RLMC

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to better coordinate and improve patient care."

There is incredible value in working together and planning for patient care is an active and continuous process that includes an integrated system of settings, services and providers, said Dr. David Spoelhof, medical director of Wilderness Health and chair of the quality committee.

"It is our goal to collaborate throughout the patient's continuum of care and identify areas for improvement with care coordination," he said in a statement.

Opportunities for areas of improvement include chronic disease management and critical care transfers, he said.

RLMC patients will be able to see more specialists as a result of the collaboration, but when they will start locally is not yet known, Odegaard said.

The regional collaborative has a number of common goals, Odegaard said. Those goals include:

■ Keeping health care local to patients by maintaining independence of facilities while maximizing operating efficiencies and reducing costs.

■ Coordination and improvement of patient care.

■ Possible participation in alternative payment models, such as accountable care organizations and bundled payments.

■ Exploring shared service opportunities.

One of Wilderness Health's first initiatives will be to use data to enhance patient care coordination, according to a news release.

"We'll be able to identify those patients who have missed preventive screenings, such as mammograms and colonoscopies," said Michael Delfs, CEO of Mercy Hospital in Moose Lake and vice chair of Wilderness Health. "By using data, we can identify which patients are at high risk for hospitalizations and work towards preventing that."

Expertise will be shared among members while keeping patients in their local communities to receive care, he said.

Some of these enhanced technological health care tools are beyond reach for individual health care providers and Wilderness Health works to create bridges among these rural health care providers, according to a release.

"Wilderness Health's goal is to bring together rural, independent health care providers to share information, resources and best practices to improve health care for patients," said John Strange, CEO of St. Luke's and chair of Wilderness Health. "Wilderness Health respects the autonomy of our members, understands that independence creates flexibility and values the expertise of our members. We are not looking to change that but rather build upon it."

Wilderness Health was legally incorporated on Dec. 12, 2013. To learn more about Wilderness Health and its initiatives, visit www.wildernesshealthmn.org.

COUNCIL

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meeting.

The fee is expected to add $6 annually to cable subscriber bills. It is estimated to generate from $9,000 to $11,000 annually, said Councilor Cynthia Jaksa, who serves as chair of the city's cable commission. The exact amount is not known because the number of subscribers in the city is private information, she said.

Mayor Bob Anderson voted against the motion. He said he wanted to see the 2015 PEG budget to consider how the money generated by the fee would be used. He also said the fee would be a burden to some residents financially struggling to pay other bills.

Approval of the subscriber fee was recommended by the cable commission, which reviewed an operating agreement between the city, cable commission and KCCTV; the commission's bylaws; and the franchise ordinance with MidContinent Communications, the city's cable TV service provider.

The proposal brought to the council stated the city, under the franchise agreement, may enact a PEG fee of up to $1 each month to all city cable subscribers for "telecommunications-related capital needs."

Jaksa and cable commission members Ramona Johnson, Chrystal Clance and Tim Wegner told the council the PEG channel is being viewed by city residents, many of whom have said they find value in the local programming offered on the channel and support the fee.

Johnson said the money generated by the fee will be used to purchase capital equipment. In addition, she and Jaksa said the channel will help provide "transparency in government" by airing meetings of the local airport commission and sewer district boards, among other meetings not covered by local media.

Wegner said the commission will continue to seek grants at the same time the fee is collected.

Letters of support written by Robin Bjorkquist and Ward Merrill of Backus Community Center were presented to the council, and Jean Evans, Diane Adams, George and Susan Fraik and Delores Lundeen spoke in support of the fee.

Bjorkquist, who also attended the meeting, said it would be irresponsible of the council not to take part fully in the opportunities a PEG channel offers. She said the PEG channel would offer material exclusive to the channel and KCCTV's website.

Susan Fraik said offering local programming on the channel will inform the community and encourage involvement by the public.

Several people said an additional $6 fee annually for city cable subscribers wouldn't be much of an added expense for the value offered.

Councilors Paul Eklund and Gail Rognerud, and members of the public, said the timing is right to expand use of the channel as the community moves on the Voyage Forward initiative, established in response to layoffs at the Boise mill in 2013 to plan for future development, and a surge in pride by students and faculty in the Falls school district.

Councilor Pete Kalar said he opposed the proposal at first glance because the city sets taxes for its property owners, but should not impose a fee for the services of a private business.

However, he said he sees value in the PEG channel to the community and believed 50 cents per month wasn't a large amount for residents.

Jaksa said the channel will be offered for use to other parts of the county, including the city of Littlefork and has already been used to record some meetings in Ranier.

Anderson said MidContinent surveyed cable subscribers in the city a few years ago and found 75 percent of subscribers said they did not favor an increase in cable fees to support a public access channel.

And he said the city appears to have two levels of economy: one in which residents can afford an additional fee without the purchase of additional services; the other of which residents are struggling to pay their basic cable service and water bills and to purchase groceries.

Anderson asked commission members if they would consider making the additional fee optional to allow city subscribers to decide what they want to purchase and support, or conducting another survey.

"I can't support an increase for folks in the community who can't afford it," he said.

In addition, he questioned Jaksa's support of allowing cable subscribers outside the city limits use of the channel when she has criticized funding for the airport.

Jaksa has maintained for several years city residents are unfairly taxed to support the airport when it serves others outside the city limits. Jaksa has pushed to establish a tax district to promote what she has called an equitable distribution of the costs among the community members. She has argued that city taxpayers are carrying twice the burden of airport support that county residents are through taxes.

City Attorney Steve Shermoen has been discussing a law about how airport funding can be distributed with Koochiching County Attorney Jeff Naglosky.

FINANCES

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Still, he remained optimistic that when the board sets its levy during a Truth in Taxation hearing at 6 p.m. Dec. 15, the district will continue down the path of healthy finances.

Other business

In other business Monday, the board agreed to hire the Minnesota School Board Association for strategic planning and goal setting at a cost of $3,900, which includes travel expenses.

A strategic planning timeline from MSBA shows roles it will play in forming long-term goals for the district, as well as how school board members, the superintendent, school staff and district residents will factor into completing those goals.

Grover said the Blue Ribbon Panel, made up of community members who brainstorm ways to improve the district, has also created similar timelines that steer the district toward success.

"MSBA will come up and do some staff and community meetings and will compile the data and work with us to set the goals," he said. "They will go as far as implementation (of those goals)."

Board Chaiman Gordy Dault said he's attended Blue Ribbon Panel meetings and feels the group is doing "an excellent job" in setting goals for the district.

"MSBA has a program to tie all this together," he said. "I favor this...I do think it's really important. It's been a long time since long-range planning has happened in this school district."

The board also:

■ Approved the hire of Bill Schrader as a half-time custodian.

■ Approved the hire of Honey Hoopman as a regular, non-union bus driver.

■ Approved the hire of Staci Nelson as an educational support professional.

■ Approved the hire of Abigail Oveson as an educational support professional.

■ Approved the hire of Karen Bates and Erin Warren as co-coaches of the speech time.

■ Recalled Barb Johnson from an unrequested leave of absence.

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