

LEXINGTON VA MEDICAL CENTER

Local Advisory Panel Meeting - Public Meeting #4 Leestown Road Division Auditorium, Building 4 February 1, 2007, 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

➤ **Participants:**

Local Advisory Panel (LAP) Members present:

- 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
- Ron Spriggs, Executive Director, Tuskegee Airmen Association
- Becky Estep, Veteran
- Randy Fisher, American Legion State Service Center

Other VA Participants:

- Allen Berkowitz, PhD, Acting Director, Office of Strategic Initiatives (OSI)
- Karen Williams, Office of Acquisition and Enterprise Management (OAEM)

Lexington VAMC:

- Don Schmonsky, CARES Team Leader
- Debra Dillon, Emergency Mgt./CARES Support
- David Summers, Chief of Engineering Services
- Desti Stimes, Public Affairs Officer
- David Moynihan, Engineer

Team PwC:

- Melissa Glynn, PhD, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Janet Hinchcliff, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Matthew Jarm, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Kristin Eberhard, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Brent Hussong, Perkins & Will

Re-use Contractor (Pruitt Group):

- Tom Rosenfeld

Public:

- Approximately 25 attendees

Start at 1:00 PM

➤ **Welcome and Opening Remarks:** Patricia Pittman

- Thanked the public for their interest and attendance. Asked the Local Advisory Panel (LAP) members to introduce themselves.
 - LAP members introduced themselves.
- Called the meeting to order.

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- Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Dickson.
- **Logistics of Meeting:** Don Schmonsky
 - Reviewed location and building logistics.
 - Staff on hand to assist the meeting attendees in any way possible.
- **Business:** Patricia Pittman
 - **Overview of the Meeting Agenda and the LAPs role:**
 - Reviewed the agenda for the meeting (handouts received by audience members).
 - The LAP's role is to provide recommendations and input to the VA Secretary on the Business Plan Options (BPO) that were studied. This will incorporate the outcome of the LAP's deliberation and feedback received from the stakeholders today.
 - This is the fourth and final LAP meeting.
 - The LAP has received stakeholder feedback and comments from a number of channels.
 - The handout includes descriptions of the BPOs being discussed today.
 - A priority of the LAP is to gather input from the stakeholders during the public testimony portion of the meeting. (Reviewed the process for public testimony)
 - If the comments or questions received are out of scope it will be addressed as such; however if an answer is unknown at the present time it will be noted accordingly.
 - There are other ways to submit additional feedback which will be discussed later in the presentation.
 - Requested that anyone who wants to provide testimony during the meeting today sign up
 - Testimony will be limited to three minutes per person, which will be kept and indicated by the timekeeper.
 - **Review of Administrative Meeting:**
 - Reviewed the material and Stage II presentation that will be presented today to make sure that the LAP was educated about the process.
 - There was no deliberation or discussion about the BPOs by the LAP.
 - Announced that there is no option that has Leestown campus closing. Only BPOs 1, 5, and 6 are on the table for consideration by the Secretary.
 - The LAP provided feedback to PwC on the presentation which will be reflected during the meeting.
 - **Old Business:**
 - No old business to discuss.
 - **Remaining Questions:**
 - No remaining questions from the LAP.

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- **CARES Process Next Steps:** Allen Berkowitz
 - Speaking on behalf of Jay Halpern (Special Assistant to the Secretary of VA).
 - Thanked the panel for all of their efforts, on behalf of the Secretary.
 - The feedback provided by the panel should be received in a format most conducive to the Secretary when making his final decision. The analysis that the Secretary will be receiving, from PwC, will focus on cost effectiveness, quality of care, access of care, risk of implementation, reuse opportunities, and stakeholder consideration. The LAP will decide on how they provide their recommendations to ensure maximum impact based on the data and information received from stakeholder input. Two possible approaches can be used, including the submission of very specific input on one BPO selection supported by the decision criteria or through the LAPs agreement or disagreement on each BPO, based on the information provided.

- **Presentation of Stage II Study Results:** Janet Hinchcliff & Brent Hussong
 - Presented the relevant slides from the Stage II study presentation.

- **Presentation of Enhanced-Use Leasing Program and Reuse Report:** Karen Williams & Tom Rosenfeld
 - Ms. Williams: Introduced herself from the Office of Acquisition and Enterprise Management (OAEM) and the OAEM subcontractor, Mr. Rosenfeld from the Pruitt Group.
 - Ms. Williams presented the relevant slides from the Stage II study presentation.
 - Ms. Williams: Clarified that they do not decide on the types or areas of reuse and that the needs of the veterans drive the reuse opportunities.
 - Mr. Rosenfeld presented the reuse analysis slides from the Stage II study presentation.

- **Presentation of Stage II BPO Tradeoff and Next Steps:** Janet Hinchcliff
 - Presented the relevant slides from the Stage II study presentation.
 - Janet thanked the audience and the LAP for their efforts throughout the process. All of the feedback received was appreciated and helped PwC with their study.

