

Hendry Regional Medical Center
Questions and Answers regarding
Tuesday, March 9th Special Election

1. Why not just lower taxes instead of going to the expense of building a new emergency department in Clewiston and expanding services in LaBelle?

- The current emergency department is constantly being repaired, just to keep it up to code. In the near future, further improvements will no longer be viable because of the age and condition of the physical plant. New, state-of-the-art facilities must be provided, or sooner or later, we will be forced to rebuild or close.
- We've seen an increase in visits to the emergency department of about 10% each year over the last 5 years. The existing facility is too small to meet current demand. Providing privacy to meet Federal standards is next to impossible to maintain. To keep up with the demand and to continue providing competitive healthcare in Hendry County, these substantial capital improvements must be made.
- Expansions will also allow us to provide a broader range of services such as orthopedics, pediatrics, ENT, urology, diagnostics, etc.
- To participate in a very competitive market, we must have excellent healthcare resources.

2. How do you determine what services you will add to LaBelle?

- We look at outmigration data to determine what services are being referred out. We then add new services, based on the healthcare needs of Hendry County residents.
- We are hearing that there is a need for expanded physician specialties, such as orthopedics and pediatrics to better meet the local needs of the community. We also know that there is a need for expanded outpatient diagnostics. We have, therefore, developed business plans for recruitment priorities and additional diagnostics. For instance, to recruit an orthopedic surgeon in LaBelle, we must provide MRI services to meet the clinical and diagnostic needs of our patients.

3. Why do we have to vote for this if it is not a vote to raise taxes?

- The Florida Constitution requires a referendum or formal vote by the citizens, if tax dollars are going to be used for funding projects that extend beyond one year.

4. Are local contractors going to be used in the expansion project?

- Yes – to the absolute possible extent. They must, however, be competitive in pricing and have the expertise to meet our specialized needs.

5. Will the construction at the Hospital and expansion of services in LaBelle bring new jobs to the community?

- Definitely! Hendry Regional Medical Center is the 3rd largest employer in Hendry County. As we complete these capital projects, local labor will be utilized, and new jobs will be created as patient volume increases.

6. When will the renovations at the Clewiston Campus be complete?

- We anticipate breaking ground within 90 days of the positive vote. Construction will be completed within 18 to 24 months.

7. When can we expect to see expanded diagnostic services in LaBelle?

- New physician services could be on site within one year, and capital expenditures completed within two years.

8. What can I do to help support the passing of this referendum?

- Please educate your friends and family about the special election on Tuesday, March 9th. It's all about allowing Hendry Regional Medical Center to develop State-of-the-Art Healthcare by building a new Emergency Department in Clewiston and expanding services in LaBelle.
- If you are a member of a church or civic group and you would like us to present on this critically important upcoming referendum, we would welcome the opportunity.
- If you are active in a church, we would be happy to provide inserts in your church bulletin on Sunday, March 7th, the Sunday prior to the vote?

9. The hospital is now struggling with finances, and we are being asked to approve up to 1 mill of current taxes for the funding of building and expanding services. What if you take on more debt, will you raise taxes?

- No. We are not asking to increase taxes. In fact the Hospital Board of Authority has actually lowered the millage from 3.1 mills in 2004 to the current 2.9 mills.

9 (continued) The hospital is not struggling with finances, and we are being asked to prove up to 1 mill of current taxes for the funding of building and expanding services. What if you take on more debt, will you raise taxes?

- New, state of the art facilities will allow us to expand services, and more people will be able to receive services in Hendry County because we will be capable of meeting a broader range of their healthcare needs. Therefore, we will be able to continue growing volume and strengthening the fiscal well-being of HRMC.
- New facilities will be more cost effective and efficient to operate. (i.e. - We should be able to lower operating costs). Furthermore, new facilities, technologies and services will create an additional demand for services, and thus grow patient revenue.
- We are able to get a lower interest rate for construction to secure funding through this bond referendum, so we will incur less debt with a lower interest rate.
- With the current physical plant, we are at a point where there is no opportunity to grow our services. A new emergency department will help increase the volume needed to increase revenue. We need expansion opportunities to allow us to grow our services. It will assist us in recruiting additional physicians, and this will grow services and revenue. If we can't increase revenue, then we may have to increase taxes.

10. Will physicians be shared between Clewiston and LaBelle?

- We currently place physicians and other providers at both locations and adjust their presence based on patient demand, and it will continue to do so.

11. I understand that the hospital projects are expected to cost \$14 million. What portion of that money is designated to LaBelle? Clewiston?

- We estimate that approximately \$2 million of this total will be required to implement our plans in LaBelle.

12. What will happen if the bond does not get approved?

- Taxes may have to be increased to maintain the integrity of the aging hospital building, services might be decreased, there would be an inability to recruit physicians, and, ultimately, the future of the hospital system could be jeopardized.

13. For several years, you have been telling the community that you're going to build an emergency department and we've heard about additional services for LaBelle.

a. What has taken so long?

We have developed specific plans and designs, and State law requires us to obtain the permission from the voters before we incur long-term debt.

b. How do we really know that if we vote yes that you'll actually move forward with these plans?

The Board of Authority is absolutely and unanimously committed to these projects, which will better meet the healthcare needs of Hendry County residents. We are also firmly convinced that these efforts are paramount to the long-term survival of both the medical center and our local communities.

14. You say you're not going to raise our taxes, and you're only going to use up to one mill of the current 2.9 mills. Does that mean you are not going to raise taxes next year or the years thereafter?

There are too many uncontrollable variables that exist today in our county, state and nation for us to do so in good faith. What we do know is that building a new emergency department will attract new doctors, and new doctors will attract new patients, and new patients will bring new revenue. Consequently, there should be no need to raise taxes. It is the Board of Authority's unanimous decision NOT to raise taxes. Our hopes are that with increased services and revenues, we will be able to lower taxes in the future.