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Hospital moves forward with EMR program

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The Quincy Valley Medical Center is moving forward with its planned purchase and installation of an electronic medical records system.

The Grant County Public Hospital District No. 2 board of commissioners approved a motion at Monday's meeting to authorize the spending of up to \$200,000 for computers, servers and other hardware to upgrade the network on the hospital side of the facility.

Financial controller Dean Taplett explained that the federal government has mandated that all hospitals must have an EMR program by 2015. If a hospital doesn't have a system in place by that time, it will face penalties.

ADVERTISEMENT "But if we get it in early, there's financial incentives," he said. "We could get 100 percent reimbursement, but in order to do so, we've got to (move as quickly as possible)."

The estimate provided by CDW Government for the installation of the hardware totaled \$158,686.33, although commissioner Randy Zolman said the actual figure might be higher than that, which led to the \$200,000 figure that was voted on and approved.

After the hardware is installed, the hospital then will put a software application in place. The only question is what application it will choose. Taplett, administrator Mehdi Merred and the board members discussed two main possibilities — applications called MediTech 6.0 and Computer Programs and System, Inc.

Both have strengths and weaknesses, according to Taplett.

"I'm not prepared to advocate one over the other yet," he said. "There's some interesting dynamics to look at. We better look at this really hard. By next month's board meeting, we need to have a recommendation for a system."

Merred called the choice of application "a significant decision." He noted that the consultant the medical center is working with, Kelly Cariker, works for a hospital (Omak) that recently implemented an EMR system and went with MediTech.

"If we don't make the right decision, it could be costly," Merred said. "We're under pressure. We've got a lot of decisions to make, and we have to make them quickly. There is a sense of urgency, and we have to make a careful decision and look at all of the options."

Merred said that the construction of the upgraded network system in the hospital is an important first step.

"We need to build an infrastructure that supports any application that we might choose," he said. "The hardware and the servers must have the internal capacity to move forward with whatever application we go with."

• The medical center made a profit of \$8,848 in July, bringing its year-to-date profit total to \$174,777. The hospital actually posted a net operating income loss of \$55,383 for July, but was aided by county tax collection funds of \$64,231.

"We saw a decline in revenues for the month," said commissioner Don Condit. "The bottom line is what we can do with the expenses. We don't have any control over revenues."

To that end, board chairman Anthony Gonzalez said that he's been talking to department heads over the past few weeks and has asked them to try to cut 2 to 5 percent from their respective budgets from now until the end of the year.

"That would give us a cash cushion as we come to the end of the year," Gonzalez said.

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