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Despite losses, Quincy hospital in the black

By [Doug Flanagan](#)

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QUINCY — The Quincy Valley Medical Center lost money in November, and officials aren't terribly optimistic about December, either.

At the Dec. 28 meeting of Grant County Public Hospital District No. 2, commissioners, board members and staff discussed what could be done in the future to avoid another end-of-the-year swoon.

The hospital lost \$110,969 in November, leaving its year-to-date profit at \$184,663.

"In past months I have continually referred to the cyclical aspect of our financials, and the potential for monthly losses to close out the year," financial officer Ken Kiehn wrote in a report. "Historically, the first several months of the year and the last several months of the year exhibit lower income levels. Unfortunately, as we might have expected, our operating revenues plummeted in November."

Kiehn thinks the reason for the dip has to do with lower patient numbers. "We just had significantly lower levels of business," he wrote. "... We continue to do a decent job of holding the line on expenses, but when you don't have enough foot traffic in the emergency room and lower levels of hospital patients, you cannot generate profitable levels of income. I have no additional explanation as to why other than the before-mentioned cyclical effects this time of the year."

Administrator Mehdi Merred said the hospital should prepare for those cycles in advance.

"Last year we experienced the same thing, and then the ER and ambulance service picked up again," he said. "What's encouraging is that none of the outpatient services have been down, and we still had 688 visits to the clinic (in November), which shows signs of growth there."

Board member Anthony Gonzales questioned the hospital's agreement with The Gorge Amphitheatre to provide emergency ambulatory services last summer. According to the hospital's latest numbers, the hospital has received \$91,644.70 in payments to date, with \$43,303.32 still to be owed from patients and insurance.

"Is this a viable deal? Can we afford financially to do this?" Gonzales asked. "... We're entitled to a profit. I don't think it should be a break-even deal. Are we charging enough? We have to be able to replace equipment. We're just one blown engine or transmission (from running into problems)."

Merred said the venture was a profitable one, though.

"We'd still have patients from The Gorge whether we transported them or not," he said. "We saw a 20 to 25 percent increase in volume. We're the nearest hospital, and the protocol says they have to stop by our hospital no matter what."

Emergency medical services director Doug Martinson said the agreement served the hospital well.

"I think we did the right thing," he said. "We have to make sure it's a viable thing, but we didn't have the entire Gorge, just the campground, we still provided ambulances to the county. At least this year we got reimbursed for three out of the four ambulances we had out there this year. We got something rather than nothing."

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