

Treasurer predicts

Worthington health center will close unless four towns appropriate \$9,500

By ALISON FOBES

HUNTINGTON — "If Worthington, or for that matter Cummington, Chesterfield or Huntington, votes not to appropriate funds for the Worthington Health Center for the coming fiscal year, the health center will have to close down." Worthington Health Association (WHA) Treasurer Cullen (Pete) Packard told the board of directors at Monday's meeting.

The WHA will request a total of \$9,500 from the four towns for FY 1976: \$3,500 from Worthington and \$2,000 each from Huntington, Cummington, and Chesterfield.

WHA President James Beplat emphasized the need for a "good group" of staff members and directors to go before voters at the annual Town Meetings to explain to them openly what the health center is trying to do and wants to do in the future, as well as why the funds are necessary. He said "We can't get money by not communicating with the people we are trying to serve."

Beplat stated that if one of the towns voted not to appropriate funds for the health center, that "it would not only be a vote of non-support, but a vote to close the health center."

Beplat also stressed the need for full openness between the medical staff of the center and the board of directors. He said "everything we do needs to be more cohesive."

Worthington member Esther Sena said that she had appeared before the Worthington Board of Selectmen to have the \$3,500 request for the health center put on the warrant of the annual Town Meeting scheduled for May 3. She added that she felt that the town was not likely to vote the funds unless the WHA presented a workable budget to the Town Meeting.

Huntington member Grace Wheeler said that she felt that the \$2,000 budget request from Huntington would be approved if enough voters turned out, but said that few people attended Town Meetings in Huntington, as compared to other towns. She noted that there were 939 patients visits from Huntington this past year, a 13 per cent increase over last year's visit record.

Mrs. Wheeler suggested that an open meeting be called in Huntington on April 28 to explain the needs of the Worthington Health Center to people before the May 5 an-

nual Town Meeting.

She said that she would obtain a list of health center members from Huntington and notify them of the meeting.

Cummington member Stanley Cowell agreed with the open meeting idea and said he felt that there should be preliminary hearings several days before the annual Town Meetings in Cummington, Worthington, and Chesterfield as well. Cummington's Town Meeting is April 26.

Packard, in his treasurer's report, announced that the WHA has \$140 in its checkbook account and between \$800 and \$900 in the outstanding account. He noted that about \$1,000 intake in memberships is projected for June, as well as \$1,000 from Cummington and a little over \$1,000 from Worthington in final payments before July 1. Packard stated that the health center "may eke it through" until the end of this fiscal year, but that money will be short.

Packard said that the health center is two months in arrears with its electricity payments. He said that he felt that "it would be bad business to have the electricity shut off."

Packard told the board that Dr. John Modestow had shown "a positive reaction" to a request that he pay an \$860 fee for the space used by his practice for the upcoming fiscal year. Modestow has said that he will submit his final answer in writing to the board of directors.

Health center doctor George Scarmon said that hopefully the rest of the staff would be able to assume a larger proportion of the cost sharing of the health center in FY 1976.

Worthington member Connie Brashares noted that long distance phone calls made by and for the health association should not be the responsibility of the doctor's services. It was decided that all health association calls be made on one telephone line only.

Scarmon said that he felt that there are other possible ways to raise funds for the health center that should be explored besides membership and fund drives. Other members suggested dances, concerts, auctions, and raffles.

Cummington member Thelma Whiting's resignation from the board of directors, citing family and health reasons, was regretfully accepted. She stated in her resignation that she would continue to support the Worthington Health Association in any way she could.