



Health Matters

Health and Wellness Information for Our Community



Clinic Hours

Lopez Island Medical Clinic is located in Lopez Village at 103 Washburn Place.

Clinic hours:
Monday–Friday,
8:30 am–5:00 pm

To schedule an appointment, call 468-2245 during regular hours.

Medical emergency?
Dial 911.

www.lopezislandmedical.org/

CWMA Board Members

Marty Clark,
President
Christa Campbell, VP
Sherry Brummel
Charlie Janeway
George LeBoutillier
Don Poole, Sr.

Bette Shuh
Lauren Stephens
Edwin Turmulo

Dr. Bob Wilson, MD
Christine Burnell, DNP

Editor: Lorrie Harrison

Update on Clinic Partnership



Dr. Wilson, CWMA President Marty Clark and Vice President Christa Campbell, members of the team working on the new partnership.

Editor's Note: Due to the importance of keeping the Lopez community current on all clinic partnership developments, this issue is devoted entirely to partnership information.

In September, Island Hospital announced it would terminate its operating agreement with Lopez Clinic/CWMA effective June 30, 2017. The effort to find a new partner for the clinic was launched the following week and the community was immediately notified via Lopez Rocks, newspaper ads, fliers at the clinic and website updates.

In this interview, Dr. Wilson and CWMA Board president Marty Clark offer the most current developments in the partnering process.

"We want everyone to know just how fortunate we are to have incredible people working on this," says Dr. Wilson. The

CWMA board, Lopez Clinic medical and administrative staff, plus community members are on the team.

"The board members are key to the decision making process and will reach out to keep everyone informed," says Marty. Edwin Turmulo brings expertise in finance, Charlie Janeway in medical background, George LeBoutillier in business, Don Poole in facilities and Lopez history, Lauren Stephens and Christa Campbell in community relations and business, Sherry Brummel in clinical issues and Bette Shuh in community boards. Peggy Means and Lorrie Harrison are helping the team. Peggy's 25 years of experience negotiating partner agreements, including work on the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance which linked the University of Washington, Children's and Fred Hutchinson, is "invaluable" according to Dr. Wilson. Lorrie is keeping the public informed as the process develops.

Nurse Practitioner Christine Burnell is key to the effort. "I feel privileged to be a part of such a professional team," she says. "The board brought the clinic staff in from the beginning, engaging them in the entire process. Crystal Rovente has done an amazing job dealing with multi-directional pressures to meet needs of our patients, staff, Island Hospital and the

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Clinic Partnership

board and should be commended. It has been great to see how our community members value, respect and utilize their clinic. I am compelled to want to assist in making it the best ever for a community I have come to really value."

A public forum is planned for December. The community will be updated and have the opportunity to offer opinions.

While affiliation is obviously beneficial to us, is Lopez Clinic attractive to prospective partners?

Dr. Wilson says the answer to that is an unqualified yes. "There are a lot of networks out there trying to expand the regions they serve. Partnering with us would help them do it. We are very attractive for many reasons. We have tremendous support from our community which is a key factor. Another is that we are the healthiest county in Washington State which means lower costs and lower risks for potential partners. People who take their healthcare seriously tend to take good care of themselves. Again, that defines Lopez residents. Our clinic generates a lot of referrals and that is very

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attractive to partners. The clinic does all this while maintaining a positive operating margin, an unusual accomplishment for an isolated rural clinic."

Marty looks at a new partnership as an opportunity. "We're eager to look at our staff, administration and patients' priorities and to discuss those with potential partners," she says. "Our team is confident of finding an excellent match who will serve Lopez well."

Dr. Wilson concludes, "Christine and I are proud of the clinic staff's performance under challenging circumstances and we're very optimistic about the future."



Background: Lopez Clinic History

In 1972, a group of Lopez residents decided it was time for Lopez to have its own medical clinic. They formed a 501(c)3 organization to raise funds, build and equip the clinic and provide oversight. They named the non-profit The Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) in honor of their long-time island friend who had passed away the year before. The idea quickly gained momentum: land was found in the village, renderings were drawn, islanders began opening their wallets and soon hammers began to swing. Dr. George Dengler, who owned property on the south end, approached the CWMA about becoming the first physician.

Lopez Island Medical Clinic opened its doors on April 1, 1974 in a 900-square-foot building with Dr. George Dengler in private practice and his wife Hildegard in charge of the office.

