



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/

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Editor: Lorrie Harrison

Questions & Answers About the UW Medicine Partnership



Jay Priebe, Director of Primary Care for UW Medicine, and Debra Gussin, Executive Director of UW Neighborhood Clinics, answered questions and heard comments from an audience of 200 islanders last month. The meeting was recorded and is available on the clinic website: www.lopezislandmedical.org

Why is UW Medicine the best choice for Lopez Island?

The CWMA board chose UW Medicine for many reasons, but the two most important are UW Medicine’s track record for delivering outstanding medical care and their ability to give us excellent management support services. Under the new operating agreement, UW Medicine will take on all administrative tasks for our clinic including insurance billing, referrals, personnel management, installation and training for a new electronic medical record system. This is a huge benefit.

UW Medicine is known as one of the finest medical organizations in the country. They partner with many hospitals in the state and share ownership and governance of the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance with Fred Hutch and Seattle Children’s Hospital.

Their School of Medicine has been ranked No. 1 in primary care and rural health care training for more than 20 years by *U.S. News & World Report*. They are second in the nation in total federal research grants and contracts received. In short, they are outstanding. Affiliating with them strengthens our clinic and the care we provide.

Why didn’t the board choose independence?

The main reason was stability. The independent option meant more strain on our clinic staff, volunteers and potentially our community. We believe that when the inevitable changes coming to rural clinics develop (driven by national healthcare factors), UW Medicine will help us adjust more successfully than if we had to navigate on our own.

Partnership Questions & Answers continued from page 1

How soon does the partnership begin?

The contract between UW Medicine and our Public Hospital District goes into effect on September 25. That said, Jay Priebe, Director of Rural Primary Care for UW Medicine, has been working here since April to do everything necessary to assure a strong transition. In the meanwhile, Island Hospital extended their current administrative support for Lopez Clinic until the UW Medicine contract takes effect so the change-over can be as smooth as possible.

Will our care change?

As with any transition, there will be changes. UW Medicine sees this partnership as an opportunity to create a model for rural, remote clinical care that can be replicated in other communities around the state. Some of our current services will be different under the new model. Their goal is to keep the island fully updated as changes are implemented.

Does this mean we must go to UW Medicine in Seattle for specialty care?

No. Patients can always choose the physician and the hospital referral that best meets their needs. Providers will continue to make recommendations, but the final decision is always yours and your insurer's.

UW Medicine has contracted with Orcas Medical Center too. Are we affiliated with Orcas now?

No. We will continue to operate independently, but have the same model of care. We expect there to be opportunities for collaboration between the two clinics.

Do we still need the Public Hospital District?

Absolutely, in fact passing the PHD was crucial for a UW Medicine partnership. Without that level of our

community's financial support, the negotiations would have been in jeopardy.

Will Lopez Clinic accept patients' current insurance under the new partnership?

Yes. All insurance coverage currently accepted will continue to be accepted.

What is the role of the Catherine Washburn Medical Association now?

According to George LeBoutillier, president of the CWMA, the board will return to its traditional role as landlord and steward of the clinic building. The CWMA currently provides space and medical equipment to the clinic and to physical therapy. That will continue under the UW Medicine/Lopez Clinic partnership.

What is the role of the Public Hospital District commission?

The commission is the legal entity partnering with UW Medicine. In that capacity, the commissioners administer the contract on behalf of Lopez voters. For more details, see the PHD story on page 3.

What is the future of physical therapy on Lopez?

The PHD's contract with UW Medicine stipulates that UW Medicine provide primary care services to the Lopez community. Physical therapy is not included in that agreement. PT will move to a new and larger space by 2018. This long-needed expansion has been planned by CWMA for more than a year. Bottom line: We are working on plans that assure our Lopez PT providers will continue to offer their outstanding services on Lopez.



"We consider it an honor and privilege to bring UW Medicine medical services to Lopez Island. The rich history of the clinic and this community, coupled with UW Medicine's commitment to high quality care, creates a perfect recipe for continuing and expanding the incredible services of Lopez Clinic. We feel very honored to be asked to partner with you. Thank you for the warm welcome; we look forward to a long, strong partnership together. Debra and I are committed to listening to your comments and questions and finding ways to address them, so please don't hesitate let us know how we can be of service and support. These next few months will be an exciting time: planning new technology, adopting new workflows, training staff and expanding services. We look forward to hosting more town hall meetings to share what we've accomplished as well as the new ways we will serve the health and wellness of this wonderful community." ~Jay Priebe

Lopez Gets Its Public Hospital District

On May 5, 2017, San Juan County officially created Public Hospital District #2 after Lopez voters approved establishing a taxing district by an 86% margin. Five commissioners were elected on the same ballot.

