



## New hospital construction may begin in 2012

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BAMBERG - The newly revived regional health care partnership between Bamberg and Barnwell counties includes plans to construct a 50- to 60-bed general acute care hospital in 2012, officials announced in a press release Monday.

The Bamberg and Barnwell county councils have given first-reading approval to Memphis, Tenn.-based Dobb Equity Partners LLC to establish a Regional Healthcare System for their communities. Officials of both counties anticipate approving final third reading of the agreement by mid-September.

According to Dobb Equity Partners LLC, the Bamberg and Barnwell County hospitals will submit to a court-approved debt reorganization plan and the two counties will sell their existing hospitals to an affiliate of Dobb.

After the sale is completed, Dobb officials say they will move ahead with plans to construct the new state-of-the-art regional hospital and establish multi-specialty physician office centers in both Bamberg and Barnwell counties.

The new hospital and multi-specialty centers are expected to provide services that are not currently offered in the two communities and bring new physicians into the area, the release said. Several independent studies have shown that quality and dependable health care facilities are critical factors to job creation in rural communities, according to the release.

"We are excited to be able to move forward on a path toward a Regional Healthcare System that serves the health care needs of the citizens of Bamberg and Barnwell counties," said Bamberg County Councilman Chris Wilson, who is also a member of the Regional Hospital Committee.

The proposed new hospital would be centrally located to ensure convenient access to residents from both counties, officials say. Prior to the opening of the new hospital, the Barnwell County Hospital will serve as the temporary hub for hospital operations, the release said.

Construction of the new hospital is expected to begin in 2012. In addition, the Regional Healthcare System plans to begin working with local primary care physicians and recruiting specialty physicians to the area in early 2012.

"Our focus throughout this process has been and remains creating better opportunities for health care for our citizens," Wilson said. "We have taken the initial steps to do so and look forward to working with Barnwell County and Dobb on this wonderful project that will benefit our communities in so many ways."

Dr. Danette McAlhaney, Bamberg County Hospital Board chairperson, said, "The board and hospital are pleased the Bamberg County Council has taken steps to address the long-term health care needs in Bamberg County."

"We are looking forward to a more comprehensive, financially stable health care delivery system for our citizens. We will keep the hospital employees and the community informed and involved in this process as we move forward," McAlhaney added.

Lowell Jowers, Barnwell County Hospital Board chairman, said Barnwell County was also pleased about the creation of "a first-class health care facility."

"Our goal from the very beginning was to have the very best medical care available for our citizens," he said. "This facility will be a great asset to both Barnwell and Bamberg counties and will enhance our ability to recruit new industry to our counties. We are excited about working with Bamberg County and Dobb on this venture."

John Dobb Jr., president of Dobb Equity Partners LLC, said his company was pleased to be working with the two counties in bringing "world-class" health care services to the area.

"We are eagerly anticipating closing the transaction prior to the end of this year and being able to begin the process of recruiting physicians and new health care services to the area," he said.

According to the press release, Dobbs Equity Partners LLC is a private, family-owned business that makes private equity investments in existing and start-up operating companies. It seeks to partner with talented operators with significant experience in their fields to acquire or start up businesses with significant growth potential.

The business is not a traditional private equity fund in that it invests family assets and does not seek to raise capital from outside parties. Dobbs is currently an investor in Strategic Behavioral Health LLC, which owns and manages behavioral health care facilities. Previously, the Dobbs family owned Three River Holdings Inc., which operated Unison Health Plans, a large Medicaid HMO with operations in many states, including South Carolina.

More information about Dobbs Equity Partners LLC can be found online at [www.dobbsequity.com](http://www.dobbsequity.com).