

Regarding the dispute with Essentia Health...

February 22, 2024

Cassie Heide, City Administrator

Cassie@fosston.com

The City of Fosston formed the non-profit First Care Medical Services (FCMS) in 1993 when the municipal hospital required a non-profit to operate it.

FCMS operated the hospital from 1993 to November 1, 2009, when it affiliated with Essentia Health. FCMS was financially stable at the time of affiliation and the campus continues to be financially sound. The foresight of local leadership at the time of affiliation with Essentia resulted in a solid affiliation agreement that included strong legal language that would protect the future of healthcare in Fosston and ensure core services, including OB would remain here.

In June 2022 Essentia leadership decided to “divert” OB services to their Detroit Lakes facility, originally citing a need for additional nursing staff. The city of Fosston quickly established an OB task force comprised of fourteen well-respected community stakeholders. The goal of the taskforce was to: *Work to assist Essentia in unified and consistent messaging regarding the current pause of OB Labor and Delivery Services at Essentia Health Fosston, while working collaboratively and creatively to find a solution to successfully reset OB services in Essentia in 2023.*

After months of task force meetings with local, Essentia west, and systemwide Essentia leadership, the City of Fosston realized that Essentia never intended to resume OB services in Fosston and actively worked to create the problem they hoped the community would see them trying to solve.

Several unanimous council actions have been taken to hold Essentia accountable to the terms in the affiliation agreement they signed in 2009.

To date, informal meetings, and mediation with Essentia have occurred with no compromises or work towards resuming OB from Essentia.

Arbitration is scheduled for July 8th through the 11th at the Polk County Courthouse.

City leadership is committed to resuming OB services in Fosston and halting further deterioration of healthcare services. We are further committed to building our local hospital back up and ensuring continuance and access to high-quality healthcare for all who live in the Fosston service area.