

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL CARE COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON DECEMBER 16, 2005

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Medical Care Commission was called to order in the Emergency Operations Center at 2:00 p.m. on December 16, 2005. On roll call, all members of the Commission were in attendance. Others present for all or a portion of the meeting were: Mayor Jack McDonald, Town Council Members Norman P. Goldblum, and Allen S. Wyett, Town Manager Peter B. Elwell, Fire-Rescue Chief Edward Moran, Fire-Rescue Physician Randall Wolfe, Fire-Rescue EMS Division Coordinator Brian Fuller, Human Resources Assistant Anna Garcia, and Town Clerk Susan A. Eichhorn.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Dennis noted that there was not a flag in the room, and requested that all persons holding the country near and dear to their hearts raise their hands.

III. APPROVAL OF MEDICAL CARE COMMISSION REPORT OF NOVEMBER 21, 2005

Commission Member Stein noted that the report had not reflected his comments concerning the Sunshine Law, and requested that the language "Mr. Stein expressed the opinion that the Sunshine Law would impede the Commission's ability to fulfill its mission."

Chair Dennis commented that on page 9 and on page 11, the reference to written statements to be submitted by the Commission members was directed to the Commission's scope of work, and not for the scope of the duties of the consultant/staff director.

Commission Member Friedman moved approval of the Medical Care Commission Report of November 21, 2005, as amended. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Bilotti, and on call of the Chair, carried unanimously.

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IV. REVIEW MEMBERS' OBSERVATIONS ON THE MISSION OF THE COMMISSION
AND DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN FOR HOW TO PROCEED

Town Manager Elwell presented a proposed advertisement, outlining the general description of the staff assistant, requesting approval or modification so that it could be published in the upcoming Sunday newspaper.

It was the consensus of the Commission that appropriate computer skills should also be a requirement, and the inclusion of e-mail contact information.

Town Manager Elwell clarified that he had written the general description so as to obtain someone to help with administrative tasks; to support and manage paperwork, rather than someone who was going to be deeply into the analytical or advising role.

Commission Member Furlaud moved approval of the proposed advertisement in concept, with a second by Commission Member Friedman. On call of the Chair, the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Dennis thanked the Town Council for approving the Medical Care Commission request of funding for an assistant staff person. He reviewed the mission statement of the Commission:

1. To examine the range of medical services received by residents. He suggested that a survey of Town residents would indicate an advocacy role for the Commission, would link the concerns of the citizens with the concerns of the Commission, would identify deficiencies and experiences at various health centers, and also what may be right with the system. He noted that the Palm Beach Civic Association Health Care Committee had discussed such a survey, but had decided to hold the concept in abeyance when Mayor McDonald announced the creation of the Medical Care Commission. He suggested that the Palm Beach Civic Association may be willing to help with funding such a project, as would perhaps the Citizens Association and private donors.
2. To evaluate the quality of care of currently provided services, focusing on emergency care. He noted that there were solid guidelines, established by numerous agencies, which could be made available to the Commission. He suggested that it may be better to concentrate on hospitals, clinics, and major provider realms of influence.
3. To review the viability of Good Samaritan Hospital as a continued community resource. He stated that he personally did not want the Commission to appear to be targeting Good Samaritan Hospital. He recognized that Tenant Health Care managed four of the hospitals

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in the immediate distribution center – he cited 2004 published losses of \$16 million at Delray Community Hospital; \$10.6 million at Good Samaritan Hospital; \$65.6 million at Palm Beach Gardens Hospital; and \$64.1 million at St. Mary’s Hospital.

Chair Dennis commented that there were many obvious questions to ask:

- What obligations did Tenant Health Care really have, or believe that they have, under the agreement with the State?
 - Are they viewing properties, particularly Good Samaritan, as a sale item in five years?
 - Are they open to talks with entities that might provide alternative management?
 - What services are being planned both for inclusion or for elimination?
 - What can be expected in terms of transparency and clarification?
4. To assist in increasing services for the indigent. This was a multi-faceted problem which would challenge the Commission, particularly in the area of malpractice issues, which appear to be reducing greatly the number of physicians willing to take emergency call, thereby adding pressure on hospital emergency rooms, which supply much of the primary care.

Chair Dennis advised that the goal today should be to prioritize the needs for information and identify those who could best assist the Commission.

Commission Member Bilotti reviewed the goals that she had submitted in written form:

1. Assess Palm Beach current medical needs:
A feed-back survey for residents; contact Town agencies for existing data that may be available; assess needs of daily employees and service personnel; consider short term visitors.
2. Identify nearby providers:
Hospitals, clinics, physicians offices, nursing homes and assisted living facilities, rehabilitation centers, and hospice facilities – with a focus on hospitals and physicians available.

