

Valley Cares hopes to expand to meet demand

By HOWARD WEISS-TISMAN / Reformer Staff Brattleboro Reformer

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TOWNSHEND -- Less than four years after opening its doors, the administration at Valley Cares wants to expand.

Valley Cares, a senior living facility in Townshend, is in the initial planing stage to build 12 additional assisted living units on the north side of its property, just up Grafton Road from Grace Cottage Hospital.

Valley Cares Executive Director Bob Crego said there were no plans to expand so soon after opening, but an ever-increasing wait list has forced the organization to begin designing the expansion.

"We never planned this when we first started, but we have found out that there is a tremendous need for assisted living," Crego said. He said the Valley Cares board has been talking about the expansion for about a year.

There are currently about 60 people on the wait list, and someone could wait for more than two years, depending on their income and needs, said Crego.

"It's always hard to refer someone to another facility but right now we cannot meet all the need," he said. "Fortunately we have all the infrastructure in place and we know there is a need. We have done all our homework on this."

Valley Cares hopes to construct a two-story building for the 12 units, which would add to the existing 28 units of assisted living at the facility. There are also 24 independent living units at Valley Cares.

The group recently signed a purchase and sale agreement for a parcel of land that will allow for the expansion.

Valley Cares has applied for a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant for the project, which Crego said will cost about \$2.7 million.

The \$600,000 grant would be a major piece of funding, Crego said, against which the organization would begin other fund raising.

The Community Development Block Grant awards will be announced in October, and if all of the pieces fall into place, design work could start this winter, with a possible ground breaking in the spring.

The current Valley Cares facility cost \$9.9 million and opened in November 2007 after almost four years of meetings and planning.

The existing septic and water systems can handle the expansion, said Crego, and with the new parcel of land in hand, the group is ready to push the project forward.

Valley Cares will host a public information session on the grant on July 18, at 5:30 p.m. at Townshend

Town Hall.

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