

**Twin Falls Times News, Wednesday, Aug. 3, 2011 – by Laurie Welch**

## **Minidoka Hospital Launches \$7 Million Remodel**

RUPERT • The county-owned hospital in Rupert is ready to move ahead with a \$7 million remodeling project.

Minidoka Memorial Officials on Monday accepted a bid for the long-awaited remodel of the hospital's emergency room and exits, hiring Kreizenbeck Constructors of Boise to be the project's general contractor. Minidoka County commissioners gave a unanimous nod to the project Monday as well, hospital Administrator Carl Hanson said.

"We've known that we needed to do a better job with our building," said Hanson. "But it took a little while to save up the cash. We'll never be rolling in money at this hospital."

Starting in 2009, hospital officials worked for more than a year to change hospital governance to a community-owned nonprofit so it could take on long-term debt to fund the project. But a November 2010 vote gave Idaho public hospitals more leeway to take on debt without voter approval.

The bid for the work came in 11 percent higher than anticipated, Hanson said. Work is expected to hit its stride after Labor Day. "I think what we're experiencing is an upward creep in supply costs," he said.

Work on the ER is expected to take about a year. Medical-surgical inpatient rooms will be revamped and the north and south exits will be improved. Various other tweaks are expected to increase employee productivity and patient flow. That work is expected to take an additional 9-10 months.

The emergency department will be moved to the surgery addition prior to ER remodeling to avoid an interruption of emergency or surgical services. "But there will be some inconvenience associated with major construction," Hanson said.

Hanson said DL Evans Bank will loan the hospital nearly \$9.5 million for the improvements, which will also consolidate an existing debt of almost \$4.3 million. The loan has been approved by the Idaho Health Facilities Authority. The hospital, which has already paid \$351,000 for the work, will also apply for a \$500,000 community development block grant through the county. Remaining remodeling costs will come from hospital reserves.

### ***About the Project***

What it does • Brings multiple improvements to the 25-bed Minidoka Memorial Hospital in Rupert, including revamping the emergency room and remodeling exits

What it costs • An expected \$7.13 million

What's next • Pre-construction is scheduled to begin around Aug. 23, with major work starting after Labor Day