

Fallbrook Healthcare District to become Fallbrook Regional Health District

By *Tom Ferrall* on December 23, 2016

Fallbrook Healthcare District (FHD) is changing its name. Effective Feb. 1, FHD will be known as Fallbrook Regional Health District.

Bobbi Palmer, executive director of FHD, said the new name reflects that the district serves more than just the people of Fallbrook, and also the direction in which FHD is going in terms of health care. The FHD board approved the name change at its Dec. 14 meeting.

"We receive our tax revenue from Bonsall, De Luz, Rainbow and Fallbrook," said Palmer. "The board wanted to do make sure the 'regional' captured the fact that we are obligated, with the tax revenue, to support health services in each of those areas. So it will be 'Fallbrook Regional Health District,' and then underneath that name it will say, 'serving Bonsall, De Luz, Fallbrook and Rainbow.'"

"The other reason we changed the name is that Fallbrook Regional Health District is going into a direction of preventing the preventable, and health and wellness," continued Palmer. "And therein was the reason to take out the (word) care (from the name)."

FHD, which collects roughly \$1.6 million annually, awarded nearly \$700,000 in community health contracts for the fiscal year 2016-2017.

FHD was recognized at the December meeting by the Association of California Healthcare Districts (ACHD), which presented the district with ACHD certification. FHD is the 13th and most recent district to receive certification from ACHD, which requires a district to prove it has complied with the ACHD's "core set of standards referred to as Best Practices in Governance."

"It took us one year (to earn certification)," said Palmer. "It was important for us to do that. By receiving that award, we are able to say we are transparent, we are relevant and we abide by the highest level of government."

Dr. Frank Winton, who recently left the board, was recognized at the meeting for his 20 months of service as a director for FHD. Director Barbara Mroz was sworn in for a third four-year term on the board, and William Leach was sworn in to take over the seat on the board vacated by Winton.

The board also awarded a six-month contract, at \$10,000 a month, to A+ Urgent Care to provide extended hours service to the community. Extended hours are defined as hours open after 5 p.m. on weekdays and any hours open on weekends and holidays.

Prior to the board's vote on the new contract, Dr. Timothy J. Coen, owner of Fallbrook Urgent Care, once again asked the board to "level the playing field" by not awarding another contract to A+, one of his competitors in the urgent care business.

Coen, contacted the morning after the meeting, said he didn't understand the board's decision to approve the latest contract with A+.

"Why award A+ a contract when I am offering the same hours for nothing," said Coen. "It's disappointing, but not surprising. I was kind of expecting it. My view is basically that the district – with the closure of the hospital – is basically a little pet project district, and this is one of their pet projects."

Palmer said the board was justified in providing the financial support.

"In 2015, San Diego County Healthcare Services, through the MSR (municipal service review) and healthcare districts' sphere of its fullest review, did a report on Fallbrook Healthcare District and determined that, in the absence of the hospital and in the context of the affordable care act, they made a recommendation to the board to ensure that acute care services were provided to our residences," said Palmer.

Coen also stated at the meeting that "the district receives \$5,000 per month from A+ Urgent Care in the form of rent" and called it a "Sweetheart Deal."

"It's \$4,800 a month and that was a negotiated fee," said Palmer. "It's rent. We own the building where they reside and disperse their services."