

City of Cambridge

In City Council August 4, 1986

The

Committee on Health and Hospital conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 1986 beginning at 8 A.M. in the Board Room of the Cambridge Hospital. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, pursuant to a motion by Councillor William Walsh, the present collection policy of the hospital.

Vice Mayor Alfred Vellucci, Chairman of the Committee opened the meeting by stating that in addition to the discussion about to begin regarding credit and collections at the hospital, he wanted to once again raise the issue of community outreach. He stated he did not feel enough was being done within the community to market the services of the hospital. He further stated that he believed the Health Commissioner should be conducting informational meetings throughout the community.

Councillor Francis Duehay questioned whether or not an AIDS policy existed at the hospital and what was being done to inform the community. Mr. John O'Brien, Interim Administrator of the hospital, stated there was in fact such a policy, the hospital has treated some patients, and that Health Commission Dr. Melvin Chalfen was working on a comprehensive policy.

Councillor Thomas Danehy questioned the number of methadone patients treated at the hospital. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that approximately 160 patients are treated annually and the cost of maintaining such a program was fully reimbursable from the Commonwealth.

At this time Councillor William Walsh questioned why, as stated during the budget hearings prior to adopting the current budget, the bad debt and free care of the hospital had reached nine million dollars. He further stated that by his questioning, he was not inferring the hospital should not continue to promote care for those who can't pay, but rather, it should be more aggressive in its ability to determine who can pay.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that the bad debt and free care figures although "on paper" reflect nine million dollars, the actual FY 85-86 loss was \$2.7 million, but that the loss reflected in the tax levy was \$4.6 million. He stated the reason for this discrepancy was the difference between what is known as accrual accounting and general accounting methodology. Furthermore, he stated that free care, that which is given to a patient who is a bona fide Cambridge or Somerville resident, in some cases, results in approximately three million dollars. Bad debt, on the other hand results from the lack of any response to any communication from either the hospital or the Metropolitan Collection Agency. This figure is approximately six million dollars. He further stated that due to recently enacted legislation as of July 1, 1986, the hospital will be able to share in a "Free Care Pool" in an effort to reduce this deficit.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned what the deficit of the hospital was versus that of the Neighborhood Clinics. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating the hospital figure was \$2.8 million which the clinics were \$1.4 million. Mr. O'Brien continued by stating that some people who are served at the hospital are frightened to fill out any kind of forms because some are illegal aliens or here on temporary VISAs and are fearful of being returned to their home land.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned the admission policy of the Michael Neville Manor. Councillor Danehy stated he was concerned with admissions at the Manor, due to the fact that he believed some people wait longer than others.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there was in place an Admissions Committee for the Manor and he believed they maintained a list of eligible applicants. He further stated that sometimes delays occur due to the level of care required by the patient.

Councillor Walsh stated he believed that the City of Somerville should provide some sort of reimbursement to Cambridge for the maintenance of the alcoholism program. He further stated he would like to see programs in place which would assist in the collection of money due the hospital.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating he too believed in and was currently working on ways to tighten admission applications in terms of medical coverage.

At this time Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chair of the Health Policy Board, stated that in terms of marketing the hospital, as mentioned by the Vice Mayor, some new people have recently been hired just for that purpose. She further stated that at some point they would like to work with the members of the City Council in an effort to review their input.

Ms. Ackermann stated that she wished the Committee to know that the search for a permanent hospital administrator was really complete but the number of qualified applicants was small essentially because of the salary structure. Furthermore she stated that it should be noted that Mr. O'Brien was currently managing the hospital with two associate administrator positions vacant. These people, she stated, both left to take positions within the private sector at large salary increases. Ms. Ackermann urged the committee to study this issue.

Vice Mayor Vellucci stated he believed that due to modern medical procedures and insurance coverage, the occupancy rate of the hospital will not go beyond 60% and therefore the Administrator should be looking at ways to utilize the hospital's services which produce the most revenue and which will generate the most use of the building.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that no strategic planning has been done for the hospital to consider the changes which the facility faces, but he was about to form such a group and would report to the committee at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM

For the Committee,

Vice Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci
Chairman

City of Cambridge

In City Council August 4, 1986

The

Committee on Health and Hospital conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 1986 beginning at 8 A.M. in the Board Room of the Cambridge Hospital. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, pursuant to a motion by Councillor William Walsh, the present collection policy of the hospital.

