



Milwaukee County

Board of Supervisors



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MILWAUKEE COUNTY TO CONSTRUCT NEW MENTAL HEALTH COMPLEX

Chairman Holloway, majority of Supervisors announce state-of-the-art facility will be built on County Grounds

Milwaukee, WI – A majority of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, including Board Chairman Lee Holloway, have announced that a new state-of-the-art mental health facility will be constructed on the Milwaukee County Grounds in Wauwatosa. “It’s time we move forward with plans to modernize our facility. With our coalition, we are now setting a clear policy for the future of mental health care in Milwaukee County,” said Supervisor Marina Dimitrijevic, Vice-Chair of the County Board’s Health and Human Needs Committee.

“The care of individuals with mental illness is near and dear to my heart,” Chairman Holloway said. “The County Grounds is the most logical location to provide this specialized care, and I am pleased that the Board has come together for the sake of our residents who need the help most.”

The current mental health complex was built in three phases from 1968-1979. Approximately \$10.8 million remains in the 2010 budget for the planning, design and construction of a new Behavioral Health Division (BHD) facility. The resolution calls for the formation of a Special Committee, to be appointed by Chairman Holloway, to accomplish the following by June 1, 2011:

1. Examine current and potential operating revenues and evaluate the merits of locating some functions of BHD, such as the nursing home and outpatient services, at sites other than the County Grounds in a manner that is more integrated with the community and perhaps more cost effective.
2. Utilize, reassess and update previously gathered information regarding BHD space needs to provide a preliminary cost analysis of the cost to build a new facility on the County Grounds.
3. Provide possible locations on the County Grounds for a new facility.
4. Recommend other funding sources and a timeline for this project.
5. Obtain and analyze other information as requested by members of the Special Committee.

“Mental health care should not be isolated. It makes sense to build a new facility on the County Grounds, which already contains a significant concentration of health care institutions,” said Supervisor Jim “Luigi” Schmitt, whose district includes the County Grounds and current Mental Health Complex. “Building a new facility from scratch is better than retrofitting an older structure such as the former St. Michael Hospital site,” Supervisor Lynne De Bruin added. “We are committed to providing both a state-of-the-art facility and state-of-the-art quality of care.”

“I commend my colleagues for understanding the importance of modernizing the delivery of mental health services in our community,” Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb added. “Our current mental health facility is unacceptable; today we move forward together.”

“While a new building won’t address the ongoing leadership issues that exist at the current facility, this will go a long way in making sure we are up to code and won’t risk losing outside funding due to inadequate facilities,” Supervisor John F. Weishan, Jr. said.

The resolution, sponsored by Chairman Holloway along with Supervisors Dimitrijevic, Schmitt, Lipscomb, Weishan, De Bruin, Gerry Broderick, Johnny L. Thomas, Chris Larson, Nikiya Harris, Willie Johnson, Jr., and Mark Borkowski, will be considered during the September Committee cycle and could be approved by the full County Board as early as September 30, 2010.

The Board’s decision to build a new facility is the latest in a series of efforts to modernize the delivery of care to individuals with mental illness in Milwaukee County. In May, the County Board created a Mental Health Community Advisory Board, along with three related Work Groups, to recommend policies and procedures to ensure the safety of patients within the Behavioral Health Complex. The Board also approved \$1.8 million in funds to address capital needs at the current facility. Milwaukee County has also led the way in providing affordable inclusive housing for individuals with mental illness. Since 2007, more than 260 units of quality affordable housing have been developed for individuals with nowhere else to turn.

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