

**Walla Walla VA Medical Center
Local Advisory Panel Public Meeting
May 4, 2005
Room 103 of Building 78 Theatre**

Start Time: 8:00 AM

➤ **Opening Remarks and Introductions**

➤ Participants:

- Local Advisory Panel members present: Tim Williams, Chair, Director VA Puget Sound Healthcare System, Morre Dean, President, Walla Walla General Hospital; Alan Prentiss, MD, Chief of Staff, VAMC Spokane; Jim Kuntz, Executive Director, Port of Walla Walla; Duane Cole, City Manager, Walla Walla; Alice Thomsen, Commander, Veterans Coalition; Leo Stewart, Representative, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla; Gail Weaver, Vice President for Continuum of Care, Yakima Valley Memorial; Marilyn Galusha, MSN, Director of Nursing Education, Walla Walla Community College
- Absent: Fay Lyon, Disabled American Veterans; John King, Director, Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs
- PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Consultants: Scott Burns, Pat Ryan, Adrienne Setters, Laticia Aragon
- Perkins and Will: Russell Triplett, Richard Dachman
- ERA: Michael Wright
- Other VA Participants: Susan Pendergrass, VHA Director, Office Strategic Initiatives; AJ Allen, Network Planner, VISN Support Team Lead; Roxanne Sisemore, Facility Planner, Walla Walla VA Medical Center
- Public

➤ Welcome: Tim Williams, Chair, Mention of remote sites (on the Walla Walla campus and Yakima outpatient clinics) for audio broadcast of public meeting.

➤ Pledge of Allegiance: led by Sandra Kerr, RN

➤ Overview of Meeting Agenda: Tim Williams, Chair

- Overview of CARES Process and Secretary's Decision
- Overview of Demand and Forecast model
- Review of PwC Methodology
- Public has ability to provide input/comments through three access points
 - Oral testimony
 - Comment sheets for written testimony
 - Computer access to website
- Overview of Administrative Meeting for Local Advisory Panel and public
 - Review of Local Advisory Panel Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
 - Concern about Federal Register Notice, question regarding lack of information on CARES website.
Response: Federal Register Notice was published and produced at the VA Central Office; will work to get earlier notification.

➤ Standard Operating Procedures:

- Motion to Approve SOPs reviewed and considered in Local Advisory Panel administrative meeting on May 9.
Response: Adopted by Local Advisory Panel by majority (unanimous) vote.
- **Overview of CARES Process: Tim Williams, Local Advisory Panel Chair**
 - History and Background of VHA and CARES Process
 - Review of Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Program
 - Secretary's decision, announced in May 2004, included guidance for a healthcare delivery study and general capital/re-use plan for Walla Walla.
 - Walla Walla is in VISN 20 of the 21 VISNs nationwide
 - Concern regarding data and correctness of demographics
 - Local Advisory Panel members questioned long term care projections.
Response: VA is continuing to work on data improvements
- **Overview of Demand Forecast Methodology and Review of Forecasted Demand Data: AJ Allen and Roxanne Sisemore**
 - Review of forecasting model
 - Five demand models: inpatient/outpatient, nursing home care, domiciliary care, spinal cord injury and blind rehabilitation
 - Twenty-five CARES Implementation Categories (CIC), looking at years 2003-2023
 - Background information on Walla Walla, VISN 20 and the Inland North Market
 - Information will be continually posted to website as changes/improvements are made
- **Questions from the Local Advisory Panel and Public related to Demand Methodology:**
 1. Local Advisory Panel members stressed the need for a better understanding of demand data to make relevant decisions that are not only based on current assumptions. For example: increased demand for returning troops that are not accounted for at this time.
 2. Concern about the VA hiring freeze and the effect on access at Walla Walla VAMC
 3. Question about whether projections include approximations of those who have or will be returning from the current war
 4. Requests to have data available prior to meeting and data sources documented
 5. Clarification on the goal of the CARES project and the impact on Walla Walla VAMC
Response: Goals of the CARES project are to improve access, quality and costs at all study sites.
 6. Several comments about the primary care projections and the lack of information regarding Post Traumatic Stress Disorder patients

(Fifteen minute break)

- **Presentation PwC Methodology and Tools including Options Development: Scott Burns, PwC**
 - History and Background, Secretary's decision and goal of study
 - Scope of study, study phases, timelines, PwC's role, organization chart
 - Review of Business Plan Options (BPOs) and Decisions & PwC's approach to BPOs.

