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## **Teton Valley hospital to change to nonprofit**

DRIGGS — The Teton County commissioners took the first step in moving the county-run hospital toward being a nonprofit this week. The board agreed unanimously to authorize the execution of a conversion agreement that establishes a framework for Teton Valley Health Care becoming a new nonprofit entity called TVH under Bingham Memorial Hospital.

Teton County Commissioner Bob Benedict, who is also hospital board vice chairman, said he strongly supports proceeding with the agreement. He said it was a road map and not a final contract .

“There are still a lot of details, a lot of work and a lot of opportunity for people to give input,” said Benedict. “For the long-term good this is a way to start investing in the hospital, but still maintain ownership and maintain local control. The liability reduction to the county is significant.”

Commissioners Kelly Park and Kathy Rinaldi agreed. “This is the best bang for our buck without transferring it all on to the taxpayers,” said Rinaldi.

Park said he felt the hospital board looked at all avenues and that he trusts that this is the one that will work best for the community.

The process of actually converting the hospital will take about a year. Rinaldi said the county isn’t simply handing the hospital over to BMH.

In his overview letter to the county commissioners, hospital board chairman Steven Dietrich said there are no guarantees of success, but other options were explored.

“A key component of producing the cash flows necessary for future capital requirements is leveraging the expertise, purchasing power and systems developed by BMH executives and staff to increase efficiencies and revenues at the hospital,” he wrote.

Dietrich said other regional hospitals were studied. Historically TVHC has had a rapport with St. John’s in Jackson, Wyoming, but Dietrich said that working cooperation was damaged somewhat when they made a competitive inroad to manage the main competitor in Teton Valley.

Madison Hospital was also examined, but its entire management team was recently fired.

While Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center was also considered, it is the largest hospital in the area and TVHC already refers and lifeflights patients there. Dietrich said EIRMC kind of looked at TVHC and, said “Why would we want to partner with them when we already get what we want?”

Dietrich said the scope of services would remain similar to what the hospital is now doing. He also said that employees in good standing at the time of the transaction would retain their jobs. Dietrich said he, hospital CEO Virgil Boss and Benedict were going to meet with key providers next Wednesday.

“Everybody from staff to the taxpayer needs to know that we’re not bringing in Bingham to manage the hospital and reduce staff,” said Dietrich.

Dietrich added that if improvements are made and there’s more confidence in the hospital, there could even be staffing increases. Dietrich said that’s not to say there could be some consolidations or cost savings efforts but that Bingham has said from day one that they not about cutting positions.

Bingham has been consulting with TVHC for the past two years. Dietrich said they basically have a two-year running start and a good relationship with the hospital.

TVHC was technically insolvent two years ago and Dietrich said he never wants to go there again.