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**Livermore VA Medical Center
Local Advisory Panel Public Meeting
Friday, May 13, 2005
Building 90, Nursing Home Dining Room**

Start Time: 9:00AM

➤ Participants:

- LAP members present: Al Perry, LAP Chair; Ellen Shibata, MD; William Ed Schoonover; Bev Finley, Tom Vargas.
- LAP members absent: Guy Houston
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Consultant: Scott Burns, Johanna Valladares, Adrienne Setters, Amy Christopherson
- Perkins + Will: Russ Triplett
- VAMC Support Team: Jason Nietupski, CARES Support Data Lead – Facilities Planner; Robert Goldman, LVD Admin Site Mgr; Lisa Freeman, Director, VA Palo Alto Health Care System and CARES Site Team Chair; Angela Norman, VA Regional Counsel; Larry Janes, CARES Support Team; John Sisty, Logistic Team Chair; Kerri Childress, Public Affairs Officer.
- Others: Robert Wiebe, Director VA Sierra Pacific Network; James Johnson, VSSC-Capital - Spokane, WA; Brian McDaniel, VA Senior Portfolio Manager; Claude Hutchison, Director VA Office of Asset and Enterprise Management.
- Public attendees: Approximately 45 (AM Session); 60 (PM Session)

Opening Remarks and Introductions

➤ Opening Comments/Welcome: Al Perry, Chair, Local Advisory Panel

- Pledge of Allegiance, Ed Schoonover
- Welcoming Comments:
 - Overview of CARES objectives - Appropriate size and location of nursing home and reuse plan.
 - CARES is the VA's road map into the 21st Century.
 - Task is not to revisit the Secretary's decisions that have already been made and that are not in the scope of this process. The focus of this process is the size and location of the nursing home and reuse potential of the Livermore campus. Outpatient and sub-acute care decisions have already been made by the Secretary and are not part of this study process.
 - Business planning options based on stakeholder input will be given to the Secretary for final decision.
 - Emphasis that no veteran will lose access to healthcare.

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- Brief summary of LAP responsibilities:
 - To understand the Secretary's decision and coordinate input for the contractor regarding implementation options.
 - LAP will provide recommendations to the Contractor, PwC, on implementation issues identified in the May 2004 Secretary's CARES Decision that require further study:
 - Build a new Nursing Home in the Livermore Area
 - Reuse Plan for Livermore Campus
 - Cannot address things that are not identified in the Secretary's decision.
 - Solicit stakeholder input.
 - Introduction of LAP Members: VA Clinical Rep: Dr. Ellen Shibata, MD, Deputy Chief of Staff of Palo Alto HCS; Local Healthcare Representative: Bev Finley, former Stanislaus Medical Center CEO; Local Veteran Service Organization: Ed Schoonover; Local Business Leader, Local Government Representative: Tom Vargas; Director, VA Central California Healthcare System: Al Perry
 - Review of agenda.
 - Introduction of presenters.
 - Review of public comments procedures.
- LAP Administrative Meeting Summary: Al Perry, Chair, Local Advisory Panel
- Review of administrative meeting.
 - Voting and adoption of standard operating procedures
 - Quorum: 4 of 6 LAP members must be present for meeting to be called;
 - Public agenda will be posted on website;
 - Summary of public meeting notes prepared by PwC will be available to the public on the CARES website;
 - Oral comments allowed from public at all meetings;
 - Questions from the public will not be allowed during the AM session. LAP members may ask questions;
 - Written statements do not have to be provided at the beginning of the meeting;
 - Written and verbal statements will be given equal weight;
 - Media will not be allowed to ask questions during public meetings;
 - All meetings will be held in Livermore area;
 - Any LAP member can make motion for vote.
 - Motion to accept the standard operating procedures:
 - Call to vote; motion carried unanimously; passed as stated.

Presentations

- Background & CARES Secretary's Decision: Ms. Elizabeth Freeman, Director of VA Palo Alto Healthcare System
- Overview of CARES history and background.

