January 1, 2021

Dear Windsor Area Tax Payers,

I wanted to share some information that I hope might demonstrate to Windsor residents that the North Sonoma County Healthcare District/Healdsburg Hospital provides good value to Windsor residents.

A corner stone of my perspective is that the hospitals in this county, as is the case throughout the country, are part of a greater regional system, which taken together, allows the system to more effectively meet the fluctuating health care needs of people living and visiting the region. The rural hospitals in this county are an integral part of the regional system and are not financially viable without the long standing district funding model which relies on small annual payments from property owners in the district. Clearly the prevailing public funding model for critical services such as fire, police, schools and hospitals is to collect from across the broader community versus collecting from only those who use the services. Although most of us will hopefully never have to use police, fire, and emergency room services throughout our life, we accept the method for funding those services and take comfort in knowing that those services are available if and when we, or our loved ones, need them. As we travel throughout the state and the country we take for granted that there will be emergency medical facilities; and in many cases that is true because people like those of us living in the north Sonoma County district voted to assess ourselves an annual amount to fund a hospital that would not be viable based solely on patient fees for service.

I understand that for many of us who expect to get our medical needs addressed through Kaiser or Sutter Hospital may be inclined to feel like financially supporting smaller hospitals is not important to us. Even though Sutter Health relocated their facility closer to Windsor, their decision to reduce their bed count and not adequately increase their emergency room capability has increased the region’s dependency on Healdsburg Hospital’s beds and emergency services, particularly during high demand periods.

As you may not know, the emergency room wait times at Healdsburg Hospital are usually less than 15 minutes where at Sutter it is typically hour(s) and sometimes as much as 6 or more hours. Our district hospital handled 8752 emergency visits last year, all of which would have greatly increased the delay time to address those emergencies at Sutter and Kaiser had Healdsburg not been available. The point is, that although I expect to be using Kaiser for my own medical needs I realize that without other local district funded hospitals the delay in treatment would be greater. To help underscore the point last year our district hospital had 11,120 visits from Windsor and Santa Rosa residents, obviously without our district hospital they would have impacted the capacity of the other Santa Rosa Hospitals. Clearly all of this becomes even more crucial should the region experience COVID19, the much anticipated earthquake and continued wild fires.

If the regional nature of the hospital system and our responsibility to do our share to fund those hospitals does not resonate let me point out another very tangible benefit provided to Windsor residents by Healdsburg Hospital.

Last year the North County Health Care District served 1745 different Windsor residents for a total of over 5812 visits a year. The 1745 people served is in excess of the 1700 students attending Windsor High School and 1700 calls for service from our fire department in a typical year. If one is going to argue that not enough people use our hospitals services then by that standard we would stop funding our local high school and fire services as well. Why just single out the district Hospital as the one to stop funding because the majority of people do not expect to use it?

As an employer with 336 employees Healdsburg hospital is a significant economic contributor to Windsor and region. The average salary is $63,000 so the estimated annual payroll for the 43 employees residing in Windsor is $2,000,000 and if you apply the economic multiplier used throughout the country to determine the economic benefit that equates to between $16,500,000 and $29,800,000 at the high end. Think of the impact that would mean to Windsor and its services and businesses that rely on those employees pay checks.

Below is some additional data relative the North County Health Care District.

* Parcel tax generates 3,396,150
  + Windsor share is $1,296,750 (38%)
* Healdsburg Hospital Emergency Room wait times continue to average 15 to 20 minutes
* Total Emergency Department visits in 2018 were 8,752
* 2018 Windsor Residents Data
  + 1745 different individuals received services 5812 times Including:
    - 1071 Emergency Department visits (12 % of total visits)
    - 1269 visits to HPG (primary care)
    - 447 visits to specialist physicians (located at HPG)
    - 754 Radiology (CT< MRI, X-ray, etc.)
    - 626 Visits to Wound Care
    - 329 Outpatient Surgeries
    - 656 Lab visits
    - 195 Occupational Medical visits
    - 133 visits for rehab-mostly outpatient physical therapy

Please let me know if there is additional information that you feel would be helpful.

Jim Nantell

Board Member,

North Sonoma County Health Care District