

Minutes
SUNY Downstate Medical Center
Council Meeting
Alumni Auditorium
July 15, 2013

Council Members Present

Dr. Monica Sweeney, Chair (by phone)
Dr. Phillip Abramowitz
Dr. Constance Shames
Rev. Elgin Watkins (by phone)

Council Members Absent

Dr. Randall Bloomfield
Jacob Carl
Robert Herrmann

Downstate Administration in Attendance

President Dr. John F. Williams
Astra Bain-Dowell
Alan Dzija
Dr. Ian Taylor
Ellen Watson

The meeting began with a presentation by Lora Lefebvre, associate vice chancellor for health affairs for SUNY, who discussed the Sustainability Plan submitted to the Department of Health and Division of the Budget. She reminded Council of the options that were reviewed with Council at its meeting in May for preserving the medical school and restructuring Downstate's clinical enterprise.

Since the May meeting, SUNY and Downstate Administration have consulted with faculty, staff, consultants, and community stakeholders. A plan with two actionable concepts emerged. The first concept specifies that University Hospital of Brooklyn needs to take a period of time—projected to encompass four years—to restructure itself under the auspices of SUNY, with financial support from the State to facilitate the process. A restructured UHB will include activities already underway as part of Pitts Management Associates' efforts. These include revenue cycle improvements, penetrating new markets, implementing cost reductions, and improving the supply chain.

The second concept relates to the first: that for UHB to become more efficient, it needs to partner with other providers to improve hospital operations and strengthen Downstate's training and education mission. To accomplish this, the Plan calls for a new public benefit corporation to be created to facilitate

and hold those relationships. Both of these concepts were part of the Sustainability Plan submitted to the Department of Health and the Division of Budget on May 31st.

Submission triggered significant discussion. Reviewed were the amount of financial assistance requested; the size of Downstate's clinical footprint; the expense of running LICH were it to stay in operation; and the possibility of a workforce training program to assist in the transition. As a result of these discussions, Downstate submitted a supplement to the original plan, which was then approved by the Department of Health and the Department of the Budget.

The floor was turned over to the Council. Dr. Shames asked what would be the incentive for other Brooklyn providers to join the public benefit corporation. Dr. Williams said that partnering would provide greater clout in negotiations with vendors and insurers, and that members would potentially be eligible for enhanced Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements. "We need to shift the way that care is delivered," said Dr. Williams. "Across the country, hospitals are turning to models featuring medical homes and community primary care." Dr. Shames asked if Kings County Hospital Center would be involved. Dr. Williams said that we have just signed a three-year contract with KCHC, and that we intend to keep them as a partner. "Our hope is to bring our two institutions closer together."

Dr. Sweeney recommended that the restructuring be conducted in a way that minimized disruption to clinical care and education programs. Reverend Elgin Watkins, joining by phone, referred to his experience in the White House, noting the approach used there was for multiple options to be developed for executive branch review. He asked if the Sustainability Plan contained more than one option. Ms. Lefebvre explained that a number of options had been examined, with several options discarded because they lacked feasibility. These included restructuring Downstate on its own; exiting hospital operations entirely; and finding another operator for UHB. "For a variety of reasons, none of these options worked well on its own," she said, "but we needed a clinical solution." The final plan was a hybrid of several options considered. She explained that because the plan has been approved by the Department of Health and the Division of the Budget, it in effect now has the force of law, and we are obligated to implement it.

Dr. Sweeney encouraged Council members and attendees to go to the SUNY website, where information on the Sustainability Plan is posted, and thanked participants for attending.

Minutes from the previous meeting were accepted without change.