

Village contracts with business consultant in seeking to keep Heritage of Wauneta in operation

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Tina Kitt

The Wauneta Breeze

“Guardedly optimistic” is the term used by community volunteers working to ensure Heritage of Wauneta’s ongoing presence in Wauneta.

Several community members have taken the lead in exploring means to keep the nursing home in operation in the wake of an announcement earlier this year that as of next June 30, 2012, Vetter Health Services will no longer operate the facility.

Significant strides have been made in recent weeks, noted Page Johnston of Wauneta, who is among those working to ensure that Heritage remains open and operational in meeting the needs of Wauneta’s senior citizens.

The Wauneta Village Board of Trustees, of which Johnston is a member, retained legal counsel to help them navigate the legalities involved with attaining ownership of Heritage.

The board also contracted with business consultants Rural Health Development of Cambridge to formulate a business plan as they move forward.

Developing a business plan is critical in determining if it is financially viable for the Village to own and operate Heritage, explained Johnston. He noted that a business plan will also be necessary if financing or grants are applied for.

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Vetter Health Services has been receptive to overtures made by the community since VHS's July announcement and are open to consideration of the community acquiring the property to continue using as a nursing home, said Johnston.

"They have shown a willingness to work with us," he added.

A number of elements in the intricate equation of making a change in ownership feasible will still need to come into alignment, including funding options.

Johnston noted that significant research into available sources of funding has been done and the results are encouraging.

Heritage continues premier care

Heritage of Wauneta Administrator Lisa Kisinger stresses that Heritage has every intention of continuing to provide premier nursing home care and will continue with "business as usual" until June 30, 2012, as long as they have enough staff members and residents.

To date, notes Kisinger in a letter to the editor in this week's Breeze, Heritage has not had one resident or staff member depart due to the VHS announcement.

"The town people of Wauneta are busy behind the scenes working for a solution so that hopefully the nursing home can remain open," says Kisinger. "Vetter Health Services will no longer be the owner/operator after June 30, 2012, but there is a lot going on to try to save Wauneta's nursing home. There remains a definite need for this vital service, and the town people are backing the efforts to stay open 110 percent."