



**FINAL OFFICIAL
MEETING MINUTES**

**Miami-Dade County Commission District 3
Town Hall Meeting**

Hospital Governance Taskforce Recommendations

Joseph Caleb Center
5400 NW 22 Avenue
Miami, Florida 33142

July 28, 2011
As Advertised

Harvey Ruvin, Clerk
Board of County Commissioners

Christopher Agrippa, Division Chief
Clerk of the Board Division

Alicia Stephenson, Commission Reporter
(305) 375-1475



**CLERK'S OFFICAL MEETING MINUTES
HOSPITAL GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE
TOWN HALL MEETING
JULY 28, 2011**

Commissioner Audrey Edmonson, Miami-Dade County Vice Chairwoman, convened a Town Hall meeting in the Joseph Caleb Center, 5400 NW 22 Avenue, on Thursday, July 28, 2011, at 6:00 p.m., for the purpose of discussing the Hospital Governance Task Force's (Task Force's) Recommendations. Present were members Martha Baker and Edward J. Feller, M.D.; and alternate member Assistant State Attorney Paul Silverman (representing Vice Chairperson Susan L. Dechovitz).

The following staff members were present: Assistant County Attorneys Eugene Shy and Karon Coleman; Commission Auditor Charles Anderson; Office of the Commission Auditor staff members S. Donna Palmer, Angie Martinez, Robert Marksmeier, and Bia Marsellos; Commission District 3 Chief of Staff Misty Brown; Government Information Center Translator Fabie Bodek; and Deputy Clerk Alicia Stephenson.

Commissioner Edmonson called the meeting to order at 6:11 p.m.

1. Opening Remarks/Hearing Rules

Commissioner Edmonson introduced herself and thanked members of the public for expressing an interest in the Task Force's Recommendations by attending tonight's (7/28) meeting. She asked meeting attendees not to treat the Recommendations as if they had been considered or approved by the County Commission. She noted tonight's meeting would proceed with a presentation of the Recommendations, followed by a question and answer session between members of the public and County staff. She asked that those wishing to speak complete Speaker's Cards, and noted that the meeting would end by 8:10 PM (instead of 8 PM) since it began late.

Commissioner Edmonson introduced members Mr. Silverman, Dr. Feller, and Martha Baker (President, Service Employees International Union Local 1991), as well as Commission Auditor Charles Anderson.

Commissioner Edmonson noted she and her mother had been patients at Jackson Memorial Hospital when they were younger. She also noted that was a product of Liberty City.

2. Presentation of Eighteen (18) Task Force Recommendations

Mr. Anderson noted that handouts were available in English, Spanish, and Creole at the entrance of the meeting room, and they provided information on steps that had been taken

to address JMH's financial crisis, a list of the Task Force's members, and the Task Force's Recommendations.

Mr. Anderson noted on January 20, 2011, the Board of County Commissioners approved Resolution No. R-30-11, which established the Task Force and charged its members to study and report on possible alternative models for operating Jackson Memorial Hospital's Public Health Trust (PHT) in order to ensure it had the necessary governing and financial structure to fulfill its mission. He noted the Task Force consisted of 20 members, appointed by individuals or organizations that were designated by the Resolution. He also noted the Task Force met during the months of March, April, and May 2011, and published its Final Report on May 12, 2011, along with the 18 Recommendations outlined in this presentation (See attached Exhibit).

Mr. Anderson provided an overview of the Recommendations.

Mr. Anderson advised meeting attendees that the complete list of the Recommendations, the Task Force's Final Report, and other pertinent information were available at http://www.miamidade.gov/auditor/hospital_governance.asp, the Commission Auditor's website.

Commission Auditor Anderson opened the floor for comments/questions.

