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Sebring City Council OKs Good Shepherd Hospice House Good Shepherd Hospice releases artist's rendering of future facility

SEBRING, FLA. – In a 4-to-1 vote, the Sebring City Council has approved a request to amend a development agreement for property at 1110 Hammock Road in Sebring. The approval paves the way for Good Shepherd Hospice to construct a 16-bed hospice house and adjacent community resource center on the property.

The council took up the issue at its regular meeting on Tuesday, January 20.

“Good Shepherd Hospice is extremely grateful for the council’s approval on this matter,” said Becky McIntyre, RN, Good Shepherd Hospice regional director. “We are now one step closer to being able to provide compassionate and comprehensive hospice house care for Good Shepherd Hospice patients in Highlands and Hardee counties.”

In August, the state’s Agency for Healthcare Administration approved Good Shepherd Hospice’s certificate of need application to build the hospice house in Highlands County. A hospice house is an acute care, inpatient facility specifically designed to address the requirements and requests of patients facing the end of life. In a hospice house, healthcare professionals provide pain management, symptom control and medical procedures in a safe, homelike setting where families and friends are encouraged to visit.

Currently, Good Shepherd Hospice operates the George C. Forsythe Hospice House in Auburndale and a hospice unit at Palm Terrace of Lakeland. The Highlands County Hospice House will be only the second freestanding facility of this type within the Good Shepherd Hospice service area of Polk, Highlands and Hardee counties.

Good Shepherd Hospice also used the city council meeting to present a proposed artist's rendering of the future hospice house and community resource center. Good Shepherd Hospice plans to construct both facilities in Florida Cracker-style architecture that features wide porches and metal roofs. The hospice house will offer a homelike environment with comfortable private rooms and baths, a dining area, family laundry facilities and children's play area. The community resource center will be the home base for Good Shepherd Hospice care teams and offer additional space to conduct volunteer training sessions, community education and bereavement programs.

"Good Shepherd Hospice is very excited to be able to offer, in the very near future, hospice house care in our own community," added McIntyre. "Currently patients must travel approximately 50 miles to Auburndale to receive this type of inpatient care. And many times family members don't want their fragile loved ones to travel such a distance or to be so far away. The Highlands County Hospice House will be a tremendous end-of-life care resource for Good Shepherd Hospice patients and their families."

Good Shepherd Hospice plans to schedule a groundbreaking ceremony later this year.

About Good Shepherd Hospice

Good Shepherd Hospice is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that supports and serves more than 700 patients each day in Polk, Highlands and Hardee County as they face the challenges of life-limiting illnesses. Healthcare professionals and trained volunteers embrace the Good Shepherd Hospice mission to make the most of life by relieving the suffering of patients and their families affected by end-of-life issues. The organization has been a part of the community since 1979 and is a 2008 recipient of a Circle of Life Citation of Honor Award. Good Shepherd Hospice is the only local agency offering hospice programs accredited by the Joint Commission, the nation's premier healthcare accrediting body. The United Way of Central Florida partially funds the community programs offered by Good Shepherd Hospice. For more information, please visit the website at www.goodshepherdhospice.org

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Photo Caption: A proposed artist's rendering of the Hospice House Good Shepherd Hospice plans to build in Sebring. On January 20, the Sebring City Council approved an amendment a development agreement for property at 1110 Hammock Road, which paves the way for the construction of the 16-bed Good Shepherd Hospice House and adjacent Community Resource Center.