Vice Mayor Alfred Vellucci, Chairman of the Committee opened the meeting by stating that in addition to the discussion about to begin regarding credit and collections at the hospital, he wanted to once again raise the issue of community outreach. He stated he did not feel enough was being done within the community to market the services of the hospital. He further stated that he believed the Health Commissioner should be conducting informational meetings throughout the community.

Councillor Francis Duehay questioned whether or not an AIDS policy existed at the hospital and what was being done to inform the community. Mr. John O'Brien, Interim Administrator of the hospital, stated there was in fact such a policy, the hospital has treated some patients, and that Health Commission Dr. Melvin Chalfen was working on a comprehensive policy.

Councillor Thomas Danehy questioned the number of methadone patients treated at the hospital. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that approximately 160 patients are treated annually and the cost of maintaining such a program was fully reimbursable from the Commonwealth.

At this time Councillor William Walsh questioned why, as stated during the budget hearings prior to adopting the current budget, the bad debt and free care of the hospital had reached nine million dollars. He further stated that by his questioning, he was not inferring the hospital should not continue to promote care for those who can't pay, but rather, it should be more aggressive in its ability to determine who can pay.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that the bad debt and free care figures although "on paper" reflect nine million dollars, the actual FY 85-86 loss was \$2.7 million, but that the loss reflected in the tax levy was \$4.6 million. He stated the reason for this discrepancy was the difference between what is known as accrual accounting and general accounting methodology. Furthermore, he stated that free care, that which is given to a patient who is a bona fide Cambridge or Somerville resident, in some cases, results in approximately three million dollars. Bad debt, on the other hand results from the lack of any response to any communication from either the hospital or the Metropolitan Collection Agency. This figure is approximately six million dollars. He further stated that due to recently enacted legislation as of July 1, 1986, the hospital will be able to share in a "Free Care Pool" in an effort to reduce this deficit.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned what the deficit of the hospital was versus that of the Neighborhood Clinics. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating the hospital figure was \$2.8 million which the clinics were \$1.4 million. Mr. O'Brien continued by stating that some people who are served at the hospital are frightened to fill out any kind of forms because some are illegal aliens or here on temporary VISAs and are fearful of being returned to their home land.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned the admission policy of the Michael Neville Manor. Councillor Danehy stated he was concerned with admissions at the Manor, due to the fact that he believed some people wait longer than others.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there was in place an Admissions Committee for the Manor and he believed they maintained a list of eligible applicants. He further stated that sometimes delays occur due to the level of care required by the patient.

Councillor Walsh stated he believed that the City of Somerville should provide some sort of reimbursement to Cambridge for the maintenance of the alcoholism program. He further stated he would like to see programs in place which would assist in the collection of money due the hospital.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating he too believed in and was currently working on ways to tighten admission applications in terms of medical coverage.

At this time Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chair of the Health Policy Board, stated that in terms of marketing the hospital, as mentioned by the Vice Mayor, some new people have recently been hired just for that purpose. She further stated that at some point they would like to work with the members of the City Council in an effort to review their input.

Ms. Ackermann stated that she wished the Committee to know that the search for a permanent hospital administrator was really complete but the number of qualified applicants was small essentially because of the salary structure. Furthermore she stated that it should be noted that Mr. O'Brien was currently managing the hospital with two associate administrator positions vacant. These people, she stated, both left to take positions within the private sector at large salary increases. Ms. Ackermann urged the committee to study this issue.

Vice Mayor Vellucci stated he believed that due to modern medical procedures and insurance coverage, the occupancy rate of the hospital will not go beyond 60% and therefore the Administrator should be looking at ways to utilize the hospital's services which produce the most revenue and which will generate the most use of the building.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that no strategic planning has been done for the hospital to consider the changes which the facility faces, but he was about to form such a group and would report to the committee at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM

For the Committee,

Vice Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci
Chairman

City of Cambridge

In City Council August 4, 1986

The

Committee on Health and Hospital conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 1986 beginning at 8 A.M. in the Board Room of the Cambridge Hospital. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, pursuant to a motion by Councillor William Walsh, the present collection policy of the hospital.