Break

- **Public Testimony, Questions and Comments:** Patricia Pittman
(All testimony has been paraphrased and names are used only if written testimony was submitted or if testimony was provided on behalf of state or local official)
 - Called the public comment period to order.
 - **Testimony 1:**
 - Doctor from the Kentucky Department of Veteran Affairs representing the Homeless Program as an Outreach Coordinator.

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- Has a high level of interest in sustaining the 40 bed transition facility that is currently housed in Building 29. BPO 1 would maintain the building and the program and BPO 5 may provide a sustainable option for this program. It is not clear if BPO 6 would provide the ability for the program to be maintained. There is no end in sight for the need of this program. This is a VA supported and funded program and requests that the LAP take this into consideration during their deliberation.
 - Ms. Pittman: The program was identified in the presentation and is something that should be recommended by the LAP to be honored.
- **Testimony 2:**
 - What does CCRC stand for and what does it mean to me?
 - Ms. Williams: Continuing Care Retirement Community. It is a community that will meet all of the needs of aging individuals, providing different levels of care across a continuum.
 - What does OAEM mean?
 - Ms. Williams: Office of Acquisitions and Enterprise Management.
 - Requested to receive a (hard) copy of the strengths and weaknesses to study and make decisions on.
 - Ms. Hinchcliff: This is included in the report that is on the website.
 - Stakeholder: What if I don't have access to the website?
 - It was stated that Public Affairs at the VA will assist him.
 - Be sure to keep the young guys in mind when moving forward, as the 80 year old guys probably won't be around.
- **Testimony 3:**
 - Retired and disabled veteran.
 - Will there be a better VA created with these BPOs or is it just downsizing?
 - Mr. Fisher: Out of the BPOs he personally likes BPO 5 due to faster construction, new facilities, state of the art nursing home, no disruption, and an additional entrance. He would like to see more acreage with this BPO due to possible increases in space demands in the future. He also would like to keep Buildings 1 and 4 for use as administrative buildings.
 - Mr. Spriggs: What is meant by downsizing?
 - Stakeholder: Is this to save the government money or to make the VA better?
 - Mr. Fisher: We are trying to improve care through better facilities as well as a new nursing home. It is downsizing only in the area and amount of space; however it will save money

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on unused buildings and space. It will provide utilization of resources and funds.

- Dr. Roth: Been involved in the CARES process since 1999. The point is not to save money but to maximize the finite dollar amount. It appears like downsizing when viewed on the maps; however the buildings that are built will meet the needs of both today's and future veterans. Things will be better and no the VA is not saving money.

○ **Testimony 4:**

- This project is 15 - 20 years in the future so is the cost a percentage increase. What figures do you come up with for the cost to the VA in the future? How was the cost that will be escalating determined?
 - Ms. Hinchcliff: We used the Net Present Cost method out to the year 2033 for each BPO to compare the BPOs. This takes into account the cost of future dollars. The rate is the rate that VA uses for their budgeting processes.
 - Stakeholder: It does not consider the worst case scenario.
 - Ms. Hinchcliff: What is the worst case scenario?
 - Stakeholder: It could end up requiring a lot more money than what was reported.
 - Ms. Williams: These numbers will have to be reanalyzed as the process progresses because they are working off of conceptual plans right now.

○ **Testimony 5:**

- BPO 5 & 6 are the best two BPOs as there is a current need for new facilities. He likes BPO 6 more than BPO 5 because it allows for more land to be used down the road. BPO 5 would be the best option if it included a little more green space; however it does allow for things to happen quicker, which is a good thing. The individuals bringing the veterans currently to the hospital are not the spouses or children, but the grandchildren, of the veteran and it would be nice to have some park space to spend with their family members.

○ **Testimony 6:**

- Represents the 30,000 citizens of this community who signed the regional petition.
- Everyone seems to want to know what the citizens want, but yet keep convoluting how things really are. The petition states that the VA medical facility should remain open for veterans without any reduction of facility or grounds. There is no unneeded land at this campus.
- Ms. Pittman: What BPO do you support?
 - Stakeholder: Supports BPO 1
- There are 450,000 veterans who suffer from mental illness that is service connected, not to mention the thousands more from Iraq and Afghanistan. This land is tranquil and would be a good location

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for them. There is real estate all around the area but they don't need that on the campus.

- **Testimony 7:**
 - Volunteer at the hospital for the last 30 years.
 - The best choice for the land would be to use 25 acres to house a facility to serve the veterans coming back from current conflicts.

