

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

In the Matter of Adopting Findings and)
Conclusions in Support of the Formation)
of the new Columbia Health District)
_____)

ORDER NO. 43-2004

WHEREAS, on June 9, 2004, the Board of County Commissioners adopted Resolution No. 36-2004 approving the formation of a new Columbia Health District; and

WHEREAS, at the June 9 hearing the Board of County Commissioners determined, in accordance with the criteria prescribed by ORS 199.462, that the area could be benefited by the formation of a new health district; and

WHEREAS, the attached findings of fact and conclusions of law have been submitted by the Hospital Coalition, a local group which is in support of the proposed new health district; and

WHEREAS, the Board has reviewed and considered the proposed findings and conclusions;

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the findings of fact and conclusions of law which are attached hereto, labeled Exhibit "A", and incorporated herein by this reference, be and hereby are, ADOPTED.

DATED this 30th day of June, 2004.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON

By: _____

Chair

By: _____

Commissioner

By: _____

Commissioner

Approved as to Form:

By: _____

Office of County Counsel

EXHIBIT "A"

FINDINGS FOR A NEW HEALTH DISTRICT IN COLUMBIA COUNTY

Background

There has been a hospital in Columbia County since the late 1940's. The location was first on North 4th Street in St. Helens and then in the 1970's a new facility was built on property southwest of Hwy 30 and Pittsburg Road intersection. This facility was sold by the Columbia Health District to the Sisters of St. Joseph Peace Health and Hospital Services and the Sisters closed the hospital in the early 1990's. The Columbia Health District used the proceeds to lease a portion of the former hospital space and sublet to Legacy Health Systems to provide some healthcare services. When the funds were exhausted in 1996, the Health District was not able to support hospital or clinic type healthcare services.

In the year of 2001 the district received grants from Oregon Health and Science University Office of Rural Health, Northwest Oregon Economic Alliance and support from Port of St. Helens to evaluate how to improve the overall healthcare services for Columbia County citizens. With the involvement of a great number of community leaders and interested citizens a Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) was formed and they conducted a great many interviews of citizens, stakeholders, and businesses. The conclusion of this evaluation process is that the County needs and desires 24 hours/7 days a week emergency healthcare services; and needs and desires more physicians and specialists. The recommendation is to develop a Critical Access Hospital. This type of hospital is a real hospital with a special Federal designation.

The Health District staffed a Hospital Coalition to see if the community will support a Critical Access Hospital. The idea is to construct a new facility or remodel existing facilities to develop a small 15 bed hospital with a 24/7 emergency room and with facilities and staff to provide some day surgery, care for up to 4 days for the moderately ill (pneumonia, congestive heart failure, wound care, lacerations, infections, and non surgical fractures). The desire is to have those services that the community (south Columbia County) wants and those that the small hospital can afford and those that are not in competition with other existing services such as pharmacies, nursing homes, and senior care facilities.

Based upon the current boundaries and current tax rate and based upon the surveys, interviews and desires of some of the cities' councils, the current Columbia Health District Board of Directors has decided to dissolve the current health district; ask the voters to reform a new health district with new boundaries based upon the general boundaries of the St. Helens Ambulance Service Area Number 3 and Scappoose Ambulance Service Area Number 2 and those areas likely to use the facility if located in the St. Helens city limits; ask the voters to approve a new tax rate of \$.38 per \$1000 assessed property value; and to elect a new board of directors.

Standards

Oregon Revised Statute Chapter 199 section 462 governs the standards by which the County

Board of Commissioners (BOC) shall use to approve the changing of boundaries (new formation) of a health district. The BOC shall consider local comprehensive planning for the area, economic, demographic, sociological trends and projections pertinent to the proposal, past and prospective physical development of land that would directly or indirectly be affected by the proposed boundary change and the goals adopted under ORS 197.225.