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- CARES is a 20 year plan for capital asset management for the VA and access to quality healthcare; no veteran will lose their healthcare benefits.
- Demand forecast provided by Milliman USA.
- Livermore Campus – Several elements of the Secretary's decisions are final and will not be revisited in this process.
 - VA will relocate the Livermore outpatient clinic functions to a new East Bay Clinic and Central Valley locations;
 - Low volume outpatient specialty services will be transferred to Palo Alto along with Sub-Acute Inpatient Care.
 - VA will retain nursing home care in Livermore Area, which is defined as the area that Livermore currently services. Size and location to be determined.
- Demand Data & Demographics Presentation: Jason Nietupski, CARES Support Data Lead, Facility Planner
 - Overview of demand data and demographics.
 - Review of Livermore Division.
 - Overview of National veteran's population statistics.
 - Presentation of Livermore Division population statistics and workload.
 - LAP Member Question: Do we know where the fiscal year 04 nursing home patients were originally from? Answer: Yes, data will be shared with LAP members.
 - LAP Member Question: You mention that the drive is over 30 miles; It would be helpful to tell the audience what this means in time. Answer – We are using a 30 minute drive time as the baseline option for access; When we hear from Mr. Burns, he will explain this baseline criteria and how it will be used in the business planning options – access, which includes drive time; cost effectiveness; and quality.

10:00AM – Break

Call to reconvene at 10:15AM

- CARES Business Plan Presentation: Scott Burns (Team PwC)
 - Overview of VA CARES project and PwC methodology.
 - 18 sites across country; methodologies assembled with central office.
 - Overview of criteria for options development.
 - Review of mechanism for stakeholder input.
 - Review of study scope for Livermore Campus:
 - Size and location of nursing home for Livermore area patients and re-use plan.
 - Financial effectiveness studies will consider capital requirements and healthcare requirements.
 - Review of baseline option.
 - Overview of website and PO Box options for submitting comments:

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- VA CARES Website: www.va.gov/cares
- VA CARES PO BOX: Livermore Study
VA CARES Studies
P.O. Box 1427
Washington Grove, MD 20880-1427
- LAP Member Question: What is the approximate time frame that the subcontractors will be in Livermore area? Answer: All primary subcontractors have been on-site since Wednesday of this week. They will be on-site periodically. We are starting with a blank slate and taking Secretary's decision as starting point. Your input, ideas, sensitivities and comments will all be taken, starting today as the kick off. All input will be integrated in the recommended business plan options.
- LAP will get periodic summaries of all comments throughout the process
- Once an option has been approved, it will have to compete in the normal VA capital processes for a given year against other projects within VA for funding.
- Participation by the public is continuous throughout the process.

10:50AM – Lunch

Call to reconvene at 1:00PM

- Review of morning session and Public speaking ground rules, Al Perry, LAP Chair. LAP Chair again reiterated what is included in the scope of this study and that other items cannot be addressed by the LAP.

Brief Description of Testimony/Public Statements

- Sam Weaver, Representative for Congressman Pombo:
 - Strongly opposed to the closing of the Livermore VA facility.
 - Must ensure that veterans are given the best health services at the best location.
- Mike Underwood, Representative for Congresswoman Tauscher:
Three concerns, all related to the CARES process:
 - a.) Recently the press stated that the majority of Livermore VA nursing home patients came from the Central Valley; in reality, 51.4% of nursing home patients came from the Bay Area and 49.6% came from Central Valley. This misuse in numbers is misleading the public. A fair minded comparison would have included the Bay Area cities. The Central Valley is where the San Joaquin County Hospital is located, not the patients. San Joaquin County Hospital seems to be where the VA wants to put patients.

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- b.) VA CARES & the Palo Alto Healthcare System say that the Livermore facility will not be closed until there is a place to take care of all 12,000 patients. How can this be done? How can quality care be given to sub-acute patients if the services are moved to the nursing home? Which nursing home patients will go if sub-acute patients move in? Keeping status quo was never analyzed by commission.
 - c.) Sent a letter to the Secretary with concerns – never received a response.
- Mike Jensen, Representative for Congressman Cardoza:
- Supports ideas behind CARES but remains concerned that the closure of the Livermore facility will bring problems to those currently receiving care - What will happen to patients if a new facility is not ready upon closure of the Livermore facility?
 - Response: Al Perry reiterated that services in Livermore will not be discontinued until such time as other facilities are in place to provide care.
 - Concerned over the driving time for veterans into the Central Valley.
- Testimonial 4:
- Copy of the San Joaquin County proposal will be provided to LAP in packet for consideration.
 - It is the County's desire that the Central Valley facility be located at San Joaquin General Hospital, as Stockton/San Joaquin is the most centrally located of the Central Valley.
 - The San Joaquin General Hospital Stockton French Camp is located near major highways, so the site is most accessible, especially for veterans that need services 3-4 times a week.
 - Can co-locate skilled nursing home facility with up to 200 beds with an outpatient clinic on San Joaquin property. There is strong community and veteran support for this location.
- Testimonial 5:
- Supporter of San Joaquin County Proposal.
 - Would like community to recognize the terrible hardships placed on veterans.
 - Expressed concerns over the hardships for a disabled veteran to drive to Palo Alto from the Central Valley. (PTSD patient trying to drive in South Bay traffic; 80 year old veteran's wife driving to Palo Alto to visit her sick husband.)
 - It is best to have the facility located at the French Camp site in San Joaquin County.

