



The Cambridge Hospital



1493 Cambridge Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 (617) 498-1000

March 23, 1993

The Cambridge City Council
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA. 02139

Dear Members of the City Council:

My name is Dr. Lisa Rechtschaffen. I am the Medical Director of the Primary Care Center at Cambridge Hospital and have been a physician at the hospital since 1979. I would like to respond to a point raised at the Hearing on March 22, 1993, which was not adequately addressed.

Vice Mayor Cyr and members of the Community voiced reasonable concerns about the concentration of services at the main Hospital site. They suggested dividing the hospital services and placing some on Beacon Street. Although on the surface this does seem like a logical solution, when one looks at the clinical work that takes place at the hospital, it becomes apparent that this solution is not viable.

The following example, which is by no means an isolated one, will illustrate what I mean. I have a 70 year old patient with schizophrenia, lung disease and diabetes, who was first cared for at the Hospital through the Psychiatric Outpatient Department. She was referred to me so that I could care for her medical ailments. Her largest problem in life is not her inability to breathe normally nor is it her blood sugars which are often in the 300 or 400 range. Her biggest problem is her inability to organize her daily activities, from making herself breakfast to remembering to wash her clothes. What she has managed to do in her life is maintain a relationship with her psychiatrist and me, her internist. She is able to accomplish this primarily because we are located in the same facility. This is not a patient who would find going to one doctor at one address and another doctor at a different address a straight forward task. Such a prospect would terrify her and would prove insurmountable.

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Although the mission of the Hospital is not simply to serve the mentally impaired, a large part of the mission is to serve people who are otherwise disenfranchised, people who without Cambridge Hospital would not have health care options. It is these patients who find it most difficult to negotiate any complexities in the health care system. For these patients, multiple separate sites of service, each demanding its own means of transportation, can often mean the difference between seeking care or going without care. Whether it is a mentally ill person, an elderly person, or a single mother with several small children, ready availability of health care in a single location is not just a way of easing their entry into the medical care system, it is the key to maintaining their health.

The Cambridge community must understand that not providing care in a manner which is accessible to all will ultimately cost everyone more emotionally, physically, and financially. The only way of guaranteeing the Cambridge population universal access to care is by funding the necessary improvements to the Cambridge Hospital.

I appreciate the care and attention you are giving to this matter. If I can be of further assistance please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lisa Rechtschaffen M.D.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lisa Rechtschaffen, M.D.
Medical Director
Primary Care Center

Consent Comm. # 4 8-162

Comm. received form Lisa Rechtschaffen,
M. D., Medical Director, Primary Care
Center, Cambridge Hospital, regarding
the Cambridge Hospital's proposal for
expansion.

In City Council,

April 12, 1993

Placed on file