



NEHALEM BAY HEALTH DISTRICT

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For Immediate Release

August 2, 2022

Health District Receives Welcome Jump Start to Develop New Health Center/Pharmacy New Center Would Be Built in Wheeler and Will Create New Opportunities for Housing for Health Care Workers

Efforts by the Nehalem Bay Health District to improve primary health care delivery in north Tillamook County have received a major boost thanks to Oregon Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden.

Earlier this year the health district asked to be considered for “congressionally directed funding” to finance a portion of a new primary health care center and pharmacy in Wheeler. Merkley and Wyden [announced recently](#) that the requests have been included in proposals approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee where Merkley is a member.

The request for \$3 million constitutes a major jump start for the district’s funding plan for the new health center/pharmacy.

“A new, state of the art health care center and pharmacy will truly be a transformative development in north Tillamook County,” said Marc C. Johnson, President, Nehalem Bay Health District. “The new health center/pharmacy will double the size of the current aging facility, allowing better delivery of services including specialty care, to more residents and visitors. The Nehalem Bay Health District is enormously grateful to Senators Merkley and Wyden for understanding and supporting quality health care close to home in rural Oregon.”

Johnson said the district is enormously gratified by the broad community support shown for the project, including endorsements of the congressional funding request from the Tillamook County Commissioners; the mayors of Wheeler, Nehalem and Manzanita; the Neahkahnie School District (which partners with the existing clinic on a School Based Health Center on its campus); the Emergency Volunteer Corps of Nehalem Bay; CARE, the non-profit social service agency in Tillamook County; and Oregon state senator Rachel Armitage.

All who endorsed the project understand the need to provide quality health care services close to where people live and work in rural Oregon.

“This level of community support clearly helps position the project for success, and the support had to be impressive to Senators Merkley and Wyden,” Johnson said. He said the entire board deeply appreciates the community support.

The district envisions construction the new facility on a 1.3-acre parcel directly adjacent to Highway 101 in Wheeler. The district purchased the property last summer and has done substantial preliminary design work, including geotechnical studies and coordination with the city of Wheeler.

The new facility is envisioned as a 19,000 square foot medical center and pharmacy on two levels. The new health center will contain expanded exam rooms, specialty suites, staff work and meeting areas and a significantly larger pharmacy.

The district is working to finalize an overall funding plan for the health center and pharmacy, including an approach to upgrade and revitalize the existing Nehalem Valley Care Center in Wheeler, a 48-bed skilled nursing facility that is one of the few facilities of its kind on the Oregon coast.

The district intends, once the health center and pharmacy are relocated to the new site in Wheeler, as part of its long-term strategy and subject to community approval, to repurpose a portion of its existing campus to address a critical community need – workforce housing opportunities for workers at the health center and Care Center.

The district is also committed to working with the North County Food Bank, currently housed in the old Wheeler hospital, to identify a suitable location for a new food bank facility.

The district welcomes community involvement in its planning and development and holds two regular meetings every month – the second Wednesday for health district business and the fourth Wednesday for Care Center business. The public is invited to attend the meetings that are held on Zoom.

For more meeting and general information: <https://nehalembayhd.org/>