First criteria to consider is that the BOC should consider local comprehensive planning for the area. The proposed area includes southern Columbia County rural and urban areas. The Columbia County Comprehensive Plan includes a section titled Public Facilities and Services and policy #16 states that the County should "Work with the appropriate agencies to ensure adequate levels of health care exist for county residents." The studies completed by the Health District in the last three years indicates that there are not currently adequate levels of health care. The City of St. Helens' Comprehensive Plan in the section titled Public Services and Facilities has a policy #23 that states that the City should "Encourage cooperation between the health care facilities planning and capital improvements program and the City's land use planning program." The use of St. Helens City officials and staff in developing the plans for a new hospital is in keeping with the policy of the City of St. Helens. Scappoose's Comprehensive Plan in the section titled Public Services and Facilities has a policy that states that the City should encourage cooperation between the Hospital District and city planning. Some of Scappoose's officials and representatives in agencies, most notably the Mayor and the Fire Chief, shows that the City of Scappoose is cooperating with the current Health District to improve healthcare for their citizens.

Based upon the policies of the comprehensive plans for the local area, the proposal to form a new health district to develop a hospital in south Columbia County meets the first criteria because a new health district is being formed in accordance with the comprehensive planning policies of the local area.

The second criteria is economic, demographic and sociological trends and projections pertinent to the proposal. The current health district commissioned a feasibility study to see what it would cost to develop a critical access hospital in south Columbia County. This feasibility study also reviewed the changes in population, demographics, economics and social. The study indicates who used the old hospital and who will use the new hospital. The study shows the population growth since 1990 and projected to 2020. South Columbia County population is growing between 2 and 4% annually per the data for each city over the last ten years. The study shows the ages of users since 1995. In most regions the population is aging and all studies indicate that over the next couple of decades the over 65 year old age group will grow significantly. The study evaluates anticipated revenues and expenses based upon comparisons of our population and those in other areas of Oregon and Washington. The study shows that this type of hospital will do better with the Medicare and Medicaid eligible groups (mostly over 65 years of age) than conventional hospitals and healthcare organizations. A survey was commissioned by a member of the study group and that professional survey evaluated the voters of Columbia County as to locations, interests in proposed services and willingness to pay a tax for the proposed hospital. The results were strong for bringing a new hospital to Columbia County but the areas more than 30 minutes from the City of St. Helens were not very strong for a new hospital and very low for paying a tax for it.

Based upon the studies, survey and data referenced above, this criteria is met.

The third criteria is past and prospective physical development of land that would directly or indirectly be affected by the proposed boundary change. In the past Trojan Power Plant, southeast of the City of Rainier was included in the Columbia Health District and this proposal excludes this area. The reason is that the power plant is shutdown and will not have any employees in the very new future. The majority of the citizens live in the urban areas and nearby. The boundaries are adjusted on the north and west edges to reflect the time and distance that appear to be most practical for residents and emergency services to drive to the new hospital. The boundaries to the south and east are boundaries of Columbia County. The district boundaries were chosen also in an attempt to align as best as is reasonable to the Ambulance Service Areas. Most of the citizens to be served and to pay taxes for the hospital are located in the cities of Scappoose, St. Helens, and Columbia City and the rural areas nearby.

The boundaries take into account most of the potential and likely users of the hospital while not excluding anyone. This criteria is met based upon the above description of land to be included.

The fourth criteria are the goals of ORS 197.225. The Health District is responsible to coordinate health care services to the citizens of the district which will encompass the cities of Scappoose, St. Helens and Columbia City and the rural areas nearby. The Health District has communicated their proposal for this new district and proposed hospital to all three City Councils and to the Board of Commissioners of the County. The proposed hospital location is to be located somewhat central of the area of the district and where there are available lands and public facilities and services necessary to support the proposed facility. The Health District has taken into account what lands and services are available for the proposed facility based upon the existing land use plans of the City of St. Helens. Transportation plans, public facility plans, population projections, land use laws, and other public services such as police and fire have all been considered in developing the location of the proposed new facility.

This criteria is met based upon the limited responsibility for the goals of ORS 197.225 which is only to supply healthcare to the citizens of the district.