REPORT OF THE MEDICAL CARE COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON APRIL 14, 2006

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Medical Care Commission was called to order on Friday, April 14, 2006, at 9:40 a.m., in the Town Council Chambers. On roll call, all members of the Commission were found to be present: Chairman Michael Dennis, Vice Chairman Robert Friedman, Commission Members Richard Furlaud, Norman Goldblum, Michael Stein, and Norman Traverse.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Dennis.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was approved as printed.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 21, 2006, MEETING

Deferred to April 25, 2006, Medical Care Commission Meeting.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MARCH 28, 2006 MEETING

Deferred to April 25, 2006, Medical Care Commission Meeting.

VI. GERALD O'CONNOR, M.D., INTERNAL MEDICINE
THE FUTURE OF GOOD SAMARITAN MEDICAL CENTER

Chairman Dennis introduced Dr. Gerald O'Connor who lives in the north end of Palm Beach. Dr. O'Connor reported that patients with chest pain who are living north of Royal Palm Way are transported to Palm Beach Gardens Hospital, where it could take family members about

30-40 minutes to get there. The problem is that most patients' doctors are at Good Samaritan. If the situation is not cardiac, the patient is no longer of high interest at PBG Hospital.

Dr. O'Connor commented that historically, Good Samaritan has been a very good hospital but has been stagnant for a number of reasons. Improvements were needed in philanthropy, cardiac care, and a stroke program. Patients want to go to Good Samaritan because their doctors are there.

Dr. O'Connor also noted that there were from 3,000 to 9,000 new condominiums within a two to three mile radius of Good Samaritan, and most of the people living there would be middle-aged or over, and would need medical care. He remarked that, because chest pain was so common, it would be important to start a cardiac cath program first, and then move into the stroke program.

Mr. Stein questioned:

- The volume of work at Good Samaritan to develop the teams and the requisite skill to do a good job there;
- How an academic institution would work in conjunction with Good Samaritan;
- Physicians obtaining admitting privileges at all of the hospitals;
- The past effort on the part of Mass General to set up programs in the area.

Dr. O'Connor replied that the volume of work at Good Samaritan would only increase in the future, while seasonal occupancy may fluctuate. It would just be less busy in the summer months, and something could be structured on a rotational basis with some of the existing teams. Regarding obtaining privileges at all hospitals, Dr. O'Connor noted that going to all three hospitals would not be a practical solution; that was why most physicians had opted to go to one or two hospitals. He stated that there may be interest on the part of Mass General, Johns Hopkins, and Cleveland Clinic to set up a program in the area.

Dr. Dennis then read a letter from Dr. Midwall into the record.

Brian Fuller, EMS Division Commander with the Town's Fire Rescue Department, then addressed the Commission. Mr. Fuller agreed with Dr. O'Connor that 80% of residents with chest pain are not cardiac related. He informed the Commission that when 911 is called from the north end (north of Royal Palm Way) and it is NOT a cardiac event, the patient will not be transported to PBG Hospital. Good Samaritan does not provide cath service so a cardiac patient would be taken to PBG. If the patient is conscious he/she can choose a different facility. He explained that the process that happens when 911 is called is dynamic; by an educated and diagnostic decision the patient is transported to the facility that is believed to be in the best interest of the patient.

Mr. Stein then inquired how long it took to reach Palm Beach Gardens Hospital when the bridge is up. Mr. Fuller informed him that they make contact with the bridge as soon as the decision is made as to which hospital the patient will be transported. Dr. Dennis inquired as to how long it took from the northern inlet to Palm Beach Gardens Hospital. Mr. Fuller responded that they went to PBG 6 times last year. He said it would take a long time from the north inlet to PBG. When questioned about the use of a helicopter he said it was possible but not a standard procedure. The Healthcare District bought those helicopters for trauma patients only.

Mr. Fuller then read an e-mail he sent to Dr. Dennis in response to an article from the newspaper where Dr. Crandall questioned the amount of time paramedics spend in a patient's home trying to determine to which hospital the patient needs to be transported. He added that paramedics have to figure out what is happening to a patient within a ten-minute period of time, based on experience and diagnostic equipment, and having never met that patient before.

There being no further questions from the Commission or the public, Dr. Dennis thanked Dr. O'Connor for his appearance before the Commission.

VII. TRENT STEELE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF FOUND CARE AND MARK MONTGOMERY, MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF FOUND CARE

Dr. Dennis introduced Trent Steele, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Found Care. Mr. Steele introduced himself as an attorney who grew up on the island but is now a resident of Hobe Sound. He addressed the following points:

- Health insurance for the uninsured
- Infant Mortality
- Prenatal Care

Molly Ferguson, Director of Program Development at Found Care, added that there are eight health care facilities in five counties surrounding Lake Okeechobee. Staff is bilingual in Spanish and Creole. Many forms and literature are offered in English and Spanish and as the Creole population increases the forms and health kits will also be available in that language.

In response to Dr. Dennis, Ms. Ferguson replied that as a federally qualified health center receiving funds from the federal government, the physicians are covered under the federal Tort Claims Act. This immunity covers the physician as long as the patient is under care at the center. Dr. Dennis questioned if the immunity was impenetrable. Ms. Ferguson replied that if anyone had a claim against the center they would have to sue the Federal government. Mr. Steele added that there is some kind of cap in terms of how much they could claim.

Ms. Ferguson clarified that this was not going to be a free clinic or health center. They would accept private insurance such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield, and would also operate after hours, providing services to low-income patients.

Mr. Steele commented that this is the first of many centers he would like to establish in the medically underserved areas such as the Glades, Riviera Beach and West Palm Beach.

Mr. Friedman asked the following:

- How financial responsibilities of patients are checked
- Whether they had doctors "on board" and where they will be coming from

Mr. Steele replied that fees are set on a sliding fee scale based on family income and size (providing last tax return or last 3 pay stubs) and no one gets services for free. The lead doctor will be Dr. Mitchell and physicians would be recruited both nationally and locally.

Dr. Dennis asked the following:

- The extent of Quantum Foundation's commitment to the project and how it was supported;
- The relationship with both Palm Beach County Health Dept. and Healthcare District of Palm Beach County in terms of receiving funding;
- The difference in functions of PBC Health Dept. and Healthcare District.

Mr. Steele replied that the Foundation had already given the lead gift of $460K and have pledged an additional $600K in matching grant funds. They would also meet any shortfalls in the operations. He stated that with the Palm Beach County Health Dept. and the Healthcare District it was a struggle in terms of receiving funding. Support has been requested but it has not yet been forthcoming. They have a meeting set up to do a presentation to them within the next month. Ms. Ferguson added that the Health Care District is funded by taxes and offers insurance programs, but do not have their own clinics.

Dr. Dennis then thanked Ms. Ferguson and Mr. Steele and the members of the Florida Community Health Center.

VIII. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were none.

IX. NEXT MEETING: **TUESDAY, APRIL 25, 2006 AT 9:30 A.M.**

X. ANY OTHER MATTERS

There were none.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Medical Care Commission of April 14, 2006 was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

_____
Michael Dennis, M.D., Chairman

Prepared by:
Patricia Gayle-Gordon
Administrative Assistant