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- Testimonial 6:
 - Supporter of San Joaquin County Proposal.
 - In 1966, joined the Marine Corp and volunteered to fight for another country's freedom. Here we are again fighting for veterans' rights.
 - We need to take care of veterans now and those that are coming.

- Testimonial 7:
 - Expressed strong contentment with the services at the Livermore facility – "Staff is excellent, care is excellent."
 - Families are also very happy to have their loved ones come this facility.
 - The San Joaquin County would put nursing home patients between a hospital and a jail, unlike the beautiful surroundings here in Livermore.

- Testimonial 8:
 - Speaking on behalf of the Livermore employees and as a Marine veteran.
 - In the past 2-3 weeks the Livermore Nursing Home has lost some of the best nurses due to concerns over job security.
 - Good healthcare employees are scared to lose their jobs so they move to other private hospitals. How will things get better if the facility is losing some of its best employees?
 - Why does CARES want to move the nursing home from this setting? It is peaceful and serene in Livermore, something that cannot be found in another setting.

- Testimonial 9:
 - The American Legion objects to any closure of this facility, especially during time of war.
 - The Department of Veterans Affairs is ready for 5 more Veterans' Homes in the State of California. Why can't one of the State Veterans' Homes be built at the Livermore campus? Can the State of California come together with the VA and build a State Veteran's Home in Livermore?

- Testimonial 10:
 - Wife of a veteran, speaking on behalf of all veterans.
 - Livermore nursing home is in a beautiful setting, feels like private nursing home.
 - Livermore should stay open and right where it is.

- Testimonial 11:
 - Committed to supporting the Livermore facility and keeping it open.
 - Look at East Bay Clinic for possible opportunities for care.

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- Request to continue to work with the VA and provide quality care for veterans.
- Testimonial 12:
 - Three points to support retention of Livermore campus:
 - Appropriate and convenient medical care needs to continue;
 - It is a convenient central location for nursing home, including Alzheimer's units;
 - Current Livermore VA Hospital meets open space quality of life.
- Testimonial 13:
 - Discussed how much of an asset the facility is to the rapidly growing community of Livermore.
 - Livermore is an ideal setting for veterans' healthcare. Take a look at the total number of veterans that need care in this area – Livermore is dead center to all veterans.
 - If Livermore is lost, then ties to Palo Alto Medical Center and Stanford Medical Center are lost and quality of care will go down.
- Jean Prasher, City of Livermore:
 - On behalf of the Mayor, oppose the closure of the Livermore VA Facility.
 - Closing this facility would greatly affect access to quality healthcare for veterans and their families.
- Testimonial 15:
 - Supporter of San Joaquin County Proposal.
 - Personally made three trips to Palo Alto facility, and during one trip, fell asleep and drove off a cliff.
 - A 6 hour drive in traffic to Palo Alto is unacceptable for those living in San Joaquin County. Veterans in San Joaquin County are only going to Palo Alto to get veterans' benefits because they have no where else to go.
 - What about the disabled veterans who have to take a bus? What happens if they miss the last bus home and have to spend the night in an unknown city?
 - Not all veterans can afford to use other sources for healthcare benefits, so there needs to be a facility located close to the veterans who use them.
- Testimonial 16:
 - Expressed deep approval of medical care given at the Livermore facility.
 - The drive into Palo Alto is very difficult, especially during high traffic times and especially for those who need to travel for medical care 3-4 times a week.

