

# Medical center gets good feedback

By Nick Baptista | The Valley Springs News | Friday, August 7, 2015

Opening a new state-of-the-art medical clinic in Valley Springs took a step forward Wednesday morning as the Mark Twain Health Care District Board of Directors received mostly positive public comments on the proposed project and then adopted a resolution to file an application seeking a federal loan to finance construction.

The health care district is in escrow to purchase 14.44 acres at the southwest intersection of State Route 26 and Vista Del Lago West for the projected 18,000 square-foot clinic and will seek financing through a low-interest loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Daymon Doss, the district's executive director, outlined the proposal to an audience of about a dozen people including county Supervisors Cliff Edson, District 1, and Steve Kearney, District 5, during the meeting inside the La Contenta Events Center.

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.

Doss called those other buildings "possibilities of what could be and no absolutes at this time."

"We have had no discussions with any possible vendors" for the other building sites, Doss added later.

Changing the hotel site to senior citizens housing was a popular idea and Doss said his board was in agreement.

Valley Springs resident Marti Crane said she was glad to see the health care district board has been diligent in looking at uses missing in the community and pursuit of senior housing does not preclude also seeking a hotel.

Civil engineer and former Caltrans employee Gary Caldwell expressed surprise Caltrans would grant access into the development off State Route 26.

"I'm not thrilled having another driveway on 26," he said.

Doss said the access point is one of the contingencies associated with sale of the property and under previous ownership of the property had been agreed to by Caltrans.

Colleen Platt, MyValleySprings.com secretary, said her organization is supportive of the project as it is a logical site for commercial development.

Kearney asked how many new jobs are anticipated with opening a new clinic and Doss estimated staff size would double as new services will be added and the number of office visits should show an increase.

The health care district, Doss said, would purchase the property and a \$6.5 million loan through the USDA would finance construction. The district finished its pre-application process with the USDA and received positive feedback, which is a strong indication the loan will be approved.

At this time, The USDA is issuing 30-year fixed loans at an interest rate of 3.75, he said, which would be “a significant savings to the district.”

The board voted 4-0 to start the loan process with Directors Lin Reed, Ken McInturf, Peter Oliver and Ann Radford supporting the resolution. Director Randy Smart was absent.