

By Michael Prochaska  
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After a year of searching for a new chief executive officer, the Morgan Memorial Hospital Authority Board voted last Thursday to begin contract negotiations with Ralph A. Castillo for the position of CEO. "This has been a long, hard journey, and we're starting to get real close to seeing that light at the end of the tunnel," said Hospital Authority Chairman Terry Evans before Authority Vice Chair Sarah Burbach announced the new hire.

Burbach explained that the authority partnered with Tyler & Co., an Atlanta-based search firm, last spring. In early August, the hospital received a list of more than 100 recommended applications from the firm.

By the end of August, the first round of finalists were named and the search firm held interviews and conducted background checks. In October, the authority agreed on which candidates to interview and all interviews were completed by December. On Jan. 10 of this year, the authority sent a press release to the Morgan County Citizen announcing the two finalists.

Burbach said Castillo seems to have a good feel for the things that MMH wants to accomplish.

"He has incorporated his own staff at the hospital he was in before into the whole budgeting process, like we've done," she said. "He has stay-ability. He wants to come here; he wants to live here; he wants to be a part of our community."

"We think he can work well with physicians because he has a good track record with that in the past, and he's given us ideas already to enhance revenue with our hospital," Burbach said.

Castillo has worked for Alleghany Memorial Hospital in Sparta, N.C., for 11 years, serving as CFO from 2000 to 2005 and CEO from 2005 until January of this year. He has more than 20 years of experience in hospital operations, finance and patient accounting.

The motion to offer Castillo the position of CEO passed unanimously with no discussion. Castillo will begin work March 7, pending final execution of his contract.

In other hospital authority news:

- Chief Information Officer Patrick Cook asked for support in potentially tapping into Georgia's telemedicine industry. Telemedicine is the use of telecommunication to provide health care at a distance for rural communities. It's been used for critical care and emergency situations, Cook said.

"In the next five years, you're going to see that explode. It will be pervasive. It will become a common place thing," he said. "Wherever your imagination can take you, telemedicine can help in a rural setting." Cook said that Georgia has the best telemedicine system in the nation and that it can be reimbursable.

- MMH experienced a net income of \$174,000 for the month of December and is below budget on total operating expenses by \$103,000.

- About \$21,900 has been raised through the PORCH mailing campaign. The foundation has authorized that most of the money be used to purchase a GlideScope and a Bi-pap machine.