

\$150,000

Senators propose federal funds for new hospital

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Livingston HealthCare is in line to receive federal money to help the organization build its new hospital and medical campus.

The offices of Democratic Senators Max Baucus and Jon Tester on Thursday announced that Tester and his colleague on the Senate Appropriations Committee have initiated the process of setting aside \$150,000 for LHC in the Senate's Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations Act.

The money for LHC is now in the legislation but must receive approval from the full Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives before being signed into law, according to a news release issued jointly by the Montana senators' offices.

"We believe that the new hospital is essential for the health of local residents and of the local community and we appreciate the support of Senators Tester and Baucus in helping us achieve that," LHC Chief Executive Officer Sam Pleshar said in the release.

LHC, the nonprofit organization that operates Livingston Memorial Hospital and other local medical offices, plans to build a health care campus on land on the east side of the bridge that spans the Yellowstone River near the old KPRK radio station building.

The organization is in the process of applying for a loan through the United States Department of Agriculture to fund the new facility. LHC hopes to have details of the funding secured and finalized this fall, LHC spokeswoman Sandi Marlowe said Friday.

The federal money, which the organization requested early this year, would go toward the new facility in general rather than being intended for a particular portion or aspect of the project, she said. Any federal aid LHC receives frees up the organization from seeking those dollars elsewhere, Marlowe said.

"It allows us to have some additional support that we would have had to go to the community for or borrow," she said, "so this really makes this project more affordable for us."

LHC expects the new campus to cost about \$37.5 million, although that estimate is from 2007 and figures could change once financing and other details are finalized, Marlowe said.

A construction timeline is dependent on securing financing, but LHC hopes to break ground in 2011, she said.