Vice Mayor Alfred Vellucci, Chairman of the Committee opened the meeting by stating that in addition to the discussion about to begin regarding credit and collections at the hospital, he wanted to once again raise the issue of community outreach. He stated he did not feel enough was being done within the community to market the services of the hospital. He further stated that he believed the Health Commissioner should be conducting informational meetings throughout the community.

Councillor Francis Duehay questioned whether or not an AIDS policy existed at the hospital and what was being done to inform the community. Mr. John O'Brien, Interim Administrator of the hospital, stated there was in fact such a policy, the hospital has treated some patients, and that Health Commission Dr. Melvin Chalfen was working on a comprehensive policy.

Councillor Thomas Danehy questioned the number of methadone patients treated at the hospital. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that approximately 160 patients are treated annually and the cost of maintaining such a program was fully reimbursable from the Commonwealth.

At this time Councillor William Walsh questioned why, as stated during the budget hearings prior to adopting the current budget, the bad debt and free care of the hospital had reached nine million dollars. He further stated that by his questioning, he was not inferring the hospital should not continue to promote care for those who can't pay, but rather, it should be more aggressive in its ability to determine who can pay.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that the bad debt and free care figures although "on paper" reflect nine million dollars, the actual FY 85-86 loss was \$2.7 million, but that the loss reflected in the tax levy was \$4.6 million. He stated the reason for this discrepancy was the difference between what is known as accrual accounting and general accounting methodology. Furthermore, he stated that free care, that which is given to a patient who is a bona fide Cambridge or Somerville resident, in some cases, results in approximately three million dollars. Bad debt, on the other hand results from the lack of any response to any communication from either the hospital or the Metropolitan Collection Agency. This figure is approximately six million dollars. He further stated that due to recently enacted legislation as of July 1, 1986, the hospital will be able to share in a "Free Care Pool" in an effort to reduce this deficit.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned what the deficit of the hospital was versus that of the Neighborhood Clinics. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating the hospital figure was \$2.8 million which the clinics were \$1.4 million. Mr. O'Brien continued by stating that some people who are served at the hospital are frightened to fill out any kind of forms because some are illegal aliens or here on temporary VISAs and are fearful of being returned to their home land.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned the admission policy of the Michael Neville Manor. Councillor Danehy stated he was concerned with admissions at the Manor, due to the fact that he believed some people wait longer than others.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there was in place an Admissions Committee for the Manor and he believed they maintained a list of eligible applicants. He further stated that sometimes delays occur due to the level of care required by the patient.

Councillor Walsh stated he believed that the City of Somerville should provide some sort of reimbursement to Cambridge for the maintenance of the alcoholism program. He further stated he would like to see programs in place which would assist in the collection of money due the hospital.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating he too believed in and was currently working on ways to tighten admission applications in terms of medical coverage.

At this time Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chair of the Health Policy Board, stated that in terms of marketing the hospital, as mentioned by the Vice Mayor, some new people have recently been hired just for that purpose. She further stated that at some point they would like to work with the members of the City Council in an effort to review their input.

Ms. Ackermann stated that she wished the Committee to know that the search for a permanent hospital administrator was really complete but the number of qualified applicants was small essentially because of the salary structure. Furthermore she stated that it should be noted that Mr. O'Brien was currently managing the hospital with two associate administrator positions vacant. These people, she stated, both left to take positions within the private sector at large salary increases. Ms. Ackermann urged the committee to study this issue.

Vice Mayor Vellucci stated he believed that due to modern medical procedures and insurance coverage, the occupancy rate of the hospital will not go beyond 60% and therefore the Administrator should be looking at ways to utilize the hospital's services which produce the most revenue and which will generate the most use of the building.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that no strategic planning has been done for the hospital to consider the changes which the facility faces, but he was about to form such a group and would report to the committee at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM

For the Committee,

Vice Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci
Chairman

City of Cambridge

In City Council August 4, 1986

The

Committee on Health and Hospital conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 1986 beginning at 8 A.M. in the Board Room of the Cambridge Hospital. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, pursuant to a motion by Councillor William Walsh, the present collection policy of the hospital.