- Overview of the Option Development Process and Baseline Option
- A number of credible options will be presented at the second Local Advisory Panel meeting. That input will then be presented to the Secretary and up to six options will be selected.
- Access and cost are key components of PwC's analysis along with quality
- Data is developed on a site by site basis and will continue to be updated throughout Stage 1 and Stage 2. There will be a range of BPOs developed in Stage 1

➤ **Questions from the LAP and Public related to PwC Presentation:**

1. Questions about the future plans for the historical buildings on campus that are not directly related to patient care.
Response: The historical buildings will be considered in the capital/re-use portion of the Walla Walla study.
2. Local Advisory Panel requested that a meeting or discussion be held with the Local Task Force
Response: Local Task Force report was entered into the record and will be considered in developing options.
3. NFFE Representative concern about whether health care providers/employees are being considered as part of PwC analysis
Response: Employees' commute will be considered, at a high level, with regard to the location of the VA services, corresponding with the Secretary's CARES decision of May 2004. In addition, employee costs (salaries/benefits) are aligned by CARES Implementation Categories (CIC), and included in the DSS cost data, provided by the VA to Team PwC for consideration as part of the unit cost analyses, in developing the financial model by Business Planning Options.
4. Requested that the Veterans Rural Access Hospital Policy be considered
Response: PwC will follow-up on this policy
5. What are the expected timelines?
Response: Options will be developed and LAP project completion is expected by the end of 2005. The Secretary will make his decision during the February 2006 timeline.

➤ **Brief Description of Testimony / Public Statements (5mins/speaker) – Summary of Comments:**

1. Testimonial 1, Submitted written statement made to Senate committee at Walla Walla Community College; Average of 200 patients per month traveling to Seattle or Portland for consults, resulting in annual fuel costs on average of \$60,000.
2. Testimonial 2, Commissioner for the Port of Walla Walla, spoke about report presented and options delivered. Keep day clinic, contract out services such as dietary and laundry.
3. Testimonial 3, discussed the quality of his personal experience at the Walla Walla VAMC, and the need for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder programs.
4. Testimonial 4. Mayor of City of Walla Walla, referenced two resolutions in relation to CARES along with 2 City Council members Jerry who all oppose closing the facility.
5. Testimonial 5, City Council member comments regarding Local Task Force Plan, placed task force report into record. He noted that Dr. Susan Jackson assisted the Task Force in developing its report.
6. Testimonial 6, City Council member spoke of specific healthcare needs required by veterans and CARES assumptions that were incorrect.

