



San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – May 28, 2019

Friday Harbor, WA

On May 22, 2019, the Board of San Juan County Public Hospital District No. 1 voted to give \$15,000 for the feasibility study looking into long-term care in the county. This money will go to the 501(c)(3) Inter Island Healthcare Foundation (www.interislandhealthcare.org), or IIHF, which is serving as the financial agent for the project. We understand that including this donation approximately half of the needed \$50,000 has been raised.

Commissioner Warren Appleton, a retired ER doctor, explained why he voted for the measure saying: “This is never a need until it becomes a crisis. You get one stroke and your family can’t take care of you. What are you going to do? It’s a tool we don’t have on this island anymore. It’s a tool that’s needed.”

Originally the District had planned to give an amount equal to the Lopez and Orcas hospital districts, but those districts are working on issues related to their medical centers and did not feel like they could contribute at this time. In a letter dated March 21, 2019, the San Juan County Board of Health also endorsed this project and expressed its hope that it would be countywide. As the project goes on, we hope all will see value in participating.

Commissioner Appleton later added, “We’re the second oldest county in the state, age-wise... it’s very disruptive for family members who have to go off island if one person has to be in a more secure nursing home type environment. It just disrupts the whole family. The last years of life are very difficult, and services like these can make them so much better.”

A feasibility study is not an exciting project on the face of it, and perhaps this is part of why securing the needed \$50,000 has been challenging. However, this is an investment to ensure that money raised to fund long-term care is spent wisely and sustainably. It will answer hard questions about the problem itself, what is most likely to work, and how to implement solutions.

Ultimately island residents will have to decide whether to fund long term care. District Superintendent Pamela Hutchins said, “this issue affects all islanders not just seniors, either for themselves in the future or for loved ones.” Those who would like to assist with funding the feasibility study can go to <http://www.interislandhealthcare.org/donate/> .