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- The beauty of the Livermore facility cannot be replaced, feeding turkeys and deer on the campus is a joy for the nursing home patients.
 - Over next few years more disabled vets will be moving to this area due to the current war so more facilities will be needed to care for these veterans.
 - Request to leave Livermore facility open and expand services
 - Request to build another facility in Stockton.
- Testimonial 17:
- Strongly opposes closing the Livermore facility.
 - Would like to see Livermore facility made into the hub for veterans' healthcare in this area – travel time to Livermore is short, no problems with parking.
 - Recommended to dose down Menlo Park campus and to expand services at Livermore.
 - Would rather receive healthcare benefits through Medicare than to make the drive into Palo Alto.
- Testimonial 18:
- Resident of nursing home.
 - Some veterans have physical disabilities as well as mental.
 - This place has to stay open, most veterans do not want to be here, but they have to - this is their home.
 - “We need this place, we have no where else to go.”
- Testimonial 19:
- Livermore facility provides place for healing, not just physical healing, but also healing of the soul which is impossible to duplicate in another setting.
 - Livermore does not require replacement, just fixing.
 - This is a wonderful facility with great staff.
 - Would like to see more options for transportation of veterans to the Livermore facility.

Break 2:09PM

Call to reconvene at 2:25PM

- Testimonial 20:
- Would be wise to leave nursing home in Livermore. It's a beautiful, serene place.
 - Would like to suggest building a clinic in Modesto, Ca.
 - Veterans that live up in Sonora ride the bus up Livermore and the bus ride is very difficult, especially for those who are disabled.

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- From Modesto trying to get to Palo Alto would be like being in the war all over again.
- Keep the nursing home in Livermore – it is a waste of money to move it anywhere.
- Testimonial 21:
 - Concerned over the VA asking veterans to bear the burden of their budget problems by taking away veterans' healthcare.
 - Closing hospitals and nursing homes is not the solution.
 - During the draft in 1974-76 no one told those fighting the war that when they needed extended care facilities, the VA would not provide them.
 - The VA budget needs to address veterans and their needs.
 - Need to look at what healthcare burdens are in the military; need to look at the entire veteran population and how to serve them best
 - Written comments were submitted to panel.
- Testimonial 22:
 - Recommendation to have a hospital in San Joaquin and one in Livermore.
- Testimonial 23:
 - Strong sentiments that Livermore is a good place for veterans' care – no reason to get rid of it.
 - Recommendation to keep the Livermore facility open.
 - There was \$10 million recently put into this building, why throw it away?
- Testimonial 24:
 - Request that decision makers reconsider closing the Livermore facility.
 - There is a war going on, veterans coming home will need the Livermore facility.
 - American Legion Post 75 requests that the Livermore facility is kept open.
- Testimonial 25:
 - Strong supporter of the healthcare staff and administration at the Livermore nursing home.
 - Livermore hospital just celebrated its 80th year anniversary. For 80 years something was done right – do not change what is not broken.
 - Recommendation that LAP and contractors talk to patients in the nursing home to understand what the patients feel for the Livermore facility.

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- Veterans have given their all for this country, now veterans ask something of their country – Leave the Livermore facility alone.
- Testimonial 26:
 - Strong supporter of nursing staff and medical doctors at the Livermore Nursing Home.
 - Extremely satisfied with the medical care given at the facility.
 - Does not support the San Joaquin proposal because of the lack of cleanliness at the facility.
 - Loves the serenity of the Livermore campus, especially the deer and turkey that come up to the windows of the nursing home.
 - Strong sentiments toward keeping the nursing home at the Livermore campus.
- Testimonial 27:
 - Request to improve the transportation between the Valley and Livermore.
 - Very hard for veterans to use public transportation from Stockton/Modesto to Livermore and vice versa.
 - Improving transportation will be much more cost effective than building another facility.
- Russ Lowe, Representative from Senator Feinstein's Office :
 - Recommendations for veterans who need to write to Senator Feinstein to write to her San Francisco office.
 - Anytime there are proposed reductions to services of those who serve our country, Senator Feinstein takes these proposed initiatives very seriously.
 - Comments spoken today during the Livermore CARES public meeting will be taken back to the Senator.
- LAP Chair closing comments:
 - Public speakers had good things to say about nursing staff and the care given to patients at the Livermore campus.
 - Reiteration that NO veteran will lose services because of CARES; No patient will be removed from bed if another bed is not available.
 - Thanks to Lisa Freeman, all presenters, and sincere thanks to the public presenters from the audience for passionate contribution of comments.
 - Written comments will be accepted for up to two weeks on website and CARES PO Box noted during PwC presentation.

3:00PM - Call for adjournment by Al Perry. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned.