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ALERT CENTERPIECE

County leaders highlight ambulance fund, health department expansion, hospital growth

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From left, Cara Keys, Pasha Majdi, Larry Pack and Nicole Dollison talking about the new hospital expansion.

AINSLEY HALL/ Journal photo

CHARLES TOWN — Jefferson County Commissioners, WVU Medicine Jefferson Medical Center leaders and West Virginia State Treasurer Larry Pack came together at the Jefferson County Government Complex on Feb. 6 to talk about public health investments in the county.

During the regular County Commission meeting on Feb. 5, the county established a Rural Ambulance Service Fund. Commission President Pasha Majdi explained during the press conference that Jefferson County does not have good rural ambulance services, with response times that go over 10 minutes. After

conducting a study, the county will create a plan to provide high quality services to everyone. This fund will help implement that plan and create a safer community. Majdi explained that the money will come from future growth, specifically commercial growth, which has been a big focus for the county.

Majdi announced that they received news from Washington, D.C., that Senator Shelley Moore Capito helped secure \$370,000 in federal appropriations for the Jefferson County Health Department expansion into the new government complex. This department will be more accessible to residents by being ADA accessible and offering public transportation. Majdi hopes to increase clients who use these services by 50%. Commissioner Cara Keys added that the current health department is in Kearneysville, so by moving to 393 North Lawrence Street, more people can get the help they need.

"If someone can't afford a car and has to use that service, they would have to get a bus ride in the morning and walk on a very unsafe roadway to get there," Keys said. "So this is bringing it into a red zone where we have EPTA services that will actually stop here, and within walking distance of the hospital."

Jefferson Medical Center President and CEO Nicole Dollison also spoke during the conference, talking about the new hospital expansion currently in the works. A new three-story building will provide much needed space and new services, including a cancer and infusion center, allowing residents to get the medical care they need without leaving the county. The plan is for this \$60 million expansion to be completed in 2028. For patients, this new facility will provide specialized care without driving hours to get it.

"You'll be able to have your care in your neighborhood, and you'll be able to stay local, so you know your physicians, you know who's taking care of you, you know your nurses, you know the staff," Dollison said. "It's just nice to be able to go from your house, be able to park right outside the door, come in, get your care, turn around and walk back out, not look for parking, not being in a city you don't understand or don't know."

Treasurer Pack thanked the commissioners and WVU Medicine for the opportunity to hear about these new investments in health. As communities all over the state face problems with ambulance services in rural areas, Pack said it's great to see the county prioritize solving that issue and creating more accessible healthcare. Meanwhile, WVU Medicine is leading the way across the state in health, and seeing the projects being built all over West Virginia has been amazing.

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