
Press Release

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FREEHOLDERS MOVE FORWARD WITH BUTTONWOOD HEARINGS

Board Encourages Public Input and Authorizes Public Sale

Burlington County Freeholders today announced they are moving forward with two public hearings on the future of Buttonwood Hospital, reiterating earlier consultant findings that the facility would generate as much as \$4.5 million in operating losses in the current year.

Deputy Director Joseph Donnelly said that – because of changes in Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements and growing costs – those losses would only continue to increase in future years. He said given the state of the economy and the County’s budget situation, the freeholders needed to continue to evaluate the possible sale of the property.

“Public comment is critical to our deliberations,” said Donnelly. “Again, no matter what we decide, patient care remains paramount.”

The first hearing will be Tuesday, January 31, 2012, at the William McDaniel Learning Resource Center, Room 102, at the Pemberton Campus of Burlington County College. The second hearing will be Tuesday, February 14, 2012, in the Freeholder Board Room, County Administration Building, 49 Rancocas Road, Mount Holly. Both hearings commence at 6 PM.

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Buttonwood has operated at a loss for at least the last decade. A study prepared by T&M Associates of Moorestown concluded that the advantages of selling the facility outweigh the disadvantages.

That report also said there were “no identifiable environmental impediments” to a sale, and referenced an earlier study by NW Financial Group of Trenton that the facility could be sold to a private operator for \$16 million or more.

Donnelly said that both the T&M and NW Financial reports were available to the public free of charge.

“All the information and analyses are on the table,” he said. “Every stakeholder, every member of the public, is entitled to know everything we know.”

Meantime, freeholders adopted a resolution that set a public auction for February 24, 2012, at 2 PM, in the Freeholder Board Room.

“If nothing else, the auction gives us a real sense on the value of the facility,” said Donnelly. “We will retain the right to reject all bids.

“But when you have two reports saying this is the only financial solution immediately available, you have to explore it.”

Buttonwood has 170 long-term care beds and a 30-bed psychiatric hospital, and a staff of 319.

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