



## Scaled-down Ah-Gwah-Ching plan goes forward

By [MONICA LUNDQUIST](#)  
Cass County Correspondent

WALKER - Michael Hedrix, of Essentia Community Hospitals and Clinics, obtained Cass County Board approval Thursday to continue as lead provider for the proposed critical access hospital and clinic at Ah-Gwah-Ching.

The proposal has been scaled down in light of the current financial crisis, but is still going forward, he told the board.

"We are working with other area providers to share service providing at the clinic and hospital," he said, adding financing is up in the air due to the economy.

The board approved a resolution supporting Cass County Economic Development Corp., Region Five Development Commission and Essentia in their application for federal feasibility planning grant money for the hospital/clinic.

The construction program has been downsized from 52,500 square feet to 35,000 square feet for the hospital and clinic to lower construction costs by \$13 million to \$21,887,000.

The plan would be for the county to issue construction bonds to build the building, with Essentia and its partners leasing the building to operate the facility and repay bondholders, Hedrix said.

No tax dollars are considered necessary to build or operate the clinic and hospital at this time, he said.

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