3. Questions and Answers

Mr. Suly Anselme, 311 NW 83rd Street, said that people in the community were increasingly facing financial difficulties and unemployment. He noted he heard that JMH would either be closed or be privatized. He expressed concern that closing JMH may increase unemployment, which he noted would increase the debts of the unemployed. Mr. Anselme commented that patients at JMH had bills to pay, and must be helped. He pointed out that JMH was a community hospital, and therefore needed County leaders to speak louder in support of saving it.

Ms. Juana Thomas, 1700 NE 176 Street, noted she currently worked as a Registered Nurse for JMH. She asked how Commissioner Edmonson could help to ensure that JMH remained open without being privatized.

Commissioner Edmonson noted that her answer to all questions from the public tonight was that she intended to save JMH as she was elected to do. She noted her objective for calling this meeting was to learn how the public wanted her to respond to the Task Force's Recommendations; however, she was not prepared to discuss what her response would be. Commissioner Edmonson added that she did not want to be treated as though she were on trial.

Ms. Famina Rolle, 3463 NW 1st Avenue, noted that her child was one of many children in the County who were suffering from Sickle Cell Anemia, and could only receive treatment through JMH.

Ms. Yvonne Saint Gerard, 65 NW 26 Street (phonetic), noted that it seemed that the County Commission was developing a plan to provide hospital care to those who were uninsured and had low income. She noted that when the plan was complete, she would like the County Commission to inform the public how they intended to implement it.

Mr. Norberto Molina, 696 NE 87 Street, noted he had been employed by JMH for the last 18 years. He asked what the County Commission had instructed the Task Force to accomplish, and what the qualifications of the Task Force's members were.

Commissioner Edmonson noted the Task Force was assembled by the County Commission.

Dr. Feller noted that the County Commission had tried to ensure the members were knowledgeable about how hospital systems functioned; and about hospital labor, management, and human resources issues. He added that the Task Force's goal was to keep JMH open and financially viable.

Mr. Molina asked why the Task Force was comprised of individuals who worked for JMH's competing institutions.

Commissioner Edmonson read the names and titles of the Task Force members again and noted that one of the members represented JMH.

Mr. Molina noted Commission District 3 would be impacted if JMH employees lost their jobs or received pay cuts. He expressed concern that he believed matters concerning JMH were not being handled fairly.

Commissioner Edmonson reiterated that she welcomed dialogue tonight, but she did not want to feel intimidated by it.

Mr. Donny Dandy, 4851 NW 5th Avenue, noted that his childhood asthma had been eliminated through treatment at JMH, and now he worked at JMH North. He expressed concern that people who could not afford a private doctor would not receive medical treatment if JMH was privatized. Mr. Dandy noted the County needed to have a safety net hospital because it was a big metropolitan area.

Ms. Marilyn Ortiz, 142 NW 27 St, noted she depended on the services of JMH, including the Ryan White Program. She asked what was going to happen to the Program.

Commissioner Edmonson noted she could not answer that question now, but she believed the County Commission would consider it. She asked Ms. Ortiz to call one of her Offices.

Ms. Latoya Stevens, 2100 NW 44 Street, indicated that if JMH was given sufficient funds to support its operations, it would not have to be privatized. She said perhaps more effort could be made to provide those funds to JMH. She also noted she had been repeatedly been uninsured because her employers, which had been Fortune 500 companies, had chosen not to provide insurance to their employees.

Commissioner Edmonson reminded everyone that she was only one of 13 County Commissioners. She said she would do her best to ensure that as many people as possible remained employed. The Commissioner also said it did not make sense that the County should lay people off, and then have to support those same people with unemployment benefits/services.

Ms. Marie Nichole Williams, 168 NE 55 St., noted that all of her health needs were met at JMH, and she would not be able to afford JMH if it was privatized.

Commissioner Edmonson noted people had threatened to not to vote for her when her term was up, and/or to picket against her if she supported privatizing JMH; however, she had never said that she would support that. She noted she needed to weigh all options concerning how Jackson should be managed; the only alternative would be to decide based on the first option presented to her. She pointed out that whatever the decision she may make, someone would oppose it. The Commissioner noted that she was accountable to her family currently living in Liberty City, and that she believed JMH deserved the best medical staff.

