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Hospital future still at standstill, board gives Northside Clinic update

By Christina Manuel | 03 December 2020 | Reprinted with Permission

As it's now over 17 days past Election Day and votes have been counted, the John C. Fremont (JCF) Healthcare District Board of Directors are still working on a plan to get a new hospital in the county.

Currently, everything is still up in the air as the community of Mariposa indicated a 1 percent sales tax with no termination date was not the way to go.

“We are going back out to the community ...,” said Therese Williams, the director of Public Relations and Community Outreach at JCF. “We’re not giving up. Certainly, the 2030 deadline is real.”

Candy O’Donel-Browne, the board chair at JCF informed the board that both she and Williams met with the Mariposa County Clerk Office to see how viable a special election option is to be held in 2022.

The board of directors have also reached out to legal council and Gary Hicks, the president of G.L. Hicks Financial, a consulting firm, regarding what options they have.

“How much can we spend on the hospital?” O’Donel-Browne is planning to ask Hicks after Thanksgiving, as he will give the board an update if bonds are an option.

“He’s working on it, he has to put all of the numbers together,” said O’Donel-Browne. “We’ll be moving forward with some hard facts, then it’ll make it a little easier.”

After meeting with Hicks the board can move forward to begin discussing the next steps with the ProWest construction team and the Cuningham Group of architects.

“We’re gathering information to be able to present to, to give the update to the community and staff members and community wide,” said Williams.

In regards to community feedback, the board is working with the county clerk to get a clear breakdown of the yes and no votes for Measure N and where they are located.

O’Donel-Browne mentioned because there was no end date to the tax proposed, it will be now set at a 40 year or shorter time frame “if we can pay it off earlier,” she said, if another sales tax option is decided as the way to go.

Once again, the board mentioned how they find it fascinating community members don't mind driving further distances to larger cities with higher sales taxes as opposed to implementing Measure N.

"It would be interesting to know what you're paying for when you go down to Merced," said O'Donel Browne.

The board is still interested in hearing community response as to why those who voted against the measure did so.

"I feel a little more clear as of where we're going now," said O'Donel Browne. "The board has made it pretty clear that we do want to go back to the public and get another vote on this."

Northside Clinic update

Plans for the Northside Clinic have been submitted to the county, according to Kymberly Brownell, the executive assistant to the CEO at JCF. Terry Woodward, the the plant operations manager at JFC left the board meeting early so Brownell provided the updates.

What is currently in the works in the clinic are lowering counters to the 2016 Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and should be completed by the first week of January, said Brownell. "The holidays are what's putting us off a few more days," she said.

Shahriar Tajbakhsh, the acting chief financial officer brought up the point that the time frame is tight with not much wiggle room.

"That Jan. 1 (2021 completion date) is a very light promise because we are waiting for a few contractors, the county and also architects to do what they need to do Then we as a district probably need a week or two to prepare the clinic for occupancy and for accepting patients."

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