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OhioHealth plans new primary care facility

Al Lawrence, Correspondent Published 11:38 a.m. ET Sept. 24, 2018 | Updated 4:09 p.m. ET Sept. 24, 2018



(Photo: News Journal file)

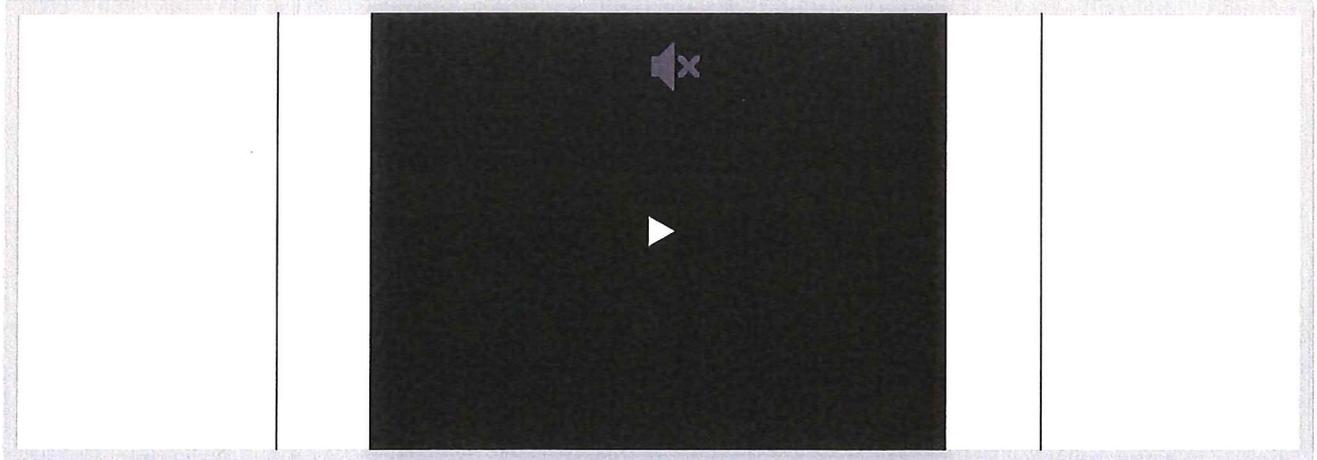
OhioHealth is preparing plans for up to \$275 million worth of improvements to its facilities around Ohio, including those in Mansfield and Shelby. Richland County commissioners voted unanimously following a public hearing during their meeting on Thursday to approve a resolution authorizing Franklin County to serve as the lead county to issue hospital facility revenue bonds to finance the work.

Joseph Lyren, vice president of finance for OhioHealth Mansfield and Shelby hospitals, said one of the main local projects will be to build a new primary care facility in order to bring additional primary care providers such as doctors, nurse practitioners and physicians' assistants to the area.

"We're in the process of securing land on the primary care initiative and we probably have a 12-month timeline after that," he said.

Lyren gave no other details of local projects. However, the published notice for the hearing said some of the money will be used for "construction of and/or improvements to the freestanding emergency department associated with the OhioHealth Mansfield Hospital" and "to the emergency department associated with OhioHealth Shelby Hospital."

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Lyren pointed out that OhioHealth has spent \$163 million over the past four years in Richland County on facility construction and improvements – including construction of a medical office building and a parking garage and other hospital improvements on the Mansfield campus. Another \$60 million was spent during the period on more routine capital projects such as an MRI machine and renovations to the nursing unit. This year, \$9 million worth of plans are in place.

The bond issue will fund a variety of projects within the OhioHealth system with each depending on the needs for each facility. Some of the other projects are a new corporate administration building that is under construction in Columbus, the master plan-bed privatization plan at Marion General Hospital and projects to bring in newer technologies at other facilities.

"Our objective is to provide right level of care as close to the patient as possible," said Jeffrey Alexander, vice president-treasury for OhioHealth. "Rather than building one large new hospital or new tower, there are a number of smaller projects that will help execute our strategy."

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Officials said the Affordable Care Act is helping to change the health care business into a volume business where money is put into a basket, health care is provided for a fixed fee and the amount of health care services provided depends on how healthy or sick the population is. "This is where we as a nation are moving our health care services to so we are moving our assets now so we are in a position to be able to meet that changing system," Lyren explained.

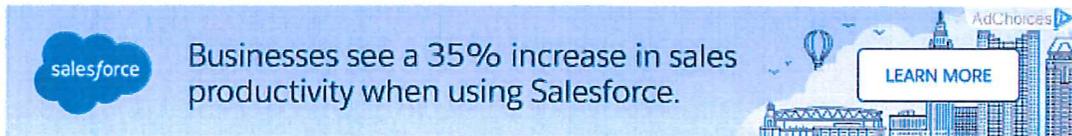
The attorney who is handling the paperwork for the bond issue, Erin Sutton of Dinsmore and Shohl of Columbus, emphasized that the bond issue creates no financial obligation for any participating county. "There are certain purposes the (state and federal) revenue code deems worthy enough to issue tax exempt funding for – particularly for non-profit 501.c3 organizations," she said. "Technically the government entity issues the bonds and immediately loans the proceeds to the 501.c3, and they're on the hook for the bonds."

Franklin County will issue the bonds for OhioHealth with Richland, Marion, Delaware, Hardin and Athens counties are participating. Sutton said the bonds should be on the market in October or early November.

In other business, commissioners approved 20 contracts between Job and Family Services and a number of agencies for fiscal 2019 for services for youth and family, children, workforce development and general aid to the needy. JFS director Sharlene Neumann noted that the contracts included an increase to the Richland Area Chamber of Commerce for workforce development, which has improved since the service has been combined with the chamber and economic development efforts.

Neumann also told commissioners that the area lost a company that provided 70 percent of the agency's transportation services under new regulations. She said the problem was a matter of the company not providing all the information required and that she hopes the company can resolve the problem because JFS needs transportation providers.

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