Commissioner Edmonson noted the public could not intimidate Commissioners and at the same time expect them to do their jobs well. She said she wanted to make a decision with a clear mind.

Ms. Marie Josee Cherisme, 76 NW 77 Street, noted that she was alive that day because of the breast cancer surgery she underwent at JMH. She opined that based on the high level of service she received at JMH, she believed that JMH should retain its JMH's doctors and nurses.

Ms. Vernice Georges, 179 NE 68 Street, expressed appreciation that JMH had given her excellent service when she was pregnant, despite the fact that she had not had Medicaid.

Ms. Magalie Vancol Peña, 9611 NW 12th Street, noted she was currently employed as a Social Worker at JMH, and her patients were afraid that if JMH was privatized, they would be unable to pay for the services they needed. Ms. Peña expressed her opinion that no other hospital would treat her patients as well as JMH had.

Commissioner Edmonson asked Ms. Peña to tell her patients that she would do all she could to ensure JMH stayed open, especially for people in their situations.

Mr. Joseph Reed, 3855 NW 210 Street, noted he was currently employed by JMH. He noted his message on behalf of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees members was that JMH should remain in operation.

Mr. James Starkweather, 10900 SW 95 Street, expressed appreciation for tonight's (7/28) meeting. He referred to Task Force Recommendation No. 6, which was to ensure that no competing interests would serve on the governing board proposed by the Task Force. Mr. Starkweather asked how it was possible that no ethics rule was violated when representatives of JMH's competing organizations were appointed to the Task Force.

Assistant County Attorney Eugene Shy noted the County Commission had determined that the Task Force membership was appropriate. He also noted the Task Force developed the Recommendation(s) regarding the composition of the governing board; and it was to their credit that they did not want the governing board to include people from organizations like theirs.

Assistant State Attorney Silverman noted although some of the Task Force members were currently CEO's of competing hospitals, they had put their personal agendas aside to develop Recommendations that they thought would benefit and preserve JMH. He pointed out that those members did not constitute a majority of the Task Force's membership, and they represented successful hospitals. He added that if the County Commission decided to accept some or all of the Task Force's Recommendations, it would establish a Committee to implement them.

Mr. Starkweather noted JMH's biggest need was to acquire paying customers so it could fund the uninsured. He said the County should not seek help from the hospitals with paying customers.

Mr. John Ratliff, 9825 NE 4 Avenue Road, noted that JMH's economic problems were being resolved. He pointed out that the hospitals affiliated with some of the Task Force members had not been recognized for their patient services; only JMH had been. Mr. Ratliff added that not one of those hospitals used their resources to treat people with Sickle Cell Anemia or other ailments; in contrast, JMH used all of its money from paying patients to treat the indigent. He said he was doubtful that any other board would do the same. Mr. Ratliff noted he believed that JMH should remain public, because it was a public hospital that had become the epicenter for treating AIDS when that disease became an epidemic.

Ms. Baker noted that her opinion had dissented from the opinions of the other individuals on the Task Force. She said people thought that fixing JMH meant changing its governance; however, studies showed that changing a hospital's governance structure did not necessarily result in improved hospital operations. Ms. Baker noted that if a private

board with an incompetent CEO was to govern JMH, not only would JMH's patients suffer, but so would the public. She said it was currently being proposed that sovereign immunity be instituted, but without accountability to the Government in the Sunshine Law; that governing board members be allowed to own the buildings but have the public mow the grass; and that CEO's and private sector, not-for-profit representatives be put in charge of JMH and be allowed to make by-laws under Section 13, and decisions about human resources, reduction or growth of medical services, and contracts. Ms. Baker pointed out that a private board could establish a policy that no person without medical insurance or a \$45 down payment could receive treatment from JMH's staff. She questioned the idea of giving such power to a governing board when the public did not know who the board members would be, and when the public had owned the property and paid to maintain JMH for years.

