

**Lexington VAMC Leestown Campus
Local Advisory Panel Meeting – Public Meeting
Building 4 – Main Auditorium
September 20, 2006, 1:00 PM – 5:45 PM**

I. Participants

Local Advisory Panel (LAP) Members: Patricia Pittman, Director VAMC Memphis, Chair; General Les Beavers (Retired), National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs and Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs; Dr. Richard (Dan) Roth, Deputy Chief Medical Officer VISN 9; Becky Estep, Senior Aide to Mayor of Lexington, Kentucky; Ron Spriggs, Executive Director, Tuskegee Airmen Association; Randy Fisher, American Legion State Service Center

VA Support Team: Jim Schiller, Engineer VSSC; Christina White, Health System Specialist, Office of Strategic Initiatives; Malinda Pugh, Office of Acquisition and Enterprise Management; Lexington VAMC: Richard Cogger, Staff Assistant to the Director; Debra Dillon, Emergency Mgt./CARES Support; David Summers, Chief of Engineering Services; Desti Stimes, Public Affairs Officer; David Moynihan, Engineer.

Team PwC: Janet Hinchcliff (PricewaterhouseCoopers), Peter Erwin PhD. (PwC), Michael Bobbin (PwC).

Pruitt Group EUL: Tom Rosenfeld (Pruitt Group).

Public: 30-40 attendees

II. Opening Remarks: Patricia Pittman

- Welcome.
- Explained role as Chairperson.
- Described the role of the LAP panel in reviewing the work of the consultants.
- Described the background to the CARES study process.
- Described the current appropriations for capital projects.
- Described the role of the consultants (PwC and Pruitt Group).
- Described the general timing and outcomes of Stage I.
- Described the purpose of today's LAP meeting - the focus of input today is on issues needing to be considered in the selected options.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

- Led by Mr. Evans.

IV. Introduction of LAP Members

- Each LAP member, the presenters and support staff introduced themselves.

V. Review of Agenda and Public Comment Process: Patricia Pittman

- Described the purpose of the third LAP meeting:
 - To provide input on the options presented at today's meeting.
 - Comments should focus on providing the Secretary with input on the considerations needing to be addressed by each option.
 - To document public concerns for the Secretary.
- Described the rules for public participation and the order of business for the public meeting.
- Described the alternate mechanisms for public to provide comment outside of today's LAP meeting.

VI. Report of Administrative Meeting and Standard Operating Procedures:
Patricia Pittman

- Described the agenda for the morning's administrative meeting and the nature of the discussion.
- Summarized the issues discussed at the administrative LAP meeting:
 - Traffic patterns and access to campus from Leestown Road.
 - Providing ample parking.
 - VA related services and affirmed that VA related services should receive the highest considerations when evaluating the options.
 - VA's mission to veterans will be a priority in any re-use considerations on campus.
 - No land will be offered for sale at Leestown campus.
 - For any option where re-use is proposed, primary care and nursing home care will continue to have a presence on this campus.
 - Retain sufficient land for future VA expansion.
 - Modernization of the campus.
- The LAP members and the public should try to keep comments to key implementation considerations that the Secretary should keep in mind when making his decision.

VII. Review of Stage I Summary Report

- Janet Hinchcliff presented.

VIII. Review of Secretary's Decision and Approved BPOs for Further Study

- Christina White presented.

IX. Presentation of Options/Stage II Methodology

- Janet Hinchcliff and Tom Rosenfeld presented.

X. LAP Comments on BPOs

- Patricia Pittman opened the floor for LAP discussion.

- **Patricia Pittman** - Blanket comment for all options - Two of the issues raised in the administrative meeting were parking and vehicular access.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Asked for affirmation from LAP panel that everyone agreed that vehicular access and ample parking were important considerations for each option.

