

Two seek M. Reed job

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Figueroa likely appointed after losing re-election

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The Vidette

ELMA — Two McCleary applicants for the vacant Position 2 seat on the Mark Reed public hospital district board were interviewed Tuesday, Dec. 20.

The district's commissioners are expected to select one at a special meeting Wednesday, Dec. 28, after *The Vidette's* press time. It was also an expectation that a current commissioner whose term ends this weekend will be selected to fill the vacancy.

Though there was no quorum for what was announced as a special meeting at the Elma library until just

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before it ended, commission chairman Brent Meldrum, along with the district's chief executive officer, Renée Jensen, and its chief financial officer, Ron Hulscher, conducted the interviews.

Commissioner Amy Thoma-son arrived just before the meeting's end, and Commissioner Drew Hooper was absent.

Current Position 1 commissioner, Louie Figueroa, defeated in November's general election by Chad Searls of Elma and whose six-year term ends this Dec. 31, was also present. But he was also one of the applicants.

Otis Leathers, 68, a former state employee, who ran unsuccessfully against Figueroa in 2005 and Dean Schwickerath in 2009, also applied for the position, relinquished in September by Schwickerath, citing an inability to "make a difference" on that board.

After a rocky 21 months in which he and the other commissioners rarely saw eye-to-eye, Schwickerath wrote in a letter to *The Vidette* editor that "when someone volunteers to become involved as an elected official in a community, the goal is to make a difference. Unfortunately, it is now clear to me nothing I try to do as a Mark Reed Hospital commissioner will

make a difference."

In October, the other commissioners declared Schwickerath's position vacant.

Judging from the Dec. 20 meeting, the appointment to the vacant seat won't take long.

Leathers, a retired computer programmer for the state Department of Social and Health Services in Olympia, told Meldrum and the others at the Dec. 20 meeting that the commissioners would likely make a "bad decision" if he was selected for the post.



Figueroa

Figueroa is "as good as I am," Leathers said. "And, in fact, Louie's probably better than I am because he's had the time on the board," he said, adding, "I think the board would probably make a bad decision to replace Louie at this time."

Figueroa, 59, is a physician's assistant at the Stafford Creek Corrections Center near Aberdeen. Having been part of those working for a new Mark Reed Hospital, he would "really, really like to stay and finish this project,"



Leathers

Figueroa told Meldrum and the others.

Leathers having indicated the other applicant should fill the vacancy, Jensen told Leathers that "we as a board" have been discussing having a community member sit on it. That person "wouldn't necessarily have voting privileges," Jensen said. "But what we're hoping is that we'd bring more of a community perspective and less of a commissioner or administrator perspective.

"I wonder if that might be something that you would be interested in doing," Jensen asked.

Leathers said he definitely would.

"That might be a win/win

for everybody," Jensen said. "We've been wanting to do that; we just haven't really found the right forum to do that in."

The district also has a community member on its Quality Committee, Figueroa said, noting that that person was probably not going to be able to continue and suggesting Leathers might also consider replacing her.

"So we have two opportunities," Jensen said.

The person selected to fill the vacant Position 2 seat will need to be elected in the November 2013 general election to keep it, said Julie Colacurcio, Grays Harbor County elections administrator.

Passenger injured in crash

McCLeARY — A passenger in a disabled vehicle on the eastbound shoulder of Highway 8 two miles west of McCleary was injured when another vehicle crashed into the parked car shortly before 4 p.m. Tuesday, according to the Washington State Patrol.

An eastbound 2002 Ford Taurus driven by Marlene L. Peterson, 41, of Elma drifted onto the right shoulder, striking the rear of a 2002 Ford Mustang as that car's driver, Jacob T. Armstrong, 36, of Tacoma, was adding fuel it, said the state patrol. Armstrong was not injured, the state patrol said.

The Taurus came to rest facing west on the eastbound shoulder, the state patrol noted.

Sheena Holman, 29, of Lakewood, a passenger in the Mustang, was taken by aid car to Mark Reed Hospital in McCleary with a neck injury, according to the state patrol.

Peterson, who has been charged with negligent driving, was also transported to Mark Reed Hospital, with neck and back injuries, according to the state patrol.