TOWN OF PALM BEACH

REPORT OF THE MEDICAL CARE COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON DECEMBER 7, 2006 9:30 A.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Dennis called the meeting of the Medical Care Commission to order at 9:31 a.m. on Thursday, December 7, 2006.

Chairman Dennis advised that the following members of the Commission were present: Chairman Michael Dennis, Vice Chairman Robert Friedman, Commission Member Richard Furlaud and Commission Member Norman Goldblum.

Chairman Dennis advised that Dr. Traverse was out of town. He also advised that Dr. Stein would not be in attendance physically but might participate via telephone.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Dennis advised that the Commission had met more frequently in the last two weeks in an effort to accomplish as much as possible for the medical welfare of residents.

Chairman Dennis advised that after the Commission meeting held the previous Tuesday, he had sent a message to Judy Goodman, the attorney representing Good Samaritan Hospital. He read aloud a portion of his letter to Ms. Goodman detailing requests from the Commission. He advised that he had tentatively scheduled a meeting with Ms. Goodman for December 18.

Chairman Dennis clarified the motion made at the previous meeting to engage outside experts to audit the Town's entire healthcare system. He stated that although most of the Commission's concern was Good Samaritan Hospital, Good Sam must be understood in the context of being part of a complex health care analysis and plan for the entire community.

Chairman Dennis advised that he and a single Commission member had met the previous day with Suzette Wexner, president of Palm Healthcare Foundation. He spoke of the role of this foundation with Good Sam and invited Ms. Wexner to address the Commission.

IV. PRESENTATIONS BY:

(i) Suzette Wexner, President, Palm Healthcare Foundation

Ms. Wexner spoke of her history dating back to 1989 with the Good Samaritan Foundation. She explained that in 1994, discussions were held concerning the merger of Good Sam and St. Mary's Hospital. However this was not actualized until the sale of both hospitals to Tenet Healthcare in 2001.

Ms. Wexner stated that Palm Healthcare Foundation's mission was focused on 1) access to healthcare for the underserved and 2) encouragement and promotion of nursing and health careers.

Ms. Wexner advised that the Foundation had distributed $14 million in funding over the past five years. She stated that the Foundation's funding priorities included access to healthcare, quality and safety, healthcare technology, healthcare policy and the healthcare workforce issues. In addition, the Foundation worked very hard with Palm Beach Atlantic University (PBAU), Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and Palm Beach Community College (PBCC) to strengthen their nursing programs. She spoke of the partnership with Good Sam to establish the nursing program at PBAU which yielded forty additional nurses tied to this community for a period of years.

Ms. Wexner advised that the Foundation had revised its grant process in terms of its priorities. She encouraged the Commission to go through the online grant application process in order to work more closely with the Foundation. She also stated that the Foundation was working with the Palm Beach Medical Society and other organizations and donors to look at ways to attract physicians to the community.

A Commission member stated that while he appreciated the concern for the underprivileged population, those of privilege in the community also had problems receiving the service they needed from Good Sam and did not want to go twenty minutes away for good emergency care.

Commissioner Friedman commended Ms. Wexner for the work she had done in providing the Commission with detailed information on her organization's efforts.

Ms. Wexner advised that the Foundation had recently purchased a building from Tenet on the St. Mary's Hospital campus and would be building a healthcare facility for children with special health care needs. Chairman Dennis stated this was an excellent model of partnering. He asked whether the gatherings of the fourteen hospital CEOs was an ongoing process. Ms. Wexner responded affirmatively and advised there were two meetings held per year to look at shared agendas for legislative actions. She advised that the next meeting was scheduled for February, 2007 and welcomed members of the MCC.

Chairman Dennis asked how Ms. Wexner characterized the cooperation among the various hospital groups. Ms. Wexner stated that cooperation was outstanding and that those involved behaved as true colleagues working toward common objectives.

Chairman Dennis asked about the mechanism in place to keep nurses in the community. Ms. Wexner explained that for every scholarship given, the nurse agreed via contract to stay and work in Palm Beach County for each year of scholarship funding. She stated that affordable housing was an ongoing problem that deterred healthcare workers from coming into the community.

Chairman Dennis stated that on Tuesday, Senator Atwater had dissuaded the MCC from thinking much would be achieved in global tort reform. He asked Ms. Wexner for her views on sovereign immunity where healthcare for the underserved was concerned. Ms. Wexner advised that sovereign immunity was an issue that would be discussed going forward.

Regarding sovereign immunity, Commissioner Goldblum stated that other counties such as Brevard owned their own emergency room and asked whether the Foundation could consider following this model. Ms. Wexner stated that Brevard County was structured differently from Palm Beach County but believed this was a model worth studying.

Chairman Dennis asked about the Foundation's efforts to improve physician recruitment. Ms. Wexner advised that this work was just beginning and explained that philanthropic means and foundations were being pursued to accomplish this.

Chairman Dennis summarized the discussion and stated that the Commission was trying to come up with a realistic configuration of services that would meet the needs of residents on the island and out to the west.

Ms. Wexner advised that the Foundation had funded several studies over the years and was concerned about duplication of services in the community. She agreed that it was important to identify the needs of the community. She commended Good Samaritan Hospital on its services especially in cancer care and orthopedic surgery.

Chairman Dennis opened the discussion to the public.

Gerald Goldsmith asked for information on where the funds had come from and where they had been spent. Ms. Wexner stated that in 2001 about $45 million in donations had been received by the Foundation. She added that currently the assets had grown to $70 million on top of giving away $14 million in operating the Foundation. She explained that the residual income from the sale of Good Samaritan and St. Mary's hospitals had not yet been released.

Mr. Goldsmith stated that those funds should be provided for direct hospital use for the community that raised the funds. Ms. Wexner pointed out that the hospital was now operated by a for-profit provider.

Chairman Dennis asked what the Foundation's operating costs were. Ms. Wexner advised that this was about 4.8% which was approximately $300,000 in terms of administrative overhead.

Mr. Goldblum suggested that Ms. Wexner could work in partnership with Good Samaritan Hospital to apply some of these funds donated by residents to go above the ceiling pay for Palm Beach physicians.

Mr. Goldsmith stated that the ceiling pay established by the state was not a mandate for the county to use.

Chairman Dennis thanked Ms. Wexner for addressing the Commission.

Commissioner Friedman advised that he had received a brochure from his physician who had pointed out that recently, 10 physicians had joined **MDVIP**, an umbrella organization which tied doctors with other institutions to provide patient services. He pointed out that doctors were becoming individual entrepreneurs tied to such organizations. He stated that this concerned him because of the need for doctors in the community.

(ii) Carey O'Donnell, P.R. Group Re: Brochure

Chairman Dennis advised that Carey O'Donnell could not be present but advised that the brochure had been expanded from 16 pages to 24. He stated that the brochure could be produced for $25,000 - $26,000. He added that per conversations with hospitals being represented in the brochure, the hospitals were prepared to participate in funding for this; therefore the Commission would not need to make quite as large a funding request from the Town Council.

Commissioner Furlaud asked how the Commission would apply for the grants discussed. Chairman Dennis stated he would be going online per Ms. Wexner's instructions. Commissioner Furlaud spoke of the need for staff assistance on this.

Commissioner Furlaud made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Goldblum, to assign staff to work on grant applications more effectively. In a voice vote, all voted unanimously in favor. (Motion carried 4-0)

V. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

VI. NEXT MEETING DATE

Chairman Dennis scheduled the Commission's meeting with Judy Goodman, P.A. for December 18, 2006.

VII. ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were none.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

APPROVED:

Michael Dennis, M.D.
Chairman