Option 6:

- Patricia Pittman opened the floor for comments on BPO 6.
- **Ron Spriggs** - The re-use line on slide 24 was adjusted to encompass buildings 27 and 28 and needs to be made consistent with the text.
 - Patricia Pittman highlighted creeks and topographical depressions on the site map for option 6.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Asked the panel what the LAP would want the Secretary to know about this option.
- **Randy Fisher** - Concerned about re-use issue on three sides. Does not believe the VA is holding enough land in case the VA needs expansion. Parking is an issue and is currently inadequate. Would like the VA to hold onto more land. Would like the Secretary to keep more land on front portion of campus to help with access issue.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Recommends the Secretary thinks strategically about space considerations and access to the site.
- **Patricia Pittman** - What is the period of time that property can be leased on a VA campus?
 - **Malinda Pugh** - Confirmed that lease terms are flexible and can be from 1 to 75 years, at VA's discretion.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Recommends that maximum space/acreage should be utilized for veteran space and local VA leadership should dictate shorter lease periods of portions of re-use parcels close to clinical buildings.
 - **Randy Fisher** - Areas around buildings 17 and 25 should be expanded for VA use.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Noted that the boundaries are not fixed.
 - **Ron Spriggs** - If the boundary could be moved to leave 28 and 27 on VA land, this would provide a more flexible option
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Asked for affirmation from the panel that the recommendation is to increase land for future expansion potential, not necessarily dictate what gets demolished or not.
- **Dan Roth** - Need to give strong consideration to existing and future tenant service providers that are partners with VA in providing services to veterans such as woman's programs, domiciliary, and a homeless veterans shelter.
- **Patricia Pittman** - The Secretary should consider tenant services already on campus, ample contiguous parking, space retention for future VA expansion, and vehicular access in option 6.
- **Becky Estep** - Need to be very considerate of veterans access to VA related services when considering any residential re-use on site.

- **Patricia Pittman** - Regardless of the option the Secretary chooses the LAP recommends that re-use enhances VA's mission.
- **Ron Spriggs** - VA should retain more land than what is being made available for re-use.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Recommends the issue be addressed through providing land for future expansion and to plan ahead. We can recommend some short term and long term leases for land. This can help to ensure the VA is able to get the land back if needed.
- **Randy Fisher** - Preference for option 1 and 6 (with increased acreage)
 - **Ron Spriggs** - Asked what are Fisher's concerns with option 5.
 - **Randy Fisher** - Option 5 would give two thirds of campus acreage up for re-use and would like to see less land available for re-use.
- **General Beavers** - In option 6 many buildings will be demolished that do not meet clinical criteria. This brings on the issue of phasing current services while facilities are being built. It is important to maintain continuity of services in these buildings that provide related VA services. It is important to maintain the VA's mission.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Why do we want to retain and maintain buildings that we are not using such as 27 and 28?
 - **General Beavers** - Commented that having toured the buildings they would not meet clinical criteria.
- **General Beavers** - The implementation plan and phasing for the VA related services provided in these buildings must be factored into implementation and phasing plans.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Asked for affirmation from the LAP that there were no other considerations for option 6.

Option 5

- Patricia Pittman opened the floor for comments on BPO 5.
- **Randy Fisher** - Concerned about giving too much land up for re-use.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - The parcel boundaries can be changed, with the constraint being the topography of the land.
- Pittman noted that the re-use planning process would dictate the nature of the re-use allowed and the amount of the land.
- **Randy Fisher** - Reiterated concerns about the future flexibility of land that is given to re-use.
 - **Patricia Pittman** - Agreed, but pointed out that VA retains decision control and could dictate the length of leases.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Reiterated the considerations discussed under option 6 and stated that they also apply to option 5.
- **Ron Spriggs** - The construction of a new clinical building for option 5 should dedicate the greatest level of space to provide services to veterans. The site map appears to give too much space to supporting and administrative uses.

