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Group upset with hospital

CEO's hiring questioned

By ORLANDO VICUÑA
Del Rio News-Herald

Members of the Border Organization group expressed frustration Wednesday over Val Verde Regional Medical Center's process in hiring new chief executive officer Victoria "Vicky" Barnthouse.

The closed-session, private-ballot vote in favor of Barnthouse was done at VVRMC's July 1 hospital district board meeting.

Sandra Fuentes, a Border Or-

ganization representative, said that VVRMC board members are elected by the people and not by votes among each other since they represent a public entity.

"We are going to do some research. We don't know if we are 100 percent certain at this point if there is any legal matter on the way they handled the vote," Fuentes said. "We are also extremely disappointed that this board took the risk of jeopardizing the managing relationship between this hospital and Methodist Healthcare System who, by the way, have made great improvements to this hospital."

Board member Barbara Plyler stated after the board meeting that trustees were within their legal

right in regard to voting Barnthouse as CEO.

Methodist ended its 3 1/2-year-long managing agreement with VVRMC because board members reportedly violated the contract agreement between both entities at the July board meeting. The contract was reportedly violated in relation to how the board elected Barnthouse as CEO.

In 2010, when Methodist first entered into a managing agreement with VVRMC, the center was operating at a \$4.7 million loss. In 2012, with Methodist overseeing it, VVRMC's audited statement showed an operating gain of \$5.6 million.

"We are here today to express our interest to help in any way we can to move forward," Methodist Healthcare System Senior Vice President Geoffrey W. Crabtree said Wednesday.

MHS presented an advisory agreement to VVRMC so they could continue their working relationship.

"The only change to the agreement is that we promise not to compete in your marketplace if you promise not to compete with us by having another type of advising agreement with somebody else," Crabtree said.

Board members chose not to sign the agreement with Methodist. They have hired attorney Michael Crowe of Husch Blackwells LLP in Austin to review the contract.