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City proposes giving medical clinic \$100,000

Volunteers in Medicine will open April 23

By Sarah Morin
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City leaders hope to give Volunteers in Medicine \$100,000 next year to help run its new free medical clinic in Bloomington.

“It’s inspiring to see how many doctors are signing up and nurses and dentists that care about their community,” city council President Chris Sturbaum said.

He and Mayor Mark Kruzan announced Wednesday their proposal to award the money if approved next month when the city council reconvenes.

That shouldn’t be a problem.

The city council signed a resolution weeks ago in support of state and federal legislation that calls for publicly paid universal health care.

During those meetings, council members heard stories of suffering from people who don’t have health insurance.

“It’s just a shame there’s not good health care for everybody,” Sturbaum said.

Sturbaum has been meeting with those involved with Volunteers in Medicine for the past several months.

The proposed money for Volunteers in Medicine will come from additional tax revenues to awarded by the state, according to a news release. It will go toward the clinic’s operating expenses.

“It will help enormously,” said Cindy Lott, an attorney and founding board member of Volunteers in Medicine. “We feel very, very honored that the city has chosen us.”

The money will help get the clinic doors open, she said.

Because of a recent outpouring of support, the clinic’s opening date has been moved from July to April 23. Cook Group gave Volunteers in Medicine \$600,000 for the clinic.

The clinic is modeled after a national program that uses medical and lay volunteers to provide

health-care services for the uninsured who do not qualify for Medicaid.

There are 16,000 uninsured adults in Monroe and Owen counties who could be eligible for treatment at the clinic.

While clinic services are free, there are expenses to operate it. So to help cover expenses, a campaign to raise an additional \$750,000 to run the clinic during the next three years is taking place. Lott estimates that the annual operating budget will be \$500,000.

“Illnesses don’t have a time frame; people are suffering now. We want to get this on the ground as soon as possible,” Sturbaum said.

Sturbaum said he liked that the Volunteers in Medicine plan also covered dental and mental health care.

In addition to more than 60 primary care physicians, 32 dentists and 27 nurses have volunteered to provide free services at the clinic.

The clinic will open at 333 E. Miller Drive.

By the numbers

\$9 million: The amount Volunteers in Medicine of Monroe County needs to get started.

\$100,000: How much Bloomington city leaders hope to give Volunteers in Medicine next year.

\$600,000: Amount Cook Group donated earlier.

\$750,000: A campaign is under way to raise funds to run the clinic during the next three years.

\$500,000: The estimated annual operating budget.



Chris Sturbaum. Courtesy photo

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