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3. Evaluate providers for services provided in the community, quality of the services provided, and the timeliness of those services.
4. Focus on Good Samaritan Hospital services, the quality of those services, the financial condition of the Hospital, and the financial condition of Tenet in general, as well as the intentions of Tenet for the future.
5. Determine recommendations for change and improvements both within and beyond the community borders, as well as Countywide.

Commission Member Friedman observed that all of the goals submitted by all of the members of the Commission were very similar. He reviewed the goals that he had submitted in written form:

1. Check available health facilities in Palm Beach.
2. Consider available services at these centers: intensive care, oncology, radiology, emergency rooms, and other health services.
3. Consider the availability of health practitioners in the area.
4. Statistics as to the use and occupancy rates, mortality and morbidity.
5. State Health Department Inspection Reports, and a review of the adequacy and quality of these facilities and services.
6. Meeting with the community to ascertain their needs, desires, questions, and input in general, much the same as the Strategic Planning sessions that were held in the past.

Commission Member Furlaud commented that the goals submitted by the Commission members were very similar, and suggested that much of the material may be available already through the Civic Association. He recommended that the Commission gather as much information as possible from the Civic Association, and then focus on the emergency care issue as a first item of business for the Commission.

Commission Member Stein also noted that there was a remarkable similarity in all of the goals submitted by the Commission, and considered that there were two main issues: Good Samaritan Hospital, and the scope and quality of services at Good Samaritan Hospital, as well as Tenet's current operations and its intentions within the next five years. It would be necessary to

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determine if Tenet would accept the involvement or participation to some extent of other organizations that might be able to assist in upgrading both the scope and quality of services. The second major problem to consider was the quality and the quantity of physicians in the community, and if all of the necessary specialities were adequately populated.

Commission Member Traverse commented that he was in agreement with the fellow Commission members, however, he noted that there was a crisis in that physicians were leaving the area at a tremendous rate. He suggested that a survey be created for the physicians in the community, and leave a space so that they could provide an essay type reply; the malpractice insurance problem was of concern. He stressed the importance of stroke prevention and rehabilitation, and expressed concern with the dramatic deterioration of the fiscal state of the community hospitals, and determining the cause of that. He noted that Tenet had a variety of problems, among them being that they had a major cluster of hospitals in the New Orleans area that needed rehabilitation.

Commission Member Stein suggested that contact be made with Tenet's top management, not in an adversarial manner, but to address solutions to some of the problems. He questioned how the City of West Palm Beach was addressing the problem, and suggested that Palm Beach find a way to synthesize efforts in order to have more effect. He stated that there were no young doctors coming into the community, perhaps because of the lack of a good academic institution for them to participate in continuing education, and suggested that perhaps Tenet and others may want to work towards finding a solution to that problem.

Chair Dennis commented that he had indications that Mayor Frankel of West Palm Beach, would be interested in speaking with the Commission, and suggested that she receive an invitation.

Commission Member Friedman commented that one very important aspect of the financial picture was reimbursement.

Chair Dennis suggested that the Commission consider major items, such as a survey of residents and physicians, having the Regional Director of Tenet Health Care speak to the Commission, and perhaps some of the Tenet group in Dallas, hearing from provider groups, hearing from the City of West Palm Beach, and malpractice/reimbursement.

Commission Member Stein commented that a survey would not tell the Commission anything it did not already know, however, it would provide a validity or credibility to the mission of the Commission, and allow people to feel a part of it.

Town Manager Elwell advised that a community-wide telephone survey had been done last

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year regarding Town services. He explained that a firm had been hired to design the questions, and conducted the survey, at a cost of approximately \$20,000, with approximately 400 households contacted. He explained that some useful information had been garnered, however, there had been some reactions from residents in the community that because they had not personally received a call they felt left out, and questioned the validity of the results. He noted that the cost of a mailing to every resident would approximate \$5,000.

Commission Member Traverse moved that the Commission pursue contacting potential financial supporters and potential groups that can put together a survey. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Furlaud, and on call of the Chair, carried unanimously.

Town Councilman Allen S. Wyett commented that the most important problems with Tenet were internal – the lack of angioplasty facilities, the change in operating officers, the change in attitude. He noted that JFK operated beautifully, and that Baptist Hospital in Miami does not lose money, and is well run. Good Samaritan has cut their services down to the bone, and he advised that he was in negotiations with them to make changes. Another big problem was the Emergency Room, which was run on a contract out basis.

