

SHD Board Reorganizes Monday

Gray Elected New Board President; Ratliff's Resignation Accepted

By Dustin Wright
Sentinel Managing Editor

Less than one week removed from an interesting turn of events associated with the Seminole Hospital District's Board of Directors special meeting held last Wednesday evening, SHD Board of Directors formally approved the resignation of former board president Troy Ratliff. Ratliff, the former Place 2 seat holder for the SHD Board of Directors, offered his resignation to the board through a written

statement he read aloud shortly following the start of the hospital board's Feb. 27 special meeting.

A meeting in which SHD Directors unanimously voted 6-0 in favor of placing a \$48.5 million general obligations bond proposal before Seminole Hospital District taxpayers, which if approved, would fund a proposed expansion and renovation project for the Memorial Hospital and Memorial Health Care Center facilities.

With Ratliff's vacancy as the head



of the SHD's Board of Directors, board director Elizabeth Brown made the motion to nominate board vice president Geoff Gray to be appointed as the new board president, which was seconded by fellow director Ramon Mata and

approved in a unanimous 4-0 vote, with Gray abstaining and board director Blaine Nichols absent from Monday's meeting.

SHD Board Director Dairold Lambert was nominated and approved as the board's vice president in Monday's meeting.

No time table or appointment options were offered in Monday's special meeting on how the Place 2 vacancy left behind by Ratliff would be handled by SHD officials and board members.

"I think it was a move that caught everyone by surprise," said Betsy Briscoe, CEO of the Seminole Hospital District, in Sunday story produced by the *Sentinel*. "I know it did me, personally."

Ratliff, who served as the Place 2 representative for the SHD, was appointed to the post last May after he opted not to seek re-election to the board during the May 2012 municipal filing process. No other candidates filed intentions to serve in the Place 2 seat in the May 2012 process, opening the door for Ratliff's re-appointment, which he accepted from SHD Board members.

Ratliff's resignation reads as follows, according to a copy of his resignation statement provided in last Wednesday's special meeting:

"As we move to the next agenda item, which is to consider/approve a bond election, I have this statement.

"The vote that is about to be taken is to call a \$45 million dollar bond election for the expansion of our hospital.

"During my time as a board member, we have had numerous projects to keep our facilities and equipment updated and replaced as needed. My point being I believe as a board member, one of our goals is to be aware of future facility and services our growing community will benefit from, while at the same time demonstrating financial responsibility.

"The citizens of the hospital district will voice their opinion on this bond, and if passed, the bond will be repaid through a one time tax increase over 20 years to service the debt, so the debt service is not my issue.

"My issue and concern is with the tremendous rise in the cost of operations, lower and lower collection percentages, new government mandates and reimbursement cuts that may occur in the next two years. Adding 60,000 sq ft of floor space will obviously increase our energy costs, will require additional staff and maintenance.

"This expansion is seen as a way to attract new doctors, including general practitioners, OB/GYN, surgeons, specialty doctors and additional nursing staff, all of which will have a direct impact on the

operating expenses.

"Again, I emphasize the fact I know the bond debt repayment is guaranteed by the single tax increase, but what has not been projected is the yearly tax increase that will be necessary to sustain the operating budget.

"In order not to be a dissenting vote or appear to be unconcerned with our community's future healthcare needs or for our hospital and it's staff, I step down as your board president and member this evening, so when the vote is cast, it may be a unified vote and it is my sincere hope that in the years to come, my concerns will have been unfounded."

After Ratliff's resignation, Gray assumed the role of presiding over the board for last Wednesday's meeting, per by-law guidelines of the district.

Briscoe said the SHD Board of Directors will have to formally consider Ratliff's resignation from the board in their Monday evening regular meeting, which is slated for a 6:30 p.m. start at the Memorial Hospital campus' administration board room.

Option's for Ratliff's replacement on the board could be an appointment of a resident from the Place 2 boundaries to serve upon the board for an unexpired term, which will be up for election in the May 2014 municipal election process, to leave the Place 2 seat vacant for the remainder of Ratliff's scheduled term, or to call for a special election for the seat.

City, County Effluent Water Project Nears End

By Dustin Wright
Sentinel Managing Editor

City of Seminole officials are projecting a major portion of their effluent water pipeline project -- a joint venture between the municipality and Gaines County -- will be completed this week.

The \$1.34 million project, approved by both governmental entities late last calendar year, is which is anticipated to deliver a minimum of 400,000 gallons of treated effluent water from the City's wastewater pond to the Gaines County Park/Golf Course facilities, per day.

Seminole City Administrator Tommy Phillips, on Monday, said the project was nearing completion on the installation of roughly 10 miles of PVC piping, which was bid at a price of \$1.09 million by Whitney Underground Utilities of Valley Mills.

"We are anticipating to be tied into to the water pump system at the wastewater treatment facility's pond sometime this week," said Phillips. "They (Whitney Underground Utilities) knocked this project out fairly quickly."

Phillips stated pipeline installation was covering an average span of 1 mile per day once underway.

The remaining portion of the project, according to City officials, is the installation of pipeline from the southern portion of the Gaines County Park property to a holding pond at the Gaines County Golf Course.

"I am anticipating this to all be completed by the end of March," said Phillips of the construction project.

Once completed, the City of Seminole will oversee the installation, repairs and maintenance of the pipeline,

while Gaines County will reimburse the City of Seminole for pipeline installation, maintenance and repairs to the line, as well as a 40-cent for each 1,000 gallon of discharged water delivered by the City through the pipeline to the County.

County officials, in a late July 2012 meeting, said they were suffering a water shortage at the 18-hole golf course facility that averaged roughly 400,000 gallons daily. On a peak summer day, according to Gaines County leaders, the GCGC could stand to use 900,000 to 1 million gallons of water to water the course.