Vice Mayor Alfred Vellucci, Chairman of the Committee opened the meeting by stating that in addition to the discussion about to begin regarding credit and collections at the hospital, he wanted to once again raise the issue of community outreach. He stated he did not feel enough was being done within the community to market the services of the hospital. He further stated that he believed the Health Commissioner should be conducting informational meetings throughout the community.

Councillor Francis Duehay questioned whether or not an AIDS policy existed at the hospital and what was being done to inform the community. Mr. John O'Brien, Interim Administrator of the hospital, stated there was in fact such a policy, the hospital has treated some patients, and that Health Commission Dr. Melvin Chalfen was working on a comprehensive policy.

Councillor Thomas Danehy questioned the number of methadone patients treated at the hospital. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that approximately 160 patients are treated annually and the cost of maintaining such a program was fully reimbursable from the Commonwealth.

At this time Councillor William Walsh questioned why, as stated during the budget hearings prior to adopting the current budget, the bad debt and free care of the hospital had reached nine million dollars. He further stated that by his questioning, he was not inferring the hospital should not continue to promote care for those who can't pay, but rather, it should be more aggressive in its ability to determine who can pay.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that the bad debt and free care figures although "on paper" reflect nine million dollars, the actual FY 85-86 loss was \$2.7 million, but that the loss reflected in the tax levy was \$4.6 million. He stated the reason for this discrepancy was the difference between what is known as accrual accounting and general accounting methodology. Furthermore, he stated that free care, that which is given to a patient who is a bona fide Cambridge or Somerville resident, in some cases, results in approximately three million dollars. Bad debt, on the other hand results from the lack of any response to any communication from either the hospital or the Metropolitan Collection Agency. This figure is approximately six million dollars. He further stated that due to recently enacted legislation as of July 1, 1986, the hospital will be able to share in a "Free Care Pool" in an effort to reduce this deficit.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned what the deficit of the hospital was versus that of the Neighborhood Clinics. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating the hospital figure was \$2.8 million which the clinics were \$1.4 million. Mr. O'Brien continued by stating that some people who are served at the hospital are frightened to fill out any kind of forms because some are illegal aliens or here on temporary VISAs and are fearful of being returned to their home land.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned the admission policy of the Michael Neville Manor. Councillor Danehy stated he was concerned with admissions at the Manor, due to the fact that he believed some people wait longer than others.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there was in place an Admissions Committee for the Manor and he believed they maintained a list of eligible applicants. He further stated that sometimes delays occur due to the level of care required by the patient.

Councillor Walsh stated he believed that the City of Somerville should provide some sort of reimbursement to Cambridge for the maintenance of the alcoholism program. He further stated he would like to see programs in place which would assist in the collection of money due the hospital.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating he too believed in and was currently working on ways to tighten admission applications in terms of medical coverage.

At this time Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chair of the Health Policy Board, stated that in terms of marketing the hospital, as mentioned by the Vice Mayor, some new people have recently been hired just for that purpose. She further stated that at some point they would like to work with the members of the City Council in an effort to review their input.

Ms. Ackermann stated that she wished the Committee to know that the search for a permanent hospital administrator was really complete but the number of qualified applicants was small essentially because of the salary structure. Furthermore she stated that it should be noted that Mr. O'Brien was currently managing the hospital with two associate administrator positions vacant. These people, she stated, both left to take positions within the private sector at large salary increases. Ms. Ackermann urged the committee to study this issue.

Vice Mayor Vellucci stated he believed that due to modern medical procedures and insurance coverage, the occupancy rate of the hospital will not go beyond 60% and therefore the Administrator should be looking at ways to utilize the hospital's services which produce the most revenue and which will generate the most use of the building.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that no strategic planning has been done for the hospital to consider the changes which the facility faces, but he was about to form such a group and would report to the committee at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM

For the Committee,

Vice Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci
Chairman

City of Cambridge

In City Council..... August 4, 1986.....

The

Committee on Health and Hospital conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, July 22, 1986 beginning at 8 A.M. in the Board Room of the Cambridge Hospital. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss, pursuant to a motion by Councillor William Walsh, the present collection policy of the hospital.

