

Board of County Commissioners

Agenda Request

Date of Meeting: September 6, 2016

Date Submitted: August 23, 2016

To: Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Board

From: Robert M. Presnell, County Administrator

Subject: Request Space for a Diabetes Specialty Clinic in the Gadsden Memorial Hospital Building

Statement of Issue:

This agenda item seeks Board guidance regarding a request by North Florida Regional Thyroid Center (NFRTC) to locate a diabetes specialty clinic in the area previously referred to as the urgent care center of the Gadsden Memorial Hospital Building.

Background:

According to data submitted by Dr. Celeste Hart of NFRTC, more than 1 in 5 adult residents of Gadsden County suffers with diabetes. Dr. Hart states that the mortality rate for Gadsden County residents attributable to diabetes is 37/1000, which is about twice the state of Florida average. Residents of Gadsden County who suffer with diabetes have a higher probability of developing chronic complications of the disease such as kidney failure, blindness and amputation. Dr. Hart advised that these dire outcomes can be traced, at least in part, to limited access to diabetes care. She states that, as in a number of other Florida communities which suffer disproportionately from diabetes and its complications, there are no certified diabetes education programs and no certified diabetes educators in Gadsden County and it is likely that poor diabetes related outcomes reflect limited access to necessary care.

Analysis:

Dr. Hart states that NFRTC is a full service endocrinology clinic. It has offered diabetes care to residents of north Florida since 1991 and is a continuation of the Anderson Brickler Medical Clinic which has served the panhandle region since 1954. Dr. Hart currently serves as medical director of the clinic. She is board certified in Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism and in Obesity Medicine.

NFRTC currently provides services to a number of residents of Gadsden County, but believes that many more who need their services are unable to commute to their Tallahassee Clinic or do not presently have health insurance coverage. NFRTC proposes to help eliminate these barriers by locating a diabetes specialty clinic in Quincy, Florida on a limited basis.

In order to provide these services, the clinic will need a physical facility that has a suite of two clinical examination rooms, a patient waiting area, a check-in area, a patient triage area, a classroom and restrooms. Initially, clinic sessions will be offered monthly on a Saturday. Each session will consist of patient check-in, triage, a clinic visit with the physician followed by a class session where a topic of interest regarding diabetes management will be presented.

Dr. Hart has indicated that she believes the former urgent care area on the west end of the hospital building would appear to be appropriate for the clinic. Dr. Hart has stated that she would provide electronic medical record software and laptop computers but would need Wi-fi connections. In order to assist patients obtain access to availability of community resources for assistance with medication costs and other referrals, she has also asked the County to provide the support of a social worker during clinic hours.

The Gadsden Hospital, Inc. Board has scheduled a meeting for Tuesday, August 30 to consider this proposal and provide advice. However, the GHI Board does not need to formally approve this request. Additional information regarding the outcome of that meeting will be provided at the Board meeting.

The Board needs to be reminded that Capital Regional Medical Center (CRMC) has a right of first refusal on this space. The Lease provides:

“In addition, County shall consult with Company regarding the lease of any portion of the Hospital building not subject to the Lease and will provide Company a right of first refusal to lease said space upon the same terms and conditions as contained in the offer from the third party, in accord with the process described in the above preceding paragraph. Should Company opt not to exercise this right of first refusal, County shall seek the consent of Company to any lease or sale of space in the portion of the Hospital building not subject to the Lease and Company shall respond within thirty (30) days of County's request. Company's consent will not be unreasonably withheld.”

CRMC has been advised of this request from Dr. Hart and has reached out to her to discuss both her request and also to discuss another potential option. Specifically, they plan to discuss with her the possibility of using the physician office space within the Hospital footprint instead of the old urgent care space. The physician office space within the hospital footprint is nicer space that is ready to use whereas the old urgent care space will need cleaning and some other improvements to be made ready. However, Dr. Hart is not currently a member of the CRMC medical staff and CRMC plans to discuss that subject with her. For legal reasons, CRMC cannot provide the space to her for free but believes that the rental rate is not a significant obstacle.

As of the preparation of this Agenda request, the discussion between CRMC and Dr. Hart has not yet occurred.

Questions for the Board:

In order to determine if and how to proceed and whether there will be a fiscal impact to the County, staff has the following questions for the Board:

Is the Board willing to enter into an arrangement with Dr. Hart for use of the former urgent care space for a monthly diabetes clinic?

If so, does the Board want to charge rent?

If so, how much?

Will the County or Dr. Hart (or some combination) be charged with the cost for making the space usable for the requested purpose? Recall that the space has been vacant for over six years. Even if there are no significant renovations, it will need to be cleaned, equipped, repaired to the extent necessary, etc. Actual costs for this work have not yet been estimated.

Who will bear the cost for utilities, internet, regular cleaning or other related operational costs?

How does the Board want to respond to Dr. Hart's request for the provision of a social worker?

Fiscal Impact:

Whether or not there will be fiscal impact depends on the responses to the questions listed above.

Options:

1. Board Discussion and Direction.

County Administrator's Recommendation:

Provide requested guidance.

Attachment:

1. Specialty Clinic Proposal

A Diabetes Specialty Clinic in Gadsden County, Florida

More than 1 in 5 adult residents of Gadsden County suffers with diabetes. The diabetes attributable mortality among county residents is 37/100,00 – about twice the state of Florida average. Residents of Gadsden county who suffer with diabetes have a higher probability of developing chronic complications of the disease - kidney failure, blindness and amputation. At least in part, these dire outcomes can be traced to limited access to diabetes care. As in a number of other Florida communities which suffer disproportionately from diabetes and its complications, there are no certified diabetes education programs and no certified diabetes educators in Gadsden county and it is likely that poor diabetes related outcomes reflect limited access to necessary care.

North Florida Regional Thyroid Center

North Florida Regional Thyroid Center (NFRTC) is a full service endocrinology clinic. We have offered diabetes care to residents of north Florida since 1991 and is a continuation of the Anderson Brickler Medical Clinic which has served the panhandle region since 1954. I currently serve as medical director of the clinic. I am board certified in Internal Medicine, Endocrinology and Metabolism and in Obesity Medicine. I have served on the Florida Diabetes Advisory Board and am a member of the clinical faculty of Florida State University College of Medicine. For the past 5 years, I have served as a medical director of Health for Hearts United, a church based collaborative interventional research program aimed at lowering risk of cardiovascular disease by encouraging healthful eating and increased physical activity. This project presently serves residents of Gadsden County.

NFRTC currently provides services to a number of residents of Gadsden County, but we are aware that many more who need our services are unable to commute to our Tallahassee Clinic or do not presently have health insurance coverage. We propose to eliminate these barriers by locating a diabetes specialty clinic in Quincy, Florida on a limited basis.

In Kind Support Requested

We are requesting a physical facility to house the clinic. We will need a suite of two clinical examination rooms, a patient waiting area, a check-in area where administrative staff will be located, a patient triage area, a classroom and restrooms. We will provide our own electronic medical software and laptop computers but will need Wi-Fi connections. To assure that we can help patients access available community resources for assistance with medication costs and other referrals, we would like the support of a social worker during clinic hours.

Clinic Sessions

Initially, clinic sessions will be offered monthly on a Saturday. Each session will consist of patient check-in, triage, clinic visit with the physician followed by a class session where a topic of interest regarding diabetes management will be presented.

Each patient is expected to have a primary care provider. Record of clinic visits will be communicated to that provider. Patient outcome data will be maintained in an anonymous database and will be used to support applications for grant funding to allow the program to continue.