7. Testimonial 7, Veterans Service Officer spoke about hiring freeze and Walla Walla facility operating under budget and how the VA has tendency to work based upon current patient load.
8. Testimonial 8, City of Walla Walla Parks and Recreation, entered Parks and Recreation Plan into the record and provided Master Plan 2004 to Scott Burns, PwC.
9. Testimonial 9, AFGE representative, discussed CARES decision and impact on employees, asked panel to remember the morale of employees and continue to educate about the process. Submitted AFGE document to Scott Burns, PwC.
10. Testimonial 10, Department of VA, retired Sergeant Major, expressed view that VA must continue to provide care locally in Walla Walla.
11. Testimonial 11, Public Works Director, City of Walla Walla, discussed water resources on the grounds of Walla Walla campus, entered into record and issued to Scott Burns, PwC the Current Walla Walla/DOH Water Resources Plan.
12. Testimonial 12, Concerned about items that were not covered during the morning's session of the public meeting; projections are estimates and the ratio of those currently in the system and those that will soon enter the system, were not considered in the analysis.
13. Testimonial 13, NFFE representative, expressed concern about what the future holds for professional staff.
14. Testimonial 14, Spokesperson representing Congresswoman Cathy McMorris, expressed strong support to keep the Walla Walla Medical Facility. Quoted Rep. Steve Buyer, about additions to VA budget of \$293 million in health care and \$12 million in research.
15. Testimonial 15, Veteran Services Coordinator for Umatilla Tribes Native American Indian, Walla Walla VA Medical Center provides services to three Native American reservations; VA provides a holistic approach, sweat lodge and cultural sensitivity.
16. Testimonial 16, Stressed need for partnerships specifically for mental health and detox services, as well as improved services for dementia and Alzheimer's patients.
17. Testimonial 17, read newspaper articles in relation to VA that were recently published in the local paper.
18. Testimonial 18, American Legion VSO, discussed lack of services offered at the Walla Walla VA Medical Facility
19. Testimonial 19, VA Services Representative from Tri-Cities, mentioned the increased amount of new claims that he reviews on a daily basis. He said that veterans deserve a VA hospital in Walla Walla.
20. Testimonial 20, Third generation in Walla Walla, said that he would recommend grandchildren not enlist into the service if the Walla Walla VAMC is closed.
21. Senator Patty Murray spoke on the following issues:
 - Mental health access is not available;
 - Presented a transcript of a prior Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs hearing to all Local Advisory Panel members and Scott Burns;
 - The best way to serve growing population in Walla Walla is to improve the current campus;
 - Need to create a modern efficient facility to meet the needs of the veteran population.
22. Testimonial 22, Questioned why veterans are now an expense when they were once assets

(Fifteen minute break)

23. Testimonial 23, Korean War Veteran and former VA employee said that a local hospital, St. Mary's, has closed its psychiatric unit.
24. Testimonial 24, Veteran who requires basic care and received excellent service at Walla Walla VAMC ; she discussed the need for PTSD care and views Walla Walla VAMC as her only safety net.
25. Testimonial 25, Veteran who served at Battle of the Bulge, read written testimony from his wife about veterans and the need for the Walla Walla VAMC .
26. Testimonial 26, Said he had lived in Walla Walla area since 1940 and expressed the need for the panel and the contractors to listen to all that was presented today and help keep Walla Walla VAMC .
27. Testimonial 27, Member of VFW Post 992, wants an "all [old] soldiers home."
28. Testimonial 28, Associate Professor at WSU College of Nursing, Nurse Practitioner, and practiced at Walla Walla VA. Many students in the nursing education program work at the Walla Walla VA. She is pleased with the program and expressed desire to keep the program and the facility.
29. Testimonial 29, Wife of a veteran who is currently in the Walla Walla VA Hospital, and is very pleased with the quality of care he has received and discussed the good reputation of the medical center.
30. Testimonial 30, Fire Chief, oversees ambulance service for market, provides services to veteran patients, submitted document into record and to Scott Burns.
31. Testimonial 31, A veteran said he has been clean and sober for the first time in a long time because of treatment provided at Walla Walla.

Public comments ended at 4:00 PM, 31 members of the public reported including Senator Murray and Mayor Lugo

- **Local Advisory Panel Deliberations – summary of comments provided by individual LAP members**
 - Jim Kuntz: Demand forecasting should be revisited with more timely and accurate data
 - Alice Thomsen: Needs further breakdown on the categories, especially Mental Health and PTSD, and because this care is not provided at Walla Walla it's causing people to travel to Portland and Seattle
 - Duane Cole: Access and quality data for Walla Walla Medical Center needs to be reported
 - Alan Prentiss: Suggested looking at routine customer service satisfaction surveys
 - Leo Stewart: Desires better accuracy of overall projections

Adjourn 4:10PM