Vice Mayor Alfred Vellucci, Chairman of the Committee opened the meeting by stating that in addition to the discussion about to begin regarding credit and collections at the hospital, he wanted to once again raise the issue of community outreach. He stated he did not feel enough was being done within the community to market the services of the hospital. He further stated that he believed the Health Commissioner should be conducting informational meetings throughout the community.

Councillor Francis Duehay questioned whether or not an AIDS policy existed at the hospital and what was being done to inform the community. Mr. John O'Brien, Interim Administrator of the hospital, stated there was in fact such a policy, the hospital has treated some patients, and that Health Commission Dr. Melvin Chalfen was working on a comprehensive policy.

Councillor Thomas Danehy questioned the number of methadone patients treated at the hospital. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that approximately 160 patients are treated annually and the cost of maintaining such a program was fully reimbursable from the Commonwealth.

At this time Councillor William Walsh questioned why, as stated during the budget hearings prior to adopting the current budget, the bad debt and free care of the hospital had reached nine million dollars. He further stated that by his questioning, he was not inferring the hospital should not continue to promote care for those who can't pay, but rather, it should be more aggressive in its ability to determine who can pay.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that the bad debt and free care figures although "on paper" reflect nine million dollars, the actual FY 85-86 loss was \$2.7 million, but that the loss reflected in the tax levy was \$4.6 million. He stated the reason for this discrepancy was the difference between what is known as accrual accounting and general accounting methodology. Furthermore, he stated that free care, that which is given to a patient who is a bona fide Cambridge or Somerville resident, in some cases, results in approximately three million dollars. Bad debt, on the other hand results from the lack of any response to any communication from either the hospital or the Metropolitan Collection Agency. This figure is approximately six million dollars. He further stated that due to recently enacted legislation as of July 1, 1986, the hospital will be able to share in a "Free Care Pool" in an effort to reduce this deficit.

REPORT

Committee on

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

the

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned what the deficit of the hospital was versus that of the Neighborhood Clinics. Mr. O'Brien responded by stating the hospital figure was \$2.8 million which the clinics were \$1.4 million. Mr. O'Brien continued by stating that some people who are served at the hospital are frightened to fill out any kind of forms because some are illegal aliens or here on temporary VISAs and are fearful of being returned to their home land.

Vice Mayor Vellucci questioned the admission policy of the Michael Neville Manor. Councillor Danehy stated he was concerned with admissions at the Manor, due to the fact that he believed some people wait longer than others.

Mr. O'Brien stated that there was in place an Admissions Committee for the Manor and he believed they maintained a list of eligible applicants. He further stated that sometimes delays occur due to the level of care required by the patient.

Councillor Walsh stated he believed that the City of Somerville should provide some sort of reimbursement to Cambridge for the maintenance of the alcoholism program. He further stated he would like to see programs in place which would assist in the collection of money due the hospital.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating he too believed in and was currently working on ways to tighten admission applications in terms of medical coverage.

At this time Ms. Barbara Ackermann, Chair of the Health Policy Board, stated that in terms of marketing the hospital, as mentioned by the Vice Mayor, some new people have recently been hired just for that purpose. She further stated that at some point they would like to work with the members of the City Council in an effort to review their input.

Ms. Ackermann stated that she wished the Committee to know that the search for a permanent hospital administrator was really complete but the number of qualified applicants was small essentially because of the salary structure. Furthermore she stated that it should be noted that Mr. O'Brien was currently managing the hospital with two associate administrator positions vacant. These people, she stated, both left to take positions within the private sector at large salary increases. Ms. Ackermann urged the committee to study this issue.

Vice Mayor Vellucci stated he believed that due to modern medical procedures and insurance coverage, the occupancy rate of the hospital will not go beyond 60% and therefore the Administrator should be looking at ways to utilize the hospital's services which produce the most revenue and which will generate the most use of the building.

Mr. O'Brien responded by stating that no strategic planning has been done for the hospital to consider the changes which the facility faces, but he was about to form such a group and would report to the committee at a later time.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 AM

For the Committee,

Vice Mayor Alfred E. Vellucci
Chairman

22.

S-452

Communication received from Joseph E. Connarton,
Acting City Clerk, transmitting a report from
the Committee on Health and Hospitals held on
July 22, 1986 relative to the present collec-
tion policy of the Cambridge Hospital.

In City Council,

August 4, 1986

Placed on file