

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**APRIL 21, 2015**

**5:00 P.M.**

***Public Hearing***

***A PUBLIC HEARING ON INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTION NO. 1273-2015 -  
Requesting Legislative approval of a contract with  
Hudson River Healthcare, Inc. (HRHCare) for the operation of the  
Brentwood Family Health Center.***

***HELD IN THE ROSE Y. CARACAPPA LEGISLATIVE AUDITORIUM.  
OF THE WILLIAM H. ROGERS LEGISLATURE BUILDING  
725 VETERANS MEMORIAL HIGHWAY, SMITHTOWN, NEW YORK***

**In Attendance:**

Legislator Monica Martinez - District No. 9  
Legislator Leslie Kennedy - District No. 12  
Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory - District No. 15  
Tim Laube - Clerk - Suffolk County Legislature  
Craig Freas - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office  
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy  
Linda McGregor - RN/Riverhead Health Center-Patient Care Services  
Joan Fusco - Public Health Nurse/Brentwood Health Center  
Danny Towle - AME/Patient Care Unit President.  
Diane Towle - Medical Record Clerk/DHS-Patient Care Services  
Chris Destio - Suffolk County Riverhead Jail/CO  
Linda Romano - LIU Post Student  
Cassandra Kirwan - LIU Post Student

**Minutes Taken By:**

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

**(\*The hearing was called to order at 5:07 P.M. \*)**

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Good evening. If we could all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to be led by Legislator -- Presiding Officer, excuse me, DuWayne Gregory.

**Salutation**

Please be seated. Again, good evening. Today we're gathered here for the public notice of the public hearing:

*"NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that pursuant to Statute A9-6 of the SUFFOLK COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, the Suffolk County Legislature will conduct a public hearing on the proposal/plan to transition the Brentwood Family Health Center, located at 1869 Brentwood Road, Brentwood, New York, 11717, to Federally Qualified Health Center ("FQHC") status and to provide the primary health care services using employees other than employees of the County of Suffolk. The proposal/plan is set forth in Suffolk County Introductory Resolution No. 1273-2015 and its accompanying documents."*

I would like to now open the floor to our speakers who are here today. We have three cards. You will have three minutes. First we have Mr. Danny Towle.

**MR. TOWLE:**

Isn't it five minutes instead of three minutes?

**MR. NOLAN:**

No.

**MR. TOWLE:**

Okay. Good?

**MR. NOLAN:**

Go right ahead.

**MR. TOWLE:**

Okay. My name is Danny Towle, I've worked for the Department of Health Services for 23 years. I'm currently stationed at the Riverhead Health Center, I'm the AME Patient Care Unit President. Our unit has a little over 200 members, many of whom work at the Riverhead Health Center and the Brentwood Health Center. I'd like to read our mission statement real quick:

*"The mission of the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, through its Division of Patient Care Services, is to provide comprehensive primary care in a dignified and respectful manner, emphasizing preventative medicine and providing diagnostic treatment and referrals to all, regardless of their age, race, sex, creed, color, national origin or ability to pay."*

Obviously I believe this document is outdated, inaccurate and no longer true. It appears that everything seems to be in reference to finances and money. You know, I was at the hearing last week and I have to tell you, you know, no one from the Health Department, no one from the County Executive's Office and none of the Legislators were there, so that's, you know, very disheartening to me. I see that there's a couple of Legislators here today, but I believe there's 18 of you altogether. I mean, it's not right.

In any event, I've seen the article where Mr. Bellone claims that Suffolk County will save \$25 million over the next four years by turning over the Brentwood Health Center to Hudson River HealthCare. I mean, I think everyone in this room could say, you know, Suffolk County never saves what you say you're going to save, and it always costs more than what you claim it's going to cost.

Public Hearing - April 21, 2015

It never adds up. So at best, that's a disingenuous article; at worst, it's an out and out lie, in my opinion.

I've also read that the Legislator who represents the Brentwood area is 100% behind the transfer. The prior Legislator who represented that area was opposed to the health centers, and like my 73-year old mother who worked at John J. Foley, he was laid off.

As you guys know, hundreds and hundreds of County employees were laid off, many like my mother who was making \$35,000 a year. And recently I noticed that four staffers from Tim Bishop who were laid off by the constituents in the 1st District were put on the County payroll, three as Deputy County Executives, and I believe one was hired by my Legislator, Sarah Anker. So again, it just doesn't make sense to me.