- **Patricia Pittman** - Revisited LAP 2 meeting summary - Clinical and administrative space is driven by workload projections.
- **Dan Roth** - Confirmed the use of space drivers to determine the space need for clinical and administrative services. This should ensure that space requirements are met when building new.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Asked whether there are vehicular access considerations with locating VA on the southeastern portion.
- **Dan Roth** - A traffic study should be conducted and direction should be provided from local agencies on traffic implications of all options.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Are there zoning considerations?
- **Becky Estep** - Residential re-use and traffic patterns need to be studied as well as different zoning considerations.
- **Ron Spriggs** - The Secretary should be able to see where the traffic lights are on the site plans. This will help him to understand the traffic issue.
- **Becky Estep** - The site map would also need to show where the stop light leads and the surrounding uses that are impacted.
- **Patricia Pittman** - The planning assumptions need to consider the future demand for nursing home care.
- **Patricia Pittman** - Asked for affirmation from the LAP that there were no other considerations for option 5.

Break 2:35 - 2:45

XI. Public Comment Period

- Pittman reviewed the protocol for public comments.

Testimony 1

- Service connected veteran and nurse.
- Favors baseline option. The stress level for veterans is too high. Building 16 has a pool and closure of this facility has impacted the ability to deal with stress and pain management. Other facilities such as a greenhouse, nursery, and ceramics have been closed down which have led to suicides. Need to reinstate programs for mental health patients.

Testimony 2

- Veterans' family member.
- Would like the Chapel to re-open. Pastoral care is being provided in the lunch room of this building. Hopes husband and son have access to pastoral care at Lexington.

Testimony 3

- Veteran.
- Receive acute care at Lexington. Believes the statements being made in the study are based on faulty assumptions. The buildings on campus are soundly and structurally better than many buildings. The chapel is one of

his favorite places. Veterans need the open space provided at Lexington. Re-use of campus is unfeeling and disrespectful to veterans. There is no reason to change any portion of the campus and the open space on the campus is very important to preserve.

Testimony 4

- Veteran.
- The chapel should be saved. Traffic on Leestown road is already very heavy. Suggested leasing land for athletic purposes rather than buildings - possibly soccer fields for a school.

Testimony 5

- Veteran.
- Agreed with Mr. Fisher that too much land is being given over to re-use in options 5 and 6. Woman's programs at Lexington do not meet VA mission for services and will need more space in the future. In favor of maximizing acreage for veterans.
- **Ron Spriggs** - Asked that the minutes specifically highlight the need to retain the services identified in testimonies 1 and 2.
- **Patricia Pittman** - The Stage II capital planning analysis will determine the space requirements for services such as these. This analysis has not been completed yet. Testimony 1 and 2 will be in the meeting minutes.
- **Testimony 1 continued** - There are areas in woman's programs that need expansion. There will be more female veterans coming to Lexington.
- **Randy Fisher** - What happens to the land if there are no re-use proposals?
 - **Malinda Pugh** - Clarified that if there is no interest, then VA would need to look at other options, such as different lease arrangements, or retention.
- **Testimony 5 continued** - Other local government agencies might take over the unused facilities if no other re-use proposal is identified.

Testimony 6

- Veteran.
- Wants to make sure veterans keep the land. The Chapel helps people. Keep the year 2020 in mind. Keep the trees and grass for the thousands of veterans from Iraq and other wars that will need this facility.

Testimony 3 continued

- Veterans here were taught how to farm on the land and produce things that financed ourselves. These veterans benefited and were able to get back on their feet. We need to take care of our veterans. One of the biggest problems we had was substance abuse. Lexington has the best substance abuse staff in the world.

Testimony 1 continued

- People continue to make decisions for veterans. We fought hard to keep the facilities up and running. When buildings were closed that provided mental health programs it took a great toll on the hearts and minds of PTSD patients. This campus helps us heal. Retain as much campus as possible.

Testimony 7

- Veteran.
- There is no reason to give away or lease any of the land. All veterans regardless of service should be able to enjoy the same services that have been provided at Lexington.

XII. Closing Remarks: Patricia Pittman

- **Patricia Pittman** - Heard today that each option should retain the site's special features, character, and prettiness. Access to parking is also a consideration.
- Pittman asked for further testimony and then with no further comments, asked Janet Hinchcliff to review the other mechanisms to provide public input.
- Pittman thanked everyone for coming to the meeting
- Called for adjournment, seconded

Adjournment at 3:16 PM