

June 23, 2018

Nehalem Bay Health District Considers Future of old Wheeler Hospital

A study commissioned by the Nehalem Bay Health District has recommended the demolition of the more than 60-year old hospital building in Wheeler, Oregon. Demolition of the deteriorating building could make the site available for new uses.

The health district board and a number of area residents discussed the old hospital building on June 19, 2018 during a special information meeting held as part of the district's strategic planning process. No decisions were made, but there was widespread agreement that demolition of the building, while costly, should be part of the district's plan for the future. A number of participants in the information session indicated that the district should determine potential future uses of the site as part of planning for demolition.

While the old hospital suffers from a settling foundation, cracks in walls, inadequate HVAC systems, decades of deferred maintenance and a variety of other structural problems, the underlying site would be suitable for a modern building that would benefit from appropriate site preparation and current standards of engineering and construction.

Structural engineering consultants have told the board that restoration of the building is not practically and economically feasible. The building, like many structures built in the same time period, contains asbestos. The asbestos is contained and presents no health hazard, but will be costly to contain if the building is demolished.

The district has also commissioned a report on the geology of the site to determine whether a new building at the same location would be feasible. That report and the study discussing demolition are available for public inspection at the district's website: www.nehalembayhd.org.

The old hospital building was used as a hospital until the 1980s and currently houses the district's office and meeting space, several tenants and the North Coast Food Bank. The district has indicated it wants to work closely with tenants on any future plans affecting the building.

The health district board will continue the informational phase of its strategic plan development with a special meeting on June 26, 2018 during which the current condition of the building housing the Rinehart Clinic will be discussed. The district owns the building and leases it to the clinic. The public is invited to attend and participate. The meeting will be held at 7:00 pm at 278 Rowe Street in Wheeler.