Through the years, Lopez islanders expanded their clinic three times, the cost always shouldered entirely

by donations. In 1988, Dr. Dengler hired fellow islander Dr. Ted Phillips as his part-time associate.

When Dr. Dengler began planning his retirement in 1991, seismic shifts were being felt in medicine around the country. The CWMA Board's efforts to find a physician to take over the Lopez practice proved futile. Everyone agreed on the need for a clinic, but the way to achieve that goal was unclear.

The CWMA explored a partnership with Island Hospital in Anacortes. An agreement was struck and a new chapter in Lopez medical care began.

Fast forward to September 2016. After 23 years, Island Hospital gave notice they would terminate their contract in June, 2017. Explaining that operating a remote clinic in the current healthcare environment had become too challenging, they noted the difficulty of the decision and emphasized their support for Lopez Clinic.

Clinic Partnership Timeline

The Clinic/CWMA team has made excellent progress recruiting a new partner for Lopez Clinic. These steps have been completed so far:

- Identify a list of potential partners
- Contact key administrators to introduce the clinic
- Develop a detailed 9-page information package for potential partners
- Send packages
- Host a joint meeting of the clinic staff and CWMA board to identify key priorities for the new partnership
- Receive and evaluate responses from potential partners

Anticipated Next Steps:

In the research stage, the team selected seven health-care systems to approach, some are relatively small and local; others are large, multi-state organizations. Due to confidentiality agreements, they were unable to publicize those names. While a timeline needs to stay flexible, these are the dates we anticipate.

Currently: Select finalists
Public announcement of finalists
Begin negotiations with finalists

Next: Host public information forum for Lopez residents

December: Complete negotiations
Select partner

January 1: Begin transition with new partner

Mid-2017: Complete transition
New partnership in place and fully operational

If you have a specific question, please enter it on our website blog and it will be answered promptly: www.lopezislandmedical.org/blog

Frequently Asked Questions

How soon will a new partnership be in place?

We hope to select our new partner in late December and immediately begin the transition. While we don't know exactly how long the transition will take, we do know Island Hospital has offered to continue with us until June 30, 2017 if that is necessary.

Do we really need a partner? Why can't we be independent?

Our partner supports us by handling the enormous administrative load that frees our clinic team to serve patients. They hire, compensate and collaborate with clinicians, physical therapists and clinic staff to provide the best care possible. They handle all insurance negotiations and contracting, billing and collections, accounting and purchasing, some referral coordination plus tech support for our medical equipment and information technology services like the Electronic Medical Record. Their staff tracks service levels, risk management, patient safety and satisfaction, provides human services support and deals with certification issues. Without this partnership, we would be forced to increase our administrative staff and staffing space dramatically.

Why did Island Hospital Board of Commissioners decide not to renew their contract with Lopez Clinic?

They stated it was due to the complexities of operating a remote clinic in the current healthcare environment. They emphasized it was a difficult decision, that they are supportive of the Lopez community and look forward to helping with the transition.

Who is working on this for Lopez?

The CWMA board and Lopez Clinic's administrative and clinical staff, along with the support of a few Lopez residents, are handling outreach and negotiations. That said, the entire Lopez community will be notified of the possible candidates and have the opportunity to comment before any decision is reached.

Orcas Medical Clinic is also looking for a new partner. Are we working with them to find one for both islands?

The Orcas Clinic and Lopez Clinic have always served different populations and been run completely independently. There are no plans to contract together at this time.

When will we know names of potential partners?

We expect to announce those names by the end of this month. As soon as we know, we'll let Lopez know.

Will my care at the clinic change between now and then?

Dr. Wilson, Nurse Practitioner Christine Burnell and Clinic Manager Crystal Rovente emphasize that services and care at Lopez Clinic will continue as they are with improvements as the process moves forward.

Health Matters

Catherine Washburn Medical Association
P.O. Box 309 • Lopez, WA 98261



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Front row, left to right: Don Poole, Christa Campbell, Charlie Janeway
Back row, left to right: Marty Clark, Sherry Brummel, Bette Shuh

From left: George LeBoutillier, Lauren Stephens, Edwin Turmulo

CWMA board members are all involved in the selection process. In addition to attending partnership meetings, they met with the clinic staff to solicit their input. Individual board members are contributing expertise in areas of selection process, compensation, reimbursement, insurance issues and financial soundness of potential partners.