But in reference to the health centers, the two East End clinics were turned over to Hudson River HealthCare and the Riverhead Health Center, who regularly gets calls in reference to what to do with HIV patients. So I think this is something that needs to be looked into, considering the Brentwood Health Center I believe has the highest number of HIV patients out of all of the health centers.

Let's see, what else do I have to say here? I'm also concerned, I know there's the no layoff clause, but, you know, I don't know if the employees are being stuck into jobs that don't exist until the end of our contract and they're going to be laid off, or are they filling positions that --

*(Beeper Sounded)*

-- that, you know, people retired or -- you know, that's the question I'd like to try to get an answer to. Thank you. Three minutes, right; that was the buzzer?

**MR. NOLAN:**

Yes, it was.

**LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Thank you, Mr. Towle. Next we have Ms. Linda McGregor.

**MS. MCGREGOR:**

Good evening. Before you start the clock, can I just clarify? Public hearings used to be five minutes.

**MR. NOLAN:**

It was changed to three minutes.

**LEG. LINDSAY:**

It was changed?

**MR. NOLAN:**

Yes.

**MS. MCGREGOR:**

Okay, thank you. Good evening. My name is Linda McGregor, I'm an employee of the Department of Health Services for 17 years. I'm currently employed in the Riverhead Health Center.

## Public Hearing - April 21, 2015

This public hearing should be about the repeal of the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund and your resignations for breaking the law, failing to disclose member items from this fund. The end result of the public funding for organizations from Fund 192, the Department of Economic Development and the County Operating Budget is publicity for individual Legislators from the organizations receiving the funding, not the Cultural Advisory Board, not the Department of Economic Development. You are circumventing the New York State RFP law in privatizing the health centers while you break the law failing to disclose your member items from Fund 192.

The health centers provide care in all areas; pediatric, adult, children, geriatrics, specialties, migraine clinic, prenatal care. We provide everything. It's not that Hudson River Care can do better, it's just a different provider given the same service. I hope that -- I hope that one of you will submit a resolution to repeal the Hotel/Motel Tax Fund, because I do recognize it is used for member items.

I have gone to civic association meetings. I've watched presidents of the civic associations ask everybody present to thank their Legislator present for the 10,000 and \$20,000 grants, which came from Fund 192. I collected statements from Legislators on offices taking credit for securing the funding from Fund 192. You can go to a free summer music concert held by the Chamber of Commerce who got 20 grand in public funding, and the Legislator is there taking credit for the funding. That Hotel/Motel Tax Law needs to be repealed, because it's impossible to police every meeting or every event of these organizations that get that funding. And you are circum -- you are not following New York State Law, you are circumventing the law while you break the law and fail to disclose your member items. Thank you.

### **LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Thank you, Ms. McGregor. And our final speaker, we have Ms. Joan Fusco.

### **MS. FUSCO:**

Hello. My name is Joan Fusco. I've been a Public Health Nurse for many years at Brentwood Health Center, and my main job is follow-up and referrals. Unfortunately I have no place to send anybody anymore. I'm sending one-third of our patients from Brentwood Health Center which come to me to Nassau County Medical Center until they start screening. Zwanger-Pesiri had a charity program, they just closed it to us. They no longer take our patients if they don't have a Social Security number, so that means we'll been be sending more people to the emergency rooms.

I would like to know how Hudson River is going to find backup hospitals when we don't have a public hospital in Suffolk County. Stony Brook has raised their fees prohibitively in the last six months and then they deny it when I call them. I used to spend -- send patients to spend \$50 for a first visit for cardiology, now it's 275, I think it is. And one of my patients had a fracture, a double fracture of her arm; she's between insurance, she is a resident and she had a lapse, she's also mentally ill, and she went to Southside Emergency Room five times, Stony Brook four times, and she has racked up \$15,000 worth of bills at Stony Brook Emergency Room. And I don't know, I couldn't get a business person to answer the phone at Southside to find out what her bill was at Southside, and she has not yet been casted and she has lost the use of her right-hand.

So this is what I'm dealing with on a daily basis, and I don't know how we're going to be giving care to these people. That is why the government stepped in back in 1971, because we had the exact same situation and we lived in the emergency rooms with everyone. Thank you for your time.

### **LEG. MARTINEZ:**

Thank you. I do not have any --

*Applause*

Public Hearing - April 21, 2015

-- other cards. Is there anybody else in the auditorium who would like to address the Legislators at this point? There are no other speakers, the hearing is now closed.

***(\*The hearing was closed at 5:17 PM\*)***