In this interview, Becky Presley and Albert Berger, two of those commissioners, talk about the launch of the new public hospital district (PHD).

Created to Meet a Crisis

The PHD was established in a tense environment: Lopez Medical Clinic was in danger of closing if the community could not provide on-going financial support. With the overwhelming voter approval for that funding, two key pieces fell into place. A funding plan was established through property tax revenues; and with those resources assured, the way was cleared for UW Medicine to approve a contract partnering with the PHD to operate Lopez Clinic.

“The overarching picture is that medicine and patient care in our country are changing rapidly,” said Becky. “It’s been said that the PHD is the connective tissue between the clinic and the community in a radically changing environment. Our goal is to stay ahead of that wave of change and provide for the very best medical care on our island.”

Once they were sworn in, the new commissioners hit the ground running. The work facing these volunteers is daunting. Beginning with weekly public meetings to conduct the business of the PHD, many of the commissioners were also involved in additional work sessions. Regular meetings are now being held on the fourth Thursday of every month, 5:30 pm, at Grace Church community room. Smiling, Becky holds up a single-

spaced task list that runs two pages. “Our work is defined by state statute. It’s been heavy lifting from the start.”

Albert says the commissioners are energized by the challenge. The commission is getting help from the Association of Washington Public Hospitals which provides training for new boards, educational materials, help with compliance as laws change, etc. With dozens of PHDs in Washington State, the Lopez commissioners have a solid blueprint to work with.



Deb Wiggs, PHD interim superintendent

Their first order of business was to find an interim superintendent. Deb Wiggs of V2V Management Solutions in Bellingham was hired in May and



PHD Commissioners, left to right. Jim Orcutt, Iris Graville, Albert Berger, Becky Presley, Christa Campbell.

works on island two days each week. “Think of the superintendent as the CEO of the public hospital district,” says Albert. “The commission’s role is to set policy. Deb Wiggs, implements those policies.”

In that capacity, she will manage the clinical services agreement with UW Medicine and public relations. “Basically, I’m responsible for the operations of the district,” says Deb. “People should feel free to contact me with their questions or concerns. The PHD website (www.lopezislandphd.com) is the best way to be in touch and to keep current on PHD business. We post our bylaws, minutes of meetings, the budget, meeting dates, everything.”

One PHD task will be to perform a community health needs assessment. That should happen in about a year and will involve focus groups, surveys, data evaluation and a service profile. “All this will help us define the mission and vision of the district, but we need to wait until UW Medicine can provide the data. The survey will show us how we’re doing and identify if there are additional services that are needed.”

The commissioners emphasized that while the PHD may eventually assist with other medical needs for Lopez, the clear intent of passing the public hospital district at this time was to provide funding to keep Lopez Clinic open. Accomplishing that goal is top priority.

“The important thing is that the community has put their trust in us to spend their property tax monies wisely,” said Albert. “We want everyone to know that they are welcome at our meetings. We invite people to come listen to our discussions, deliberations and decisions. We give them the opportunity at both beginning and end of our meetings to be heard.” Becky notes that this is different from a question and answer session. “The purpose of public comment is for the community to give us input that we will consider as we move forward. We are eager to hear any and all comments. As a board, we look forward to collaborating with everyone.”

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Thank You

Marty Clark, Peggy Means, Christa Campbell, Dr. Wilson, Lauren Stephens and Charlie Janeway

**Without your wisdom, perseverance, talent and unbelievably long hours of work
we wouldn't have a clinic today.**

A few words from Marty Clark and Charlie Janeway about the process:

“This was a group effort with everyone on the committee contributing so much,” said Marty. “Everyone on the team immediately took on the task of contacting potential partners. Charlie made the vital connection with Deb Wiggs who now has become our interim PHD superintendent. Dr. Wilson kept the clinic realities in our sights, and his connection with Island Hospital helped forge the crucial extension of that contract. Lauren was given the task of researching public hospital districts and approached the task with her usual competence and energy. She quickly realized that not only was it possible for Lopez to have a district, but that it could be accomplished within the April election cycle. Christa kept us orga-

nized and aware of our growing history and was a key player in both the partnership process and passing the public hospital district initiative. And, while everyone on the committee was committed and willing, it was Peggy Means who knew what to do and how to get it done. She was the leader who always kept the big picture in mind.”

“As a team,” Charlie adds, “we felt the support of the entire CWMA board and the Lopez community behind us. That was an amazing feeling! Certainly no thanks would be complete without recognizing the clinic staff and physical therapy folks who hung in there through all the angst and uncertainty. It was a very hard time for each of them and they handled the stress with professionalism and grace, always putting the needs of their Lopez patients first.”