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For Immediate Release

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Three public hospitals join forces:
Seek relationship with larger health care system

ARLINGTON, ANACORTES AND MOUNT VERNON – The Boards of Commissioners of three public hospitals in Skagit and Snohomish counties approved the release of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to seek a partnership with a larger health care system in the region.

The Boards of Commissioners of Cascade Valley, Island and Skagit Valley hospitals unanimously approved the plan in a joint board meeting on March 19 at the WSU Research and Extension Unit, in Mount Vernon.

The RFP will be sent to MultiCare Health System, PeaceHealth, Providence-Swedish, Virginia Mason Medical Center and UW Medicine.

Partnerships and consolidations among health care systems represent a trend that is playing out across the country and in the Northwest. Healthcare systems are forming alliances to combine strengths, focus on improving patient care, accessing capital and reducing the cost of healthcare through the streamlining of services.

The boards’ joint meeting this week follows more than a year of discussions and consideration in a unique process by the three public hospitals, which started with signing an interlocal agreement in November, 2011 to seek ways to work collaboratively.

Cascade, Island and Skagit seek a partnership with a larger health care system to enhance patient care, extend access to specialty services and augment clinical quality; to continue to recruit and retain physicians and other providers; to seek efficiencies and cost containment opportunities; ensure long-term economic viability and prepare for the rigors of health care reform and budget reductions at the state and federal levels.

The overarching goal of the process is to retain and expand excellence in local health care for the people served by the three hospitals.

The three organizations will use the following criteria to evaluate responses to the RFP:

- Advance the vision of Skagit Regional Health, Island and Cascade Valley
- Extend access to specialty services
- Augment clinical quality
- Augment process improvements
- Recruit and retain physicians and clinical staff
- Maximize available cost savings
- Prepare for value-based reimbursement and healthcare reform
- Build economies of scale
- Enhance information technology
- Access to capital

Health-care organizations are facing challenging times with distressed national and state economies, lower reimbursement for services, and surging competition in the areas served by the three hospitals.

**About Cascade, Island and Skagit:**

**Cascade Valley Hospital,** Snohomish County Public Hospital District No. 3, is a 48-bed facility, which has served Arlington and the surrounding communities for more than 100 years. Cascade Valley also operates six associated clinics and a free-standing surgery center. ([www.cascadevalley.org](http://www.cascadevalley.org))

**Island Hospital,** Skagit County Public Hospital District No. 2, is a 43-bed acute-care facility that has served western Skagit County, north Whidbey Island and the San Juan Islands for 50 years. Island also operates eight physician clinics and a freestanding sleep wellness center. ([www.islandhospital.org](http://www.islandhospital.org))

**Skagit Regional Health** includes the 137-bed Skagit Valley Hospital and 10 Skagit Regional Clinics locations. Skagit County Public Hospital District No. 1 has served residents of Skagit, Island, San Juan and north Snohomish counties since 1958. ([www.skagitvalleyhospital.org](http://www.skagitvalleyhospital.org))