

**REPORT OF THE MEDICAL CARE COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON NOVEMBER 7, 2007**

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Medical Care Commission was called to order at 9:55 a.m., on November 7, 2007, in the Town Council Chambers. Members of the Commission present were: Chair Michael Dennis, Vice Chair Robert Friedman, Commission Member Richard Furlaud, Commission Member Norman Goldblum, and Commission Member Michael Stein. Commission Member Norman Traverse was not present, as he was visiting the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Dennis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was approved as printed.

IV. DISCUSSION OF AREA MEDICAL CARE GUIDE

Chair Dennis commented that today's meeting would be a working session about the future activities of the Commission, with the only major discussion about the Area Medical Care Guide, which was currently at the printer, with expected delivery by Thanksgiving Day. He discussed the costs involved, the importance of press coverage, and distribution of the Guide.

The Commission Members made the following suggestions regarding distribution of the Guide:

- In order to avoid postage, the Guides could be delivered to the condominiums and homeowner's associations for distribution;
- Request that the volunteers of the Citizen's Association of Palm Beach deliver the Guides to the 6,000 members' condominiums on the southern end of the Town, at no cost;
- Concern was expressed about utilizing Publix or any other similar establishment, as the Guides would appear as free handouts, which would be easily picked up and discarded. Some form of individual delivery would be necessary; and
- Crime Watch may have groups that could help distribute the Guides.

Responding to Commission Member Goldblum, Chair Dennis asked that any information obtained at the Police Academy graduation regarding any groups or individuals that would be willing to participate or assist in the distribution, be disseminated through Town Clerk Eichhorn to ensure that the Commission was aware of the outcome.

Responding to Mr. Diamond's suggestion, Chair Dennis indicated that the entire Guide would be available on the Town's website, which could be downloaded and printed out.

Chair Dennis noted that the public relations group that edited and prepared the Guide indicated that a press release would be prepared announcing the completion and availability of the Guide. He added the following comments:

- The Area Medical Care Guide would only be covered by the local newspaper;
- The Commission had decided to offer the Guide, as a gift, to other municipalities in the County, who could print and distribute it at their own expense for use throughout the region.

The Commission agreed to find a suitable substitute in order to avoid the cost of a general mailing.

Several of the suggestions made by the Commission Members were:

- Obtain the name of the company that distributed the telephone books and an estimate of the cost regarding delivery of the Guides;
- Make the Guide available at condominiums in the south, middle, and north ends of the island, and at the Fire Stations and Town Hall; the residents should sign that they

had received the Guide; an effort should be made to deliver to each home covering the entire island;

- Request that the Condo-Managers Association of Palm Beach could distribute the Guide from the Fire Stations to the association managers of all the condominiums and the apartment house structures, where the managers were members. A listing could be obtained from the managers of the residents that did/did not receive a Guide.

Chair Dennis indicated that \$1.47 per Guide was quoted for delivery, which was \$14,700 and the Commission was trying to avoid asking the Town Council for more money. He discussed the plans for the presentations during the next several months, which included:

- Update from St. Mary's Medical Center and Good Samaritan Hospital ;
- Tort Reform; and
- Physician recruitment.

Chair Dennis read into the record an article regarding areas of tort reform in Texas. He noted that the Commission had raised public awareness, with respect to quality of services in various hospitals in the region, certain deficiencies in health care areas, the need for an academic medical institution, and the need for clinical services. The major block to physician recruitment was the malpractice issue, and the "three-strikes and your out" rule.

Commission Member Stein commented that the media may have had a role in changing the Texas legislature, and that the Florida legislators would respond to political pressure from the citizenry. Florida was facing a serious crisis in health care, and the media would need to address the issue.

Vice President Friedman noted that JFK Medical Center was starting a residency in internal medicine and bringing in 28 new doctors; Florida Atlantic University (FAU) Medical Center would be bringing in small amounts of doctors. Tort reform should be revisited and a plan be developed to implement what was discussed the last two years. The Commission could begin by requesting large numbers of people in various organizations to help raise awareness.

Commission Member Goldblum commented that it had been reported that within five years there would be a 50% reduction of physicians in the county. The citizens would need to be alerted that it would not be possible to maintain health care in the community. Action was necessary at the present time in order to have enough physicians in the five-year time period.

Commission Member Furlaud agreed that a serious crisis was imminent, and that the public may not understand that recovery costs were not being limited for actual damages, but for pain and suffering and punitive damages. The Commission could hold a public hearing to discuss and remedy the problem.

Chair Dennis stated that the Commission was the first to survey residents and first to develop a guide that identified the medical services available. He noted that the public was unaware of the impact that the reduction of physicians would have in the next five years; the public would get the message when the physicians begin to close their practices.

Responding to Chair Dennis, Town Clerk Eichhorn indicated that a public hearing could be held with proper notice and advertising.

Responding to Commission Member Stein, Chair Dennis noted that several people of the Patient Access Group in Washington, D.C., indicated that they would be willing to come to Palm Beach to assist in bringing awareness to the citizens, and possibly someone from Texas.

Commission Member Goldblum noted that articles could be written emphasizing that patients were being transferred from one hospital to another, because service could not be provided, and that there were patients that were not receiving treatment.

Commission Member Stein urged the media to write about the health crisis in Florida, particularly in Palm Beach County, as it was not an easy issue to convey.

Chair Dennis commented that there were situations where the outcome was not what the patient group or medical group wanted, but it was not necessarily malpractice. People needed to understand that the lack of physicians coming into Florida was directly related to the malpractice situation. He indicated that he would gather information in terms of location, speaker groups, and agenda items within the next week and provide the information to the Commission.

It was the consensus of the Medical Care Commission to hold a tort reform public hearing and discussion.

Chair Dennis reviewed the Commission's progress on the mission given by Mayor McDonald. He mentioned an article in the newspaper regarding Tenet's performance and the effect that Florida had on it.

Chair Dennis indicated that the Commission should consider the types of issues to take to Mayor McDonald in the annual report that was due at the end of the third week this month and decide upon future projects and what to accomplish as a body operating within the Sunshine Law.

Stanley Rumbough, 655 Island Drive, chairman of the Palm Beach Civic Association, offered to present to the Executive Committee, the Commission's problem regarding the expense of mailing the Area Medical Care Guide. In addition, he suggested that a letter could be attached to the Medical Care Guide, pointing out the problems of malpractice insurance.

Mr. Rumbaugh indicated that he would include an article in the Civic Association's next bulletin, on the subject of malpractice.

Chair Dennis expressed gratitude to the Palm Beach Civic Association, and noted that the Commission would also need to ensure that the newspapers carried information about the Guide, and its availability.

Commission Member Goldblum requested William Kelly, reporter for the Palm Beach Daily News, to influence the editorial board to write an article regarding the physician crisis that was here today and would be a catastrophe five years from now.

Commission Member Stein stated, for the record, that the Commission was successful because of the extraordinary efforts of Chair Dennis. The community owed an enormous debt of gratitude for all the things that he did personally and for chairing the Commission.

V. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

There were none.

VI. ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were none.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the November 7, 2007, Medical Care Commission meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

APPROVED:

Michael Dennis, M.D.
Chairman