

## **Wellmont Denied Certificate To Build Boones Creek, Tenn., Facility**

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Wellmont Health System officials are rethinking plans to build Tennessee's first stand-alone emergency department after a state health agency denied a permit needed to construct it in Washington County, Tenn.

The Tennessee Health Services and Development Agency rejected an application for a certificate of need Wellmont required to built the proposed \$43 million Boones Creek emergency facility.

The seven-member panel questioned what role such a facility would play, and how it would fit into the state's overall health-care system before unanimously rejecting Wellmont's application.

"This will not improve primary medical care or the orderly development of adequate medical care but will harm it," said Gene Caldwell, who represents consumer interests on the board.

Board members also questioned Wellmont's plans to build the facility close to Johnson City, which is home of Wellmont's primary competitor in the area, Mountain States Health Alliance.

"We appreciate the thorough manner with which the agency handled this issue," MSHA President and CEO Dennis Vonderfecht said in a news release about the board's decision.

Wellmont spokesman Pat Kane said the company would take a second look at the agency's reasons for rejecting it's stand-alone emergency room concept and compare them with its reasons why such a facility was needed.

He said it was too soon to determine whether Wellmont would try to build a stand-alone emergency facility in another location, but it did plan to locate an urgent care center and physicians offices on the Boones Creek property.

Kane also said the agency's decision would not affect Wellmont's plans to build an \$4 million urgent care center in Piney Flats, Tenn. Such a facility does not require a certificate of need from the agency in order to be built.

*NewsChannell 11 reporter Nate Morabito contributed to this report.*

gmclean@bristolnews.com | (276) 645-2518