



Frequently Asked Questions

Are all TMC medical staff currently paid a competitive wage?

According to a recent wage survey, 30% of staff are paid below the mid-range for their positions. TMC needs to be able to pay competitive wages to attract and retain professional staff.

When was the last time TMC asked for a mill levy increase?

The hospital district asked for property tax increases in 2018 and 2002. Each time TMC has gone to the voters for an increase in property taxes the need has been clear and all finances reviewed by the elected board of the Telluride Hospital District, which is the governmental entity that levies the property tax. You can learn more about the board and the financial history including past annual audited financials on our website at www.tellmed.org/sustainability.

What would a property tax increase of 3.25 mills cost residential property owners?

Residential property owners would pay an additional \$18/month on a \$1 million home or an additional \$10/month on a \$500,000 home. You can enter your property value on the tax calculator on our website at www.tellmed.org/sustainability to estimate your specific costs.

Why did the potential tax increase change from the 4.25 mills TMC was talking about over the summer to 3.25 mills for the ballot question?

The County Assessor recently provided the most updated tax calculations based upon the new assessed property valuations for 2023. TMC's financial challenges have not changed so the new (lower) additional mill levy of 3.25 was approved by the District Board because it would raise the \$4 million needed annually to meet the healthcare needs of the community.

Is it true that TMC is not able to recover all the costs of some emergency medical treatments, medicines, services and procedures it provides for patients?

Yes, for example tPA, which works to dissolve blood clots that block blood flow to the brain and is often administered to patients experiencing a stroke costs over \$8,500 per dose but TMC can only recover \$5,000 leaving more than a \$3,500 loss. And this is not the only example like this where TMC shoulders a significant financial loss when providing care.

Why are reimbursements such a challenge to recover costs?

There are several primary factors including that commercial insurers pay less than what they used to cover for many services and medical supplies, and that federal programs such as Medicare do not reimburse medical centers at the same rate hospitals get reimbursed for many of the medications that must be kept on hand in case of an emergency. Another reason reimbursements are a challenge is simply due to the dollar amount - the high cost of medications and equipment in some cases have increased more than 400% since 2019.

Why is TMC classified as a medical center and not a hospital?

The current facility does not meet the building codes required in order to receive an official classification as a hospital or a free-standing Emergency Department.



Why are medical supplies and drug costs so much higher now than just a few years ago?

A combination of factors contribute to this situation, but the main reason is that the global pandemic strained medical supplies across the globe and the higher prices are not expected to abate any time in the near future. For example, the drug used to treat severe allergic reactions (from insect bites or stings or food or substances) has increased 455% since 2019. And a blood thinning medication used to treat some types of heart attacks in the ER went from \$4,995/dose to over \$7,000/dose. These are only two examples of a new reality we face in healthcare.

How does TMC balance providing medical services with increasing costs?

This is a big challenge especially considering TMC serves a rural area. We have top quality service including a staff with board certified emergency doctors, emergency certified nurses and radiology technologists that are dual trained in x-ray as well as CT 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This level of care is not required but we feel it is necessary to adequately diagnose patients when we are so far from definitive care.

Would any of the revenue from the property tax increase go towards construction of a new medical facility that some members of the community have been discussing?

No, all of the revenue from the property tax increase is accounted for in covering increases for staff hiring and retention, covering medical reimbursements, and maintaining the existing facility. There continue to be discussions about expanding TMC to provide more services to meet the growing healthcare demand from the community, however the financial responsibility for that would need to be part of a separate community conversation including the TMC Foundation.

Would TMC have to reduce emergency room resources and primary care physicians without an increase in property taxes?

TMC must consider all options in the case that revenue shortages continue, and TMC could be forced to make this painful decision as a direct consequence of not having sufficient funding to pay medical staff. This is a highly unfortunate potential outcome that TMC would face, and is doing everything possible to avoid. It could mean a 25% reduction in available appointments with primary care physicians and reducing resources in the emergency department.

What is the financial relationship between TMC and the TMC Foundation?

The Telluride Medical Center Foundation (TMCF) is a non-profit 501(c)3 established in 2008 to receive charitable donations from the community to support ongoing operations and capital needs of TMC. TMCF donations have helped fund an Emergency Department renovation, the Think Head First concussion program, and many capital purchases. TMCF's 2023 philanthropic funding priorities are part of the TMC budget and help ensure patients have access to essential health care services by investing in key medical center priorities while also positioning TMC to better support the community health needs in the future.

What are the property tax implications for TMC from the statewide ballot initiative Proposition HH if it were to pass this November?

The full ramifications of Proposition HH are difficult to assess, especially for special districts such as the Telluride Hospital District (which helps fund TMC through its mill levy). The measure seems to include a temporary backfill measure that helps special districts to at least partially make up for the overall cut in property taxes, but again the full impact cannot be determined at this time.