Ms. Baker noted the County Commission needed to remain in charge of JMH, and to delegate an adequate CEO and a board with adequate members to run JMH. She noted the current seven-member board knew what it was doing for the first time in 25 years. Ms. Baker said taxpayers wanted JMH's governing board to be held accountable for how it used taxpayers' money. Ms. Baker said the public needed and wanted the Commissioners to remain in their current positions; however, if the Commission gave away JMH's leadership, the public would become frustrated and would recall all of the current Commissioners as a result.

Commissioner Edmonson noted that public officials were discouraged from helping the public when they threatened to recall them. She said the County's leaders were doing their best to serve the public. Commissioner Edmonson pointed out that the two elected officials who were recently recalled had voted to preserve jobs. She added that some factions would vote against the Commissioners if they voted in support of laying people off; but if they voted to retain jobs instead, other factions would vote against them.

Ms. Maria Viera, 4209 NW 24 Avenue, noted she was currently employed in JMH's Finance department. She said it was very difficult to ask for a \$150 co-payment from a patient without Medicaid or insurance; yet, she understood that JMH needed money to stay open. She also expressed concern that her job may be in jeopardy.

Commissioner Edmonson noted the County had no control over State funding for the Ryan White Program. She said she was a taxpayer as well and was also concerned about the security of her job and her home. She said she had not heard anyone suggest how to fix JMH's problems. She pointed out that although Ms. Baker had made some recommendations, implementing them would require the support of all 13 Commissioners.

Ms. Viera added that when JMH doctors had so many appointments that they could not see other patients with insurance, those patients ended up seeing doctors at the University of Miami Hospital and its affiliated Clinics. She noted that JMH should hire doctors to work for JMH, not for UM, in order to prevent that from happening.

Commissioner Edmonson noted she would take Ms. Viera's idea into consideration. She added that she may not vote for the Task Force's Recommendations.

Ms. Viera noted that JMH had employed collection agencies located outside of the County to collect money, but should employ County residents in need of jobs to do this work.

Mr. Aaron Ceray, 880 NE 69 Street, suggested the County Commission stop trying to resolve JMH's problems within 90 days. He said that all Jackson's employees made had forfeited 5% of their salaries last year. Mr. Ceray referred to a "white paper" that he claimed all the County Commissioners had received. He encouraged Commissioner Edmonson to listen to the community.

Commissioner Edmonson noted she would read the "white paper"; however, it should be noted that she was responsible for reading a lot of mail and documents every day.

Dr. Feller noted that the Task Force members and those who had spoken tonight were in agreement that JMH should remain in operation to give care to the indigent. He said the Task Force members had not suggested that JMH be sold to a private entity, but that it be governed by not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, comprised of members appointed by the County Commission. He said he was not anti-union, but as he saw it, union members were seeking their good, and not the good of the County.

Ms. Baker objected to Dr. Feller's comments regarding union members.

Commissioner Edmonson noted the public should consider the fact that she made an effort to hold a town hall meeting and get public input on the Task Force's Recommendations.

Mr. Starkweather noted people should respect those they disagreed with. He pointed out that some private, not-for-profit hospitals were failing in the current economic crisis, while some public hospitals were succeeding; therefore, the success of a hospital did not depend on whether it was non-profit or public, but on the way it ran business daily. Mr. Starkweather noted that JMH had always met the needs of patients and made adjustments during crises, e.g. crises created by hurricanes. He indicated that he hoped Commissioner Edmonson would not feel that she had to wait until the last minute to fight for JMH with her vote. Mr. Starkweather also noted the County needed to consider that National Healthcare Reform would bring more funds into the Healthcare System. He said that a private governing board would re-appoint itself, which would lead to political issues.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, tonight's (7/28) Town Hall meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.