

Hospital

Hospitals - Watsonville
Hospital
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board

resigning

Members for a new
20-person board sought

By VICTORIA MANLEY

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WATSONVILLE — The Watsonville Community Hospital Board of Directors announced its planned resignation today, stating that a community group will replace the board and manage an anticipated multimillion-dollar health trust received after the sale of the hospital to a healthcare corporation.

Selling the hospital to Tennessee-based Community Health Systems, Inc. will place a \$12 to \$15 million community health trust in the hands of the new 20-person board, the membership of which has yet to be determined.

Board Chairwoman Betsy Woolpert said the new board will be different from the current one in that its focus will be shifting from running the hospital to working with the community.

"It'll be a new function. It's completely different from running a hospital," Woolpert said. "We're changing functions, and we need new people."

If and when the hospital's sale is final, the dozen or so million dollars will be available for community assets. More than \$6.5 million in cash proceeds will be coming from the sale, as well as the former hospital building and the land it sits on at the corner of Green Valley and Holohan roads.

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There will also be 11,500 square feet of space available for community use in the new facility on Nielson Street, as well as funds from the Watsonville Community Hospital Foundation.

The board will be soliciting funds from the community for various projects and additional healthcare services, such as possibly establishing school-based clinics.

Woolpert said such an idea came from observing the San Jose community after Good Samaritan Hospital was bought by a healthcare corporation — the new board there was able to focus more on the community and is successfully soliciting funds from residents.

"The community (in San Jose) is really supportive of this. They're really doing beautifully," Woolpert said. "We hope to have the same success."

After the new community board spends about a year to organize and establish its policies and guide-

lines, the endowment will be available for healthcare grants in the community.

The present board of directors include four doctors — two of which are executive leaders of the medical staff — and two people elected by the medical staff.

Though the board is knowledgeable about medical and business issues surrounding the hospital, the new board will hopefully reflect more of the community and include a better race and gender representation, Woolpert said.

"I'm the only woman (on the current board)," she said. "We'd like to see more women on the board."

Anyone is welcome to apply for a position, though the board in its entirety will have to meet a few requirements: at least 75 percent of the board must be residents in the zip code areas of 95076, 95019 or 95004; three must be physicians who live or practice within those zip codes; and, for continuity, at least two must be from the current hospital board of directors.

Woolpert said that people are being sought who are well-versed

in fundraising, the various health needs in the community, administration and investment.

Investment knowledge is one of the key components of the new board, which will hopefully "invest (collected funds) well so that it will grow and make a difference in the community," Woolpert said.

Applications will be received by a six-member "Blue Ribbon" committee, which will interview for 17 of the 20 board seats. The committee will include a current board member, Watsonville City Manager Carlos Palacios, and individuals appointed by various groups, including the Watsonville Community Hospital Foundation, Pajaro Valley Coalition to Save Healthcare and United Way.

Woolpert said the Blue Ribbon committee is a "completely new" development. "This way, we're opening it up (to the community)... so people can apply," she said.

Drafts of the applications will be completed by the end of this week, and individuals are currently being sought for nomination by the various non-profit groups in the area.