Commission Member Stein related a conversation he had regarding a patient's experience at Good Samaritan, noting that patients were being lost because of a sloppiness in management. He suggested to Ms. Denise Rigopoulos, representative from Good Samaritan, who was present at the meeting, that management must be made aware of these concerns. He requested that she take the question back to management of having a medical audit team do a survey of the hospital that would indicate where the problems were, also containing recommendations as to what could be done about them.

Commission Member Bilotti suggested that, rather than having each individual member of the Medical Care Commission going to Good Samaritan to discuss these issues, that representatives from Good Samaritan be invited to attend a meeting of the Medical Care Commission.

Commission Member Furlaud moved that the Regional Director, and perhaps even someone from the Dallas group, come to speak to the Medical Care Commission. The motion was seconded by Commission Member Friedman, and on call of the Chair, carried unanimously.

Commission Member Furlaud suggested obtaining reports from those agencies that have already reviewed the hospitals, so that the Commission members could review that information.

Ms. Rigopoulos, noted that many of the reports were available on the internet.

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Commission Member Bilotti recommended postponing a meeting with hospital representatives, in order to give the Commission members time to familiarize themselves with Tenet's operation in all of the four hospitals that they operate in the community. She suggested that it would be beneficial if a set of questions was developed to be addressed, and provided to the hospital representatives before they met with the Commission.

Town Manager Elwell clarified that there was a good body of work to be accomplished before the next meeting, including defining the citizen and physician survey and budget for the surveys, contact Mayor Frankel, contact Judy Goodman, and interviewing candidates for staff assistance to the Commission. He noted that substantive progress could be made once the staff assistant was on board, and the data gathering process could begin.

Dr. Irving Herman commented that he was an alumnus of Johns Hopkins Medical School and that he had discussed this matter with Dr. Edward Miller of Johns Hopkins, and he had asked that the message that if Good Samaritan was taken over by a non-profit organization, Johns Hopkins would be very interested in signing a management contract to run the hospital.

Commission Member Stein commented that it was clear that the number one priority must be Good Samaritan Hospital, since it was the community hospital; it must be found out what the intentions of management were, and what they were willing to do to improve the conditions at Good Samaritan.

Commission Member Bilotti recommended the assignment of different aspects of fact gathering to the Commission members.

Chair Dennis suggested that each Commission member outline the facts that they want to learn from Tenet Health Care, and submit them to be condensed into one document with a series of questions to be answered.

Town Manager Elwell commented that, after Judy Goodman addressed the Commission, and then, as a group, refine the questions that would be submitted to Tenet Health Care; the refining of the list of questions into one list of questions could take place at the next meeting.

Commission Member Stein suggested that each Commission member receive a copy of the contract between Tenet and the Attorney General, perhaps with notations in the margins where services had been eliminated or downgraded.

Commission Member Furlaud suggested that the staff consultant could put all of the questions that have already been asked, put them into one list, and try to get the answers. In

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addition, he suggested that the Commission obtain copies of all of the reports made by various commissions regarding Good Samaritan, and all of the public information available regarding Good Samaritan.

Town Manager Elwell noted that Ned Barnes, Palm Beach Civic Association, had indicated that any Commission member could individually stop by and review their files regarding health care.

Town Manager Elwell clarified that copies of the Attorney General's agreement with Tenet would be obtained by staff; the Palm Beach Medical Society Report would be circulated to the Commission; resumes of the finalists of the candidates for staff consultant would be provided; information regarding the survey; each Commission member would submit a set of questions to be addressed by Tenet for compilation and distribution at the next meeting; invite Mayor Frankel, Judy Goodman, and the final candidates for staff consultant.

Chair Dennis noted that Mr. Echelard, CEO of Good Samaritan Hospital, had initiated a meeting with he and Mayor McDonald and he suggested that each Commission member send Mr. Elwell any particular questions that were of concern for discussion at that meeting. Mr. Elwell requested the submittal of questions by the close of business on Tuesday, December 20, 2005.

Commission Member Stein recommended that Mr. Echelard be asked if he would permit an audit or survey team to go through the hospital for several days, and provide a professional analysis.

V. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Any comments were incorporated into previous discussion.

VI. SET NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting of the Medical Care Commission was scheduled for Thursday, January 12, 2006, at 4:00 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers.

VII. ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were none.

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VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Medical Care Commission held on December 16, 2005, was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.

Michael Dennis
Chair