

Lee County Hospital Authority Approves Filing Request for Extension of Certificate of Public Need for New Hospital

Pennington Gap, VA (July 9, 2018). Thursday night the Lee County Hospital Authority Board of Commissioners met at the Pennington Gap Community Center to receive an update on the progress of the efforts of Americore Health to re-open a hospital in Lee County and to consider the status of the Certificate of Public Need issued to the Hospital Authority by the Virginia Department of Health.

The existing Certificate of Public Need expires July 31, 2018.

During Thursday's meeting the Hospital Authority Commissioners received a report from representatives of Americore Health about their efforts to re-open the hospital since taking ownership of the building at the end of 2017. Americore Health reported that while the hospital is on track to open in 2018 with a 24/7/365 Emergency Room, a surgical department, a laboratory, and a radiology services department, the hospital will not be ready by July 31, 2017, primarily because of significant weather delays during the first few months of 2018.

Janette Filpi, CEO of Lee County Medical Center says, "Americore Health continues to invest financially to ensure access to healthcare and supports the Hospital Authority Board as well as the community." She also stated that "Americore Health has invested over \$3 million so far in equipment and building renovations in addition to the \$700,000 initial investment to purchase the property,"

Filpi confirmed that Americore Health will invest over \$7 million to re-open the new Lee County Medical Center.

The Authority also received a report from the Authority's representatives on the Joint Operations Committee of the new hospital, which is a committee created by the Authority and Americore Health when Americore Health purchased the hospital building. This committee has responsibility for developing, monitoring, and implementing the re-opening plan.

Howard Elliott, who is one of two Hospital Authority Commissioners that serves on the joint committee with Americore Health working on the re-opening, noted significant delays in the re-opening process had occurred due to the weather at the beginning of the year. "One of the most critical challenges that Americore Health faced this year was completing some much-needed repairs to the roof of the building. Roof repairs were set to begin during January 2017; however heavy rain delayed the project by nearly sixty days," Elliot stated.

"Weather delays in repairing the roof leaks impacted the timeline of the repairs and renovations scheduled to occur on the inside of the building, including phone systems, computer installation, equipment delivery, and, plumbing and heating repairs," He said. "The building is over 30 years old, has been closed for 4 years, and was in need of some repair." He added. Americore Health reported that construction crews have been working weekends and evenings to make up the time.

“Because so few rural hospitals have re-opened we did not have an example to follow” said Commissioner Diana Pope who is the other Commissioner on the joint committee, “We’ve been so impressed with the Americore Health team’s commitment and efforts to get the hospital re-opened.” She added.

“The initial visit by the Virginia Department of Health’s staff revealed both the reality that more work remains to be done, but confirmed that a significant amount of work has already been accomplished. I think they were very impressed with what Americore Health has managed to achieve in a very short period of time,” Pope added.

“Much of the work is occurring inside the building so it’s hard to tell everything that has been completed. A lot is being accomplished,” she said.

The Authority’s Thursday night meeting was another important meeting in the efforts to bring a hospital back to Lee County,” said new Hospital Authority Commissioner, Dr. Jill Couch.

“We unanimously approved filing for the extension and hope the Commissioner of Health favorably views our request,” added Authority Chairman Ronnie Montgomery.

The Hospital Authority does not plan to announce an opening date for the new hospital until after the Virginia Department of Health action on the Request for Extension.

The Hospital Authority encourages people interested in monitoring the progress of the hospital to follow the Authority’s Facebook™ page which can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/LeeCountyHospitalAuthority> or the Lee County Medical Center website at www.leecountyhealth.com.

On May 5, 2018, the Lee County Hospital Authority and the Lee County Medical Center hosted a Community Forum which included an overview of the initial planned hospital services and a question and answer session. Over 125 residents attended.

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About the Lee County Hospital Authority.

The Board of Supervisors of Lee County created the Lee County Hospital Authority on April 15, 2014. After successfully obtaining a Certificate of Public Need and purchasing the former Lee Regional Medical Center building from its previous owner, the Authority chose Americore Health, LLC, as its partner in re-opening a hospital in Lee County.

About Americore Health, LLC

Americore Health is a new hospital management, investment and acquisition company with new profitable business models and significant capital for investment in rural hospitals.