

Health center likely to get \$90,000 in city funds - Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) - April 28, 1993

April 28, 1993 | Herald-Times (Bloomington, IN) | Jackie Sheckler

The new Community Health Center is the likely recipient of the city's first funds set aside for local social services.

The \$90,000 is a subsidy the council earmarked for social service agencies during last year's budget process. Council members have been debating where the funds should go. They will discuss that decision at tonight's council meeting.

"This is something I had hoped to see the city do over the years and it is going to be one of those votes with a lot of mixed feelings," Councilman John Fernandez said.

Although he is glad to see the funds help provide a new health center, Fernandez said he is aware that other area social service agencies also need money.

"It's hard to get excited about what we're doing because we know, at the same time, that there are a lot of unmet needs in the community, that we are essentially saying 'no' to a lot of other really worthy projects," Fernandez said.

The council will make the allocation final at next week's meeting. And that Wednesday, not coincidentally, will be last time Fernandez sits in his at-large seat on the council.

The two-term Fernandez announced his resignation in March because his new job as judicial clerk for Justice Roger De Bruler of the Indiana Supreme Court precludes political activities.

"This money is something I have felt very strongly about ever since 1987 when I first announced my campaign," Fernandez said.

"We wouldn't have wanted to rush and make a hasty decision. But I would have felt sort of bad not to have been able to vote on the allocation of the money."

The fund is made up of \$65,000 from the Westside Fund, \$18,637 from franchise fees, and \$6,363 from an annual pay increase the council turned down.

The Public Health Nursing Association has said it could free up millions of dollars for health care for the poor over the next two decades if all of its services could be in one place, councilman **Jack Hopkins** said.

The association administers a number of health-related services to the community's poor, including the new Community Health Access Program primary-care clinic; Women, Infants and Children Nutrition Program, Maternal-Child Health and Advanced Home Health Care.

Those services are now scattered over three separate buildings around town. Consolidating them into a single building could help provide as much as \$2.5 million over the next 20 years from rent and overhead that be used for health-care services, Councilman Jack Hopkins said.

The nursing association already has the land on West Dodds Street and plans to construct an additional building adjacent to their existing facility and expand its operations there.

The clinic and preventive health care were identified as a priority in the 1991 COMPASS needs assessment of Monroe County.

The city's allocation guidelines included:

The focus should be on previously identified priority areas.

Programs or projects should be such that a one-time investment will make a substantial difference.

Priority should be given to projects or programs where investments at this time will have a positive long-term effect.

Capital should be leveraged wherever possible by matching from other sources.

The health center met all these, Fernandez said.

But whether the council will ever be able to swing such an allocation again is uncertain, he added.

“I think it is fair to say that my colleagues on the council view this fund as something they would like to see continue,” Fernandez said. “Whether or not that will be reality is very hard to say.”

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