

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ocean Beach Hospital: Planning to Meet Community Health Care Needs

With greater demand for health care services, medical providers struggle amid aging facilities

ILWACO, WA—Ocean Beach Hospital & Medical Clinics (OBHMC) has provided routine and critical health care services to the South Pacific County community for 88 years. While its mission—to ease the pain and improve the health of the people in its care—has not changed, much has indeed changed since its founding as Public Hospital District 3 of Pacific County in 1934. The number of residents and visitors accessing healthcare has risen greatly, as have the types of patient needs. OBHMC needs to expand and make upgrades now to best serve the growing community and changing healthcare needs in the years ahead.

In 2020, OBHMC served over 24,000 outpatient visits, approximately 7,000 emergency room visits, and performed nearly 400 surgeries. As a Critical Access Hospital, OBHMC serves a vital role for a rural swath of Washington that would otherwise lack access to medical services.

“Those living in rural communities face a higher degree of socio-economic and health disparities compared to their urban counterparts,” says Nancy Gorshe, Chair of the Board of Commissioners. “We have many patients who must travel long distances for care—or may choose to forgo necessary care for that reason—and we need to be able to serve them here.”

OBHMC conducts regular community health needs assessments that guide continual improvement in meeting the community’s most significant health needs. Even during the pandemic, the Public Health District made a number of beneficial changes, such as extending days and hours of its clinics, adding a lab station to the Ocean Park clinic, moving the Naselle Clinic to a new facility, opening its Wellness Center, creating a new clinical social worker position; and, training in de-escalation strategies for mental health crises.

However, the most recent community health needs assessment shed light on rising issues that have begun to strain OBHMC resources. Those include a lack of services ranging from primary and urgent care, chronic disease and wellness services, specialty care, and mental health services. An underlying cause for these challenges is recruitment and retention of primary and specialty medical providers.

“We want to better serve the health care needs of our community here at home,” says Larry Cohen, Chief Executive Officer. “With our service area as remote as it is, we struggle to attract medical professionals to our area.”

Recruitment is one issue, and retention is another. To maintain providers and improve the quality of care for patients, OBHMC needs more space, modern medical equipment and facility renovations, such as patient rooms at the hospital, repair of aging buildings, and replacement of mechanical systems that are approaching the end of their usable lives. These improvements will improve patient care and move OBHMC closer to its goal of having an Urgent Care facility for the community.

The Board of Commissioners recently discussed putting a bond on the 2023 ballot, which would fund community health care needs, and ensure improved medical services locally for residents. The bond rate is expected to be \$0.17 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. This amount is less than half of the previous bond voters approved, which was paid off in 2021. This will be a public process, and more information can be found at www.oceanbeachhospital.com.

OBHMC operates under a balanced budget and has passed all its independent audits by the state. The hospital and medical clinics are primarily funded through patient revenue and an operations levy of \$0.47 per \$1,000 paid through property taxes. Bonds fund capital projects, such as renovating and maintaining facilities and replacing medical equipment.

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Pacific County Public Hospital District 3 (known as Ocean Beach Hospital & Medical Clinics) provides both routine and critical health care services to residents from Naselle to Ocean Park. Our hospital and clinics ensure continued local access to high-quality health care for rural residents. Our mission is to ease the pain and improve the health of residents and visitors in our care. We are one of the largest employers in Pacific County, providing family-wage jobs to more than 180 people. More information on Ocean Beach Hospital & Medical Clinics can be found on its website at www.oceanbeachhospital.com.