.

“The hospital is not just a building, it’s about the people that take care of the patients,” Stephens said. “We are working with them on processes and quality. We are working on a customer service culture that I think is important if you run a hospital. You need to have a good strong focus on taking care of the patients.”

As far as the new hospital goes, Moen said he expects a July 2011 completion, at the latest.

Shaun Menchaca, PHCF president, said the transition over the past 18 months since the CBO took over governance of PMC has been filled with new experiences.

“We really had to retool our entire organization,” he said. “About 90 percent of our work is different today.”

PHCF was a support vehicle for PMC that raised funds for major projects or equipment purchases. That function remains on a smaller scale through PHCF’s Endowment Board. But what was once 100 percent of PHCF’s function now comprises about 10 percent of its role, Menchaca said.

“It’s been a challenging and exciting year for us,” he said. “We have had a tremendous amount of work to do to transition our organization. We are just really excited about our role in the community at this point.”