

From: Harold Naramore [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, November 22, 2022 4:45 PM
To: Organization [REDACTED]
Subject: Hospital Update: Communications from the Mayor

This afternoon, I want to share with you some details on a topic you may hear more about in the coming days as you gather with family and friends to celebrate Thanksgiving and the blessings that we all have in our lives.

Late Monday afternoon, members of our Board of Directors received a letter from Blount County Mayor Ed Mitchell. This letter expressed Mayor Mitchell's concerns about the operations of our Hospital. He emphasized his concerns with the quality of oversight our Board is providing, even going as far as requesting that they resign from their current posts. Mayor Mitchell calls for an all-new Board of Directors, one that he hopes would "better understand the fiduciary obligations of our Hospital to the County." He cites numerous examples of his perception of the Hospital and County's relationship as it pertains to ownership and oversight, which our Charter and legal opinions confirm are not valid.

Mayor Mitchell continues to detail, in this letter, additional concerns he has with the financial situation of the Hospital. It's no secret that our finances have been strained, and I've been open and honest about that, making reference to the challenges we're facing and the changes we're implementing, just about every week since I've been CEO. We have talked about this in the community, and we've talked about this in Employee Forums and in my weekly videos, and it's been a topic of departmental meetings, too. Many of you have been a part of changing processes and cost-savings opportunities along the way, and the impact of your work is showing. Health care finances across the country are strained with post-COVID care delivery, inflated supply costs, a strained labor market and a diminished volume of inpatient care, among many things.

What this letter to our Board Members doesn't say is that I have personally tried to meet with the Mayor 4 different times, in which I offered multiple meeting dates and times, since becoming CEO in June of this year. However, the Mayor has not accepted any request I've made to meet with him due to his busy schedule. I, along with a couple of other members of our Executive team, have had many meetings with local elected officials since that time, though, to go into detail about the Hospital system's current state and strategic goals moving forward.

I will not delve into every detail of the letter, as I'm attaching a copy of it here for you to read for yourself. But I will share with you that there are numerous misrepresentations and factual errors in the Mayor's words and perceptions, which show that he lacks knowledge, information and/or awareness of Hospital operations and health care finance.

The letter, penned by Mayor Mitchell, references resolutions that the Mayor has had prepared to try to amend our Charter and to restructure our Board of Directors. He plans to present these resolutions to members of County Commission for their review and consideration at a special called meeting on Tuesday, November 29. This is a public meeting, and community members are welcome to attend.

I have shared with you from the beginning of my time as CEO that I will be as transparent with you as much as I can and that I will share with you things involving our Hospital as early as possible. This communication is an example of me continuing to deliver on this promise, as I want you to know some of the continued battles we face outside of the tough-enough health care landscape we and every other hospital in the country faces every day.

Those care delivery battles are ones that we fight because that's our mission; these political battles are ones that we shouldn't have to devote time to fighting. The founders of our Hospital worked really hard back in the 1940s to set our Hospital up so that it never became a political pawn for reasons just like this – health care is not political and it never should be.

G. Harold Naramore, MD

Chief Executive Officer

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