

Good morning Chairperson(s) and committee members. Thank you for providing this opportunity to speak relative to the the subject.

I respectfully acknowledge the well intended efforts of General Assembly Senators and Representatives who have introduced 2015 Proposed Bill S.B. No. 799.

Certainly, I am not a content expert in such complex matters and stand corrected as may be necessary.

POSITION: I rise in opposition to 2015 Proposed Bill S.B. No. 799 before us today.

OBJECTIVE:

To best inform GENERAL ASSEMBLY Committee on PLANNING AND AND DEVELOPMENT public hearing relative to 2015 Proposed Bill S.B. No. 799 of opposition views via specific substantive focused testimony / facts . Most importantly, to also offer comprehensive positive solutions on how to proceed with addressing the subject matter in the best long term interest of CVH campus clients and staff as well as the some 7,000 voters,including taxpayers, small business and rental property owners of the South Fire District .

PRESENTER BACKGROUND:

Thirty years of direct Facilities Management experience within large commercial properties ,academic, research and health care institutions. Retired 2009 from the University of Connecticut Health Center where as Associate Vice President of Facilities Management was responsibility for some 2.2 million sq. ft. university/health center facilities operations, 150 FTEs and a \$35,000,000 annual budget. Responsibilities included Hospital,Medical School,Dental School, Research and Administrative areas with complex mixed occupancies,especially as related to fire and building code compliance.

Experience includes knowledge of various Facilities Management functions, including plant maintenance and operations, housekeeping services, grounds care, general maintenance, hospital engineering, clinical engineering. Extensive experience of various operational, technical and administrative areas of Facilities Management, including utilities, capital budgets, planning , environmental sustainability and life safety code compliance.

As Hospital Safety Officer, developed and implemented extensive Emergency Preparedness operational and funding plan. Also, coordinated UCHC Emergency Preparedness Readiness Information Team efforts including the development of several employee educational / information sessions , working with UCHC Public Safety Police,Fire and various internal and external regulatory compliance divisions. Initiated Fire Safety Equivalency Survey engineering study of hospital tower in order to reduce cost of \$200,000 smoke exhaust control system. Coordinated efforts with office of CT State Fire Marshall, DPH, DEP , TJC and CMS compliance officials .

Completed an update of The Hospital - The Joint Commission (TJC) accreditation program as as well as CT Department Of Public Health licensing compliance as related to facilities operations. Coordinated DPH/CMS and State/Federal mandated Loss Prevention / Property reviews, including action plans.

Developed and implemented, working with CHA / DPH and various State / Federal agencies, a Bioterrorism / Safety Readiness Information Team. This included the development of educational / informational sessions as well an advisory committee.

Actual performance results relative to personal services and other expense for all services are within range or better than most regional and national benchmarks.

AS - Northern Essex Community College - Honors
BGS - University of Connecticut - Honors

Published: Automated Environmental Control: A System for Utilities Management, Plant, Technology and Safety Management Series #2 1989; The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. (critical life safety alarmed systems)

SUBJECT HISTORY:

During early 2011 reports of significant overtime spending issues associated with fire services at the DMHAS CVH campus was reported . In a May 07,2011 Hartford Courant Government Watch article by Jon Lender , At CVH \$346,077 In Pay to Answer Primarily False Alarms, expenses were reviewed. DMHAS addressed the findings via explaining how critical the CVH Fire Brigade was to safety as well as critical accreditation and resulting reimbursement under Medicare/Medicaid programs. At the time such critical service were also supplemented via cost effective on site volunteers, all trained relative the environment of care of this very sensitive behavioral health based environment,which has its specific accreditation standards. Soon after such negative publicity, it was reported the fire department would be eliminated. The South Fire district eventually forwarded a letter of notice to CVH relative to its limited role in providing services. The district also sought a legal opinion dated October 10,2011. This well executed opinion made it very clear that “ The issue of respective labor agreements is beyond the scope of this legal opinion” and “ The issue of Middletown refusal to share PILOT funds with the District is beyond the scope of this legal opinion”

To its organizational credit, it should not be overlooked that fire services at the CVH campus have been very professionally and effectively managed by specially trained CVH campus staff since 1876.

