

Health district to buy property for new VS medical center

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / Friday, October 16, 2015

A new state-of-the-art medical clinic in Valley Springs could be open as early as the beginning of 2017 as the Mark Twain Health Care District Board of Directors on Wednesday voted to purchase property for the facility and learned a \$6.8 million loan has received initial approval.

The five-member board voted unanimously on a resolution to move forward with the project and purchase the property located at the southwest corner of the State Route 26 and Vista Del Lago Drive intersection. The five directors are Ken McInturf, Peter Oliver, Ann Radford, Lin Reed and Randy Smart.

The 14.4-acre parcel is being purchased from Marvin Stark for \$900,000. Funds for the land purchase are coming from the district's reserves, while a 3.625 percent, 30-year loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development Community Facilities Program will be used to finance construction of the projected 18,000-square foot medical facility.

Before adopting the resolution, the board received a project update from the health care district's Executive Director Dayman Doss and Nathan Morgan and Bob Bliss from Aspen Street Architects.

The board was told Calaveras County has outlined most of its conditions for project approval, while Caltrans is waiting for completion of a traffic impact study before specifying any additional conditions.

"We're off to a good start with them," is how Doss described the health care district's pre-planning and permit process with county officials.

Aspen Street Architects' representatives estimated the worst-case scenario for Caltrans conditions could come to \$200,000 outside the current budget of \$8.9 million for the project.

In addition, Aspen Street Architects will ask the county to modify requirement to extend a sidewalk on the SR26 portion of the property. There is no need for the sidewalk, they said, and that expense is estimated at \$60,000 to \$70,000.

They anticipate the traffic impact study will be done within a month and after further staff review and a 30-day public comment period, the proposed project could go before the Calaveras County Planning Commission in January for consideration.

Another unknown is how Caltrans will deal with a direct access from the project to State Route 26. The access is guaranteed, and would mostly service Phase Two of the project. It is unknown whether Caltrans will allow a left-turn lane off SR26 into the development or limit egress to a right-turn only.

Once the project gains approval, there will be a call for bids and in the meantime, the district will be talking to lenders concerning construction loans, Doss said. Upon the completion of construction, the USDA loan will pay off the construction loan.

The remaining \$1.2 million of the project's cost for furniture, equipment, cabling and internet technology is being financed by Mark Twain Medical Center.

Construction could start in the late spring of 2016. The clinic would be the first phase of a project that could include commercial development such as a hotel, restaurants, grocery store, retail sites and professional offices at the site. There is also talk of having senior-living housing near the clinic.