



HVAC problems

Last winter, after two atypical winters and during an extended cold temperature period, Ferry County Public Hospital District's hospital building patients, visitors and employees also experienced unacceptable cold indoor temperatures as our newly energy efficient upgraded heating, ventilation & air conditioning (HVAC) system entered its third winter. This began a still-continuing ten-month quest by FCPHD administration and board into the "why of the system underperformance" and the "how to fix it" and the "how to pay for it".

During our August meeting in Curlew, we voted to temporarily close the clinic and terminate our building lease as of the end of September; we cited financial uncertainty, mainly the potential HVAC fix costs, as one of the primary reasons for our action. We believe it is now time to provide an update on the HVAC dilemma.

In a nutshell – the dilemma is still unresolved. Numerous phone conversations, emails, and face-to-face, both on and off-site, meetings have and continue to occur between and among FCPHD, the project contractor, state Department of Enterprise Services (DES), state Department of Health (DOH), state Department of Labor & Industry (L&I), other contractors in consulting roles, and, most recently, our local legislators of which Representative Shelly Short has played a vitally important "action instigating" role.

Basically, we have discovered design and installation problems. The newly installed heat pump system is inadequate for our

temperature range (especially since there is no system supplemental heat on the low end or cooling on the high end), and with the removal of our previous worn out boiler & distribution system, we have no back-up. We have also discovered errors in the regulatory approval process that occurred during the 2014 installation of the new system.

Various fixes have been developed, some estimated less expensive than others and some more complicated than others, but all confirm what we already know - our present system doesn't work as required. Also, all are beyond the financial capability of FCPHD to fix and time is rapidly ending for doing any changes for the upcoming winter. If the coming winter is like the more typical last winter, we could be faced with out-moving hospital patients and an emergency room closure. This would be catastrophic for the community & FCPHD.

The state DES is considering three plans developed by a consulting contractor and a payment solution for implementing a plan. The hospital is also conducting multi-agency worst case scenario evacuation drills to be prepared for the coming winter months ahead, just in case.

Our status continues as "great uncertainty" but moving painstakingly slowly forward to solution as we continue on FCPHD's mission "To strengthen the health and well-being of our community through partnership and trust".

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