

Vineyard Haven, MA
50 °F / 10 °C

Fog
at 8:53 PM



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The Martha's Vineyard TIMES

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May 20 - May 26, 2004 Edition
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Tribe plans new health center, too *May 20, 2004*

By Nelson Sigelman

Even as construction begins on the Wampanoag Tribe's new community center, tribe officials are also at work on plans to erect a building of similar size to house a new health and human services center on tribe lands.

Fred Rundlet, tribal health program director, said the tribe's strategic plan has for some time included the construction of a separate building for reasons of patient confidentiality and access to health care. In January, funding became available.

Money for the project, expected to cost approximately \$1 million, will come from Indian Health Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Mr. Rundlet said the Air Reserve Command Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program is set to return for the construction. The tribe will donate the property.

Work is expected to begin sometime next spring. Beverly Wright, Wampanoag tribe chairman, said the tribe will follow the same process it followed to permit the community center. In that case, the project was self-permitted by the tribe and was not reviewed by the town of Aquinnah or the Martha's Vineyard Commission.

Mr. Rundlet said the health center would be for tribe members only and provide a variety of medical, mental and dental services. Human services would include job and housing assistance, and elderly services for tribal members.

The new building will be between 5,000 and 6,000 square feet. Mr. Rundlet said the space is badly needed for programs that now exist in the cramped confines of the tribal administration building.

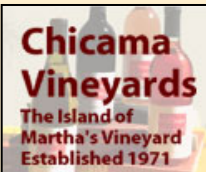
Asked why the tribe decided to build a separate facility, as opposed to joining forces with an existing institution such as the Martha's Vineyard Hospital, which is also engaged in planning for a new facility, or Martha's Vineyard Community services, Mr. Rundlet said accessibility, cultural sensitivity, cost, and quality of care are behind the decision. "A lot of tribal members prefer to come to their own place to be seen by practitioners that are more sensitive to the culture and ways of Native Americans," he said.

He added that he can provide quality care for the tribal members at far less cost than what they would normally pay Island practitioners.

Regarding the Martha's Vineyard Hospital, Mr. Rundlet, a member of the Dukes County Health Council, said that, although he is a health provider and has been in the field for a long time, he knows little about what the hospital is doing beyond what he reads in the newspaper.

"And I think that is a concern," said Mr. Rundlet.

Tad Crawford, chairman of the Dukes County Health Council, said he thinks the tribe can play a very important and ultimately constructive role in providing a comprehensive health care system on the Island.



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He said there would be no duplication of health care services as long as the island continues to be underserved.

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