

**GLACIER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC HEARING – PROPERTY TRANSFER TO
GLACIER COUNTY REGIONAL PORT AUTHORITY
CUT BANK VOTING CENTER
Thursday, October 1, 2009**

The Board of Glacier County Commissioners held a public hearing at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 1, 2009. Commissioners Michael DesRosier, Ron Rides At the Door and Tony Sitzmann were present. Commissioner Michael DesRosier called the meeting to order. Larry Epstein, GC Attorney is present to record the proceedings.

Clerk and Recorder, Glenda Hall was not present as she had a personal engagement in Columbia Falls.

Present for the public hearing were: Doug Embody, acting mayor and councilman, Bill McCauley, City of Cut Bank, Robert Carrette, Becky Kimmet, Jerry Ebel from the Northern Rockies Medical Center, Jeri Lee Wilkerson Executive Director of Cut Bank Development; LeeAnn Kavanaugh of the Pioneer Press

At the beginning, Mike DesRosier, Chairman of the County Commissioners addressed the group regarding a proposal to transfer ownership of the facilities and property under the current hospital and clinic operated by NRMC to the Glacier County Port Authority. Commissioner Tony Sitzmann stressed that this will be a win-win situation for the county and other parties. It will work to eliminate the need for the County to contribute to maintain the facilities and also, as a privately owned facility, NRMC would be eligible for grants and assistance that are not available to a government owned facility.

Also, the County, as part of the County's obligation, and to encourage the transfer intends to pave the parking lots and the install a generator that will serve the entire facility. It may go back on the tax rolls; the press inquired regarding the payment for garbage services; it appears that the hospital operation would continue to pay its garbage assessment. Taxation was also discussed. The operator inquired regarding taxation; Commissioner Ron Rides At The Door stressed that, given the value of the asset, especially with the improvements of a new parking lot and up to date generator, may give this group an asset that will allow them to promote the facility, borrow against the assets, etc.

Commissioner Tony Sitzmann noted that the County's worst case scenario for paving and electrical upgrades, based upon bids and estimates already received from contractors would be \$150,000.00; the County believes that this can be accomplished at a lower cost;

Timelines were discussed; it appears that the decision on transfer to the Port Authority (would be on the decision) will be made at the Commissioners' meeting on the 15th of October. Commissioner Tony Sitzmann called for any comments from the crowd.

Robert Carette, representing the Bank of Glacier County, says that the bank views this as an improvement in the financial condition of the operation and a real positive; There was a discussion of the status of the clinic; there is a lease between the clinic on a month to month

basis; the clinic would also be transferred; forgiveness of the debt for loans could put their Medicaid and Medicare reimbursement for the clinic in jeopardy.

Bill McCauley, councilman and on behalf of the Development Corp, stated that this will be an asset and that once it's in private hands, the bonus will be on the hospital to keep it going and will eliminate the feeling at the hospital can always "go to the county" if things get bad.

Jerry Ebelt of the NRMC board noted that within the past couple years, he has found that they can't access various programs because they don't own the hospital facilities; Becky Kimmet seconded that and noted that like all small towns the hospital struggles and that if this goes through, it will help. Irene Martin also agreed that this will be a good thing because of the possibility of up-grading the facility; Commissioner Ron Rides At The Door agreed that now we can support the grant applications from NRMC because we are no longer the owners.

Doug Embody, acting mayor, stressed the hospital's importance in employment and family recruitment in our community and expressed his whole hearted support. Bill McCauley noted that the hospital is a cornerstone for economic development, along with a good school system and a library. There was a discussion of the condition of the kitchen; Commissioner Tony Sitzmann discussed the fact that the sanitarian authorized feeding everyone but the patients – it doesn't meet the standards for hospital patient requirements.

Jerry Ebelt noted that the current generator doesn't meet current needs or the future needs for maintaining electronic record keeping back up. McCauley pointed out that solar light backup may be an answer for the facilities that lack back up.

Commissioner Ron Rides At The Door stressed that the County's sole obligation is for a set amount to pay maintenance of the facility. There is a discussion of energy alternatives.

The commissioners noted that there have been no negative comments received.

There being no further business for the day, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. with a motion by Commissioner Tony Sitzmann and a second by Commissioner Michael DesRosier. The motion passed by Board vote.

BOARD OF GLACIER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Michael J. DesRosier, Chairman

ATTEST:

Glacier County Clerk and Recorder