The South Fire District was established via Special Act 163-1957 of the Connecticut Legislature in 1957. The Charter provides for governance authority as well as certain limitations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:

PILOT funds are not received by the South Fire District from the City of Middletown. Reference (P.A 00-229, S.2, 7.) P.A. 00-229 , Sec. 12-19a (c) . Such should be reviewed and resolved prior to the subject proposed bill moving forward.

The language of the proposed act provides a proprietary contractual arrangement for the State of Connecticut concerning services with the South Fire District. This is not in the best interest of the State as well as taxpayers and may in fact end up costing the State , District, City and State wide taxpayers more to provide such services. Outsourcing of said service should be competitively bid to assure best value. Also, such existing language should be reviewed via the CT AG and State Auditors.

The language as proposed mentions a few facilities on the CVH campus but does not recognize that the entire campus has some 100 buildings. The language “ state facilities in and around Connecticut Valley Hospital” is vague and should be addressed via a comprehensive RFP with defined performance expectations and referenced benchmarks for said services.

Fire Code compliance at the CVH campus is via CGS, the State Fire Marshall / Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), not the South Fire District Fire Marshall. Critical accreditation compliance is via The Joint Commission (TJC) and via CT Department of Health as contracted by The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) . In such an intense behavioral health care environment it is critical that Public Safety staff (Fire and Police) are extensively integrated into such campus operations to assure compliant life safety driven response. As part of a due diligence process, the proposed subject bill should not move forward until extensive consult has been completed with TJC and CMS federal officials.

It is disappointing that public informational sessions have not been held within the impacted district to provide voters and taxpayers process participation opportunities.

It should be noted that most of the CVH calls are EMS in nature and appeared to have change when first responded and dispatch protocols were changed. The South Fire District previously responder only as called as secondary backup. The exact nature of calls reported should be reviewed in detail.

CVH campus firefighters are represented by IAFF Local 3918 while South Fire District firefighters are represented by IAFF Local S-15 . It is concerning that these two well respected labor groups have been needlessly put in a position to function in opposition. Also and with new collective bargaining contracts in place, the State has a fiscal stewardship responsibility to review the possibility that the use of State firefighters may now be less costly.

The CVH campus hospital is not a State of CT licensed facility as one is not required. i.e. no CT DPH licensure inspection unless contracted via a CMS validation survey. Accordingly it is critical that a firm on site presence be maintained by familiar public safety staff, such as fire and police.

Calls to CVH pull south fire district resources from local district residents and businesses. The City Mayor in 2011 advised , in news reports, the district that any overtime coverage provided by the city fire department would be back-charged to the district. Accordingly, district taxpayers would end up paying for such.

District open space has increased which reduces the potential for increase service demands. The CVH campus has always been excluded ,for good reason, from the district . Also, district Charter driven boundaries are not clear.

Mutual aid agreements could be better utilized to assure compliant and cost effective backup as needed, not just with the South Fire District but the City of Middletown. This would include equipment as well as staff.

Annual budget concerns at the South Fire District should be considered as the State contract qualifications . The most recent annual budget was only passed by 46 votes (518 -472) . The electors of the district may fail the budget and it is possible that the CVH campus may have such contracted services interrupted or not provided,with limited notice.

SUMMARY:

The cost of fire services at the CVH campus were previously spread over all cities and towns in the state or some two million voters / taxpayers. The proposed bill forces such upon some eight thousand voters or some four thousand district taxpayers. Many of the district residents are on fixed incomes and local small businesses as well as rental property owners struggle to stay afloat.

The CVH campus is a very complex behavioral health setting with critical mixed use occupancy. Such occupancy and resulting activity as well as the clients and staff deserve to have the Public Safety Fire and Police on site services that are best integrated into this campus .

I urge that the State to effect such due diligence, including holding local public hearings, consulting with the noted fiscal and operational compliance/regulatory authorities. I'm confident that if such is done, the best option will be for CVH to re-establish on campus fire services .

Most importantly, work with the DMHAS/CVH to best provide for the clients and staff of CVH by having its own fire services. It a matter of proper life safety management and what is also best for the taxpayers of the south fire district.

Respectfully presented,

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