To help alleviate some of the water issues, Gaines County recently completed the installation of a roughly 5 million gallon water reservoir at the course as a way to provide additional water storage and give some relief to the course's groundwater pumping systems.

In late-November, the Seminole City Council unanimously approved of a bid to issue Certificates of Obligation for the project. Out of six bids received, Seminole Council Members approved of a bid from the investment firm of Robert W. Baird and Co., Inc., which offered the City of Seminole the lowest interest rate among six competitive bids for the \$1.76 million sought by the municipality to cover costs for the project.

Baird and Company's interest rate bid was quoted at being 1.818283 percent.

The \$1.76 million in Certificates of Obligations was issued to the City by Dec. 20, and will have a 15-year payback, with an annual cost of \$144,000. The certificates could be paid off in full after a 10 year period, according to contract language.

Elections: SHD Voters to Decide on Bond

From Page 1

Loewen, the current Place 4 seat holder and SISD Board Secretary, will face off against Freeman in the upcoming election, which will see early voting run from April 29 through May 3.

In the Place 3 race, Darby and Duncan will face off in a race to gain the seat currently held by SISD Board President Jerry Don Foote.

Foote, who has been a member of the SISD Board of Trustees for 31 years, opted not to seek re-election to the board for another three-year term.

On Friday evening, at 6:30 p.m., the four candidates seeking election to the Seminole Hospital District's Board of Directors as "At-Large" members will conduct a ballot position drawing at the Memorial Hospital campus' Administration Board room.

The four-person race for May 11 general elections process includes SHD Board President Geoff Gray and Board Secretary Tina Siemens, as well as challengers James Lavender and Gary Dugger.

Dugger is a former Place 3 seat holder and board president of the hospital district, as well as a long time board president of the Seminole Independent School District, while Lavender is participating in his first election as a hospital district candidate after two unsuccessful attempts to run for the Dist. 3 Place 1 and Dist. 3, Place 2 seats upon the Seminole City Council.

Early voting for the May 11 municipal elections process will be held between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. at the Seminole ISD Administration Building, located at 207 S.W. Ave. D.

Polls for the early voting process will be open from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. during the five day process.

Election day voting on May 11 will be held at the Seminole Ambassador Room, located at 101 E. Ave. A (former City Hall building). Election day polling will be conducted from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Local SISD and SHD boundary residents, who are not currently registered to vote, may register with the Gaines County Tax Assessor/Collector's Office through April 11 to participate in the elections process.

Seminole Hospital District Bond Election

The decision on whether to fund a \$48.5 million bond for a proposed expansion/renovation project at the Memorial Hospital and Memorial Health Care Center facilities for the Seminole Hospital District will be brought before district voters in a May 11 election process.

The vote to consider the bond issuance

was approved with a unanimous 6-0 vote of the SHD's Board of Directors, following the resignation of Board President Troy Ratliff at the opening of Wednesday evening's special meeting and a presentation of revisions to the project by officials with McKinstry, which included the addition of seven new patient rooms and the construction of a second floor shell above the revised addition.

The proposed bond project will total 128,450 sq ft, of which 81,020 sq ft will be new construction, according to information provided by SHD officials.

Project plans call for the construction of a new three-level emergency/operating room wing facility adjacent to the current emergency room facility at Memorial Hospital, according to a Feb. 18 project presentation to SHD board members.

McKinstry officials are proposing the construction of a basement level to the new addition, which would house the hospital district's information technology department, emergency room on-call doctor's living quarters, mechanical room and clean storage facilities.

Ground level facilities for the new addition would feature the hospital's emergency room facility, which would include four ER patient rooms, one cardiac room, two trauma rooms, one isolation room, two storage rooms, three treatment rooms, and four urgent

care rooms. In addition, the ER facility would see an enlarged waiting area, with a holding capacity of 35-to-40 people, and separate patient entrances for emergency personnel and patients/visitors.

The second level of the facility would house the hospital's operating room department, complete with two full-sized operating room and one Caesarean section operating room, which could easily convert over to a full operating room in the event of additional surgical needs.

General patient rooms for the facility would remain on the ground level of the hospital's floor plans, according to drawings presented in Monday's meeting, while an expanded Labor/Delivery Dept. and Outpatient Surgery wing would be constructed on top of the campus' current patient wings.

Additions at the Memorial Health Care Center will see the addition of 16 new rooms, broken into four, four-patient "pods," which would have the capability of housing Alzheimer's patients.

The additions, according to hospital district officials, will not change the local facility's Medicare designation of being a "Critical Access Hospital," which limits the facility to just 25 patient beds, according to Medicare reimbursement guidelines.

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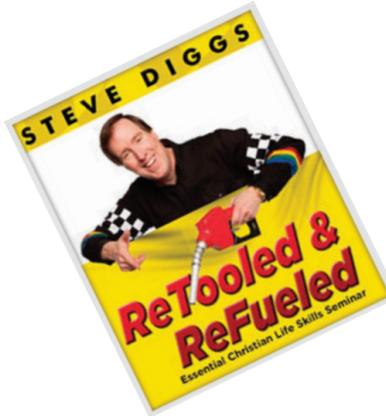
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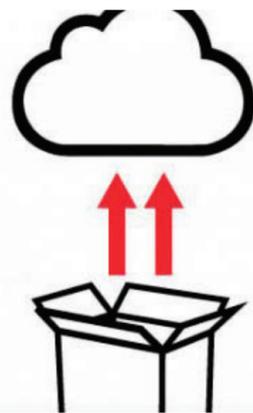


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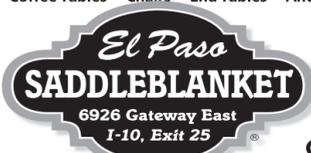
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