➤ **Local Advisory Panel Deliberations:** Patricia Pittman

- Ms. Pittman: The LAP is to discuss each BPO and either agree or disagree, providing support for their opinion. This input will then be submitted to the Secretary in the form of their recommendations.
- Ms. Estep: Can only support BPO 5 and then only if more acreage could be retained.
- Mr. Fisher: The strengths of BPO 5 are:
 - Faster construction.
 - No disruption on care (nursing home will be build separate).
 - The area would all be on one specific (central) area.
 - There would be a new entrance.
- Mr. Fisher: The 40 or so acres in this option is too small and by adding additional acreage to that it would allow for expansion.
- General Beavers: The Secretary Principi decision of maintaining Leestown was to retain the campus but to reduce the cost. BPO 5 allows for new facilities, while limiting the unused space. Supports that BPO 5 should be looked at, but with considerations to an increased amount of acreage. Separating the land into two parcels, in BPO 5, will be more attractive to a builder for a retirement community. An additional advantage of this would be to generate resources for improved health care. Hopes that Congress will commit to continuing the CARES process and funding the project. BPO 5 has a shorter timeline which will hopefully allow for the receipt of funding and get the Leestown project started before the others. The homeless program is part of the VA mission and is VA supported. Any new construction should keep that function and add a similar program for women veterans. Any VA mission that supports our veterans needs to be included in the consideration for new construction.
- Mr. Spriggs: BPO 6 was voted 4-2 at the 2nd LAP meeting. What is the difference from then to now, as BPO 5 is now preferred by the LAP?
 - Mr. Fisher: BPO 5 has faster construction time, less expensive, and continuity of care is not affected.
 - Ms. Estep: Shorter duration and the lower amount of disruption in BPO 5.
 - Ms. Pittman: Likes the available green space, which would also meet the needs of many opinions voiced today who liked the tranquil nature of the campus.
 - Dr. Roth: When we looked at BPO 5 last time we saw a smaller acreage amount, but today it was identified that the duration is shorter and it has a lower cost. Would like to see a BPO 5 with some additional acreage. BPO 5 also has

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more opportunities to keep the buildings as there is more demolition planned for BPO 6.

- Mr. Spriggs: What would an acceptable amount of additional acreage in BPO 5?
 - Ms. Pittman: Should the LAP provide the Secretary with an amount of additional acreage?
 - Dr. Berkowitz: Providing a specific number is probably inappropriate; however requesting the need for additional acreage would be appropriate.
 - Dr. Roth: Agrees with that statement as many times site plans change. Based on the information available it is hard to determine a lot of the exact programs and the corresponding site plans. The maps now are only conceptual and it is hard to know what they will actually look like.
 - Mr. Fisher: Cooper Drive is a prime example because when they finished building they were already out of space and without enough parking. He stated he felt it would be appropriate to ask for green space upfront in the process as the leases would be for 30-75 years.
 - Ms. Estep: Agrees citing past experience.
 - General Beavers: There is intangible value to the site that contributes to the healing process.
 - Mr. Spriggs: Make the number of acres as much as possible should be retained.
 - Ms. Pittman: We will advise the Secretary that as much land as possible should be retained.
- Ms. Pittman: What are the LAP member's opinions of BPO 1?
 - Dr. Roth: The way medicine is evolving we need to have adjacency of services. No amount of renovations will make the buildings effective medical settings capable of meeting current and future needs.
 - Mr. Fisher: Agreed.
 - Dr. Roth: It is hard to maintain buildings that are already past their life expectancy.
 - Ms. Pittman: We need to make sure we provide comments to the Secretary. This is the most expensive BPO according to the projections.
 - Mr. Spriggs: Looking at the summary of baseline and its weaknesses and strengths it is already summarized why BPO 1 is not favorable. Furthermore it is the most expensive BPO.
 - Comment from the public: Buildings are being renovated in BPO 1, but the buildings will not be optimal for providing care to the veterans.
 - Dr. Roth: There is a lot of underutilized space and it does not provide state of the art facilities.
- Ms. Pittman: What are the LAP member's opinions of BPO 6?

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- Ms. Pittman: It needs to offer a greater amount of acreage (green space). What are the pros and cons?
- Mr. Fisher stated that the BPOs weaknesses are:
 - Continuity of care when moving patients.
 - Disbursement of support services.
- Dr. Roth: The BPO is less attractive for reuse.
- Ms. Pittman: Is this a BPO where changes could make it the preferred BPO or does it have more disadvantages than BPO 5?
- Dr. Roth: The longer duration and complexity are major disadvantages as compared to BPO 5.
- General Beavers: This BPO is 4 years longer.
- Mr. Fisher: The greater amount of demolition of buildings is also unfavorable.
- Ms. Pittman: If the Secretary chooses BPO 6, is there anything else besides the suggestion for additional acreage that the LAP wants to convey?
- General Beavers: One advantage is that it does reduce underutilized space.
- Ms. Pittman: If the land was expanded we could live with BPO 5; however there are a lot of disadvantages.
- Ms. Pittman: Is the recommendation by the LAP to support BPO 5?
 - Mr. Fisher: Agreed.
 - Ms. Estep: Agreed.
 - Mr. Spriggs: Agreed
 - Dr. Roth: BPO 5 is the recommendation with the consideration of additional land and of the existing programs. The EUL process should consider that a developer maintain some of the historical buildings.
 - Ms. Pittman: Agreed. Maintaining some of the historical quality should be a recommendation to the Secretary as well.
 - General Beavers: If a CCRC is decided on for reuse, veterans should receive preferential status. Reuse opportunities should maintain VA mission and VA function.
- Ms. Pittman: Thanked the panel for their attentiveness and dedication. Thanked PricewaterhouseCoopers, Pruitt Group, Karen Williams, Allen Berkowitz and Jay Halpern.
- Ms. Pittman: Adjourned the meeting.

Adjourned at 3:45 PM