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OMC Life Center construction is under way

Latest hospital project to cost $1.1 million

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SENECA — The dust may have just settled on the new patient tower at Oconee Medical Center (OMC), but the wheels of progress haven't stopped turning.

OMC officials have blocked off a portion of the second floor of the old hospital, have taken contractor bids and are under way with the latest project — the establishment of a permanent home for OMC's new Life Center for Joint Health.

The $1.1 million undertaking will involve building 14 private rooms as well as a new rehabilitation area and dining facilities. However, according to Vice President of Operations Hunter Kome, this project isn't just about new facilities.

"We're not building a space as much as we are creating a new environment," Kome told OMC board members. "The physical space is just one aspect. This is an entirely new approach to care and rehabilitation."

Kome said the center's work includes involving family members in rehab after a knee or hip has been replaced and will likely result in much shorter hospital stays than are typically associated with replacement surgeries.

"We are already seeing some pretty dramatic results," he said of Life Center work already being undertaken in a temporary facility in the new patient tower.

As soon as final permits are obtained, construction will get under way. Kome estimated the project would take 200 days.

Six contractors bid on the project with the low bid going to Triangle Construction. Costs had originally been estimated at $950,000, requiring the board approve an additional $200,000 last week.

That was just one of several big ticket items approved by the board or its Finance Committee, which has authority to spend up to $100,000 without board approval, last week. Also approved were $55,000 for ultrasound equipment at the new Oconee Physician Practices obstetrics clinic, $61,000 for computer servers and $90,000 for relocation of the bio-medical shop to a portion of the patient tower basement.

An additional $125,000 was inked for renovations in the Omni suites for a new urologist's office, and it was agreed to take $1.25 million from short-term financing to pay for anesthesia and CT scan equipment. Vice President of Finance Greg Scarbrough said funds would be returned to the short-term account after ongoing financing negotiations are completed.

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