

SARASOTA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Community and Intergovernmental Relations

TO: Sarasota County Commission
THROUGH: Thomas A. Harmer, County Administrator
Lee Ann Lowery, Assistant County Administrator
FROM: Robert R. Lewis, Director, Community and Intergovernmental Relations
DATE: November 3, 2015
SUBJECT: **Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) Update**



RECOMMENDED MOTION(S) OR ACTION(S):

To consider an update on the Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC).

BACKGROUND:

Sarasota County's Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) is a partnership between the Sarasota County Health Department and the nonprofit, Community Health Center of Sarasota County (CHCSC). The Health Department serves as the medical services provider. The program successfully provides primary care, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and lab work services to over 30,000 citizens, including 13,700 children.

As reported in April 2015, staff was advised that the State Department of Health (DOH) and Surgeon General's Office directed that those health departments, which provide primary care, were not to renew their federal Affordable Care Act grants. The health departments have also been directed to withdraw from primary care services.

Following that report, multiple letters were sent by Sarasota County to the Surgeon General and Governor urging that the current program in Sarasota County be allowed to continue (see attached March 4, March 31, May 12, and June 17 letters from Commissioner Mason).

In addition, Charlotte County, the Town of Longboat Key, and the City of North Port sent letters supporting the current program (see attached March 10, 2015 letter from Charlotte County, March 23, 2015 letter from the Town of Longboat Key, and April 13, 2015 letter from the City of North Port).

County staff has coordinated multiple meetings with State Legislative delegation members, DOH staff, the CHCSC chairperson, and Sarasota County Health Department staff.

The current application deadline for Sarasota County's grant is December 2, 2015.

The Sarasota County Commission discussed the issue with the Charlotte County Commission in a joint meeting on April 17, 2015. At that meeting, Commissioners also stressed the importance of the program to DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill, who was in attendance and spoke to the two commissions.

RELEVANT PRIOR BOARD ACTION:

1. March 3, 2015 – the Board voted to direct the County Administrator to draft a letter to the State Surgeon General supporting continuance of the FQHC (5-0 vote).
2. March 3, 2015 – the Board voted to direct the County Administrator to draft a letter to the Charlotte County Commission regarding possible loss of FQHC in Sarasota County (5-0 vote).
3. March 17, 2015 – the Board requested the Chair to send a letter of thanks to Charlotte County for sending a letter to the DOH Surgeon General regarding FQHC.
4. April 17, 2015 – the Board discussed the FQHC with the Charlotte County Commission and DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill.
5. October 13, 2015 – the Board approved the Chair to send a letter to the State Surgeon General related to the Community Health Centers of Sarasota County and requested the County Administrator prepare a transmittal letter of such along with thanks to the legislative delegation for support.

PROCUREMENT ACTION

N / A

ANALYSIS/NEXT STEPS:

The State Department of Health (DOH), Surgeon General's Office continues to direct that Sarasota County DOH transition the responsibility of primary care to other private – not for profit entities (see attached July 14, 2015 letter from DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill). The DOH continues to state support of a “transition process to an agency or board which will maintain primary care services at no less than their current levels throughout the county and will ensure no gaps in the provision of those services.” The experience of Charlotte County, as stated in their March 10, 2015 letter, is that since the elimination of primary care and FQHC's in that county, not every patient is being seen.

The County's current federal grant expires in April 2016. The deadline for re-applying for our grant occurs December 2, 2015.

The CHCSC has reiterated the importance of the FQHC role in the community to DOH and notes that they have concluded that there is no acceptable entity to take over the care that is currently provided to the community. They have indicated their intent to work toward assuming responsibility for the FQHC by 2017. They further asked DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill to allow Sarasota DOH, as co-applicant with CHCSC, be allowed to apply again for the federal grant not later than December 2, 2015 (see letter dated September 28, 2015 to State DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill).

The Commission has also written to the DOH Surgeon General noting its support of the CHCSC efforts but also its continued concern by the effort to dismantle the long-standing, highly successful partnership between the Department of Health in Sarasota County (DOH-Sarasota), Sarasota County Government and the Community Health Centers of Sarasota County, Inc. (CHCSC). (See attached October 14, 2015 letter from Chair to Surgeon General and thank you letters to Legislative Delegation)

This office has continued to communicate with legislators, related updates and the importance of this program to over 30,000 current patients from the community. As a result of the Commission's most

recent letter to the Surgeon General Representative Pilon has also written in support. (See attached October 14, 2015 letter to Surgeon General)

FUNDING:

The current funding model provides \$17 million in revenues from three main sources;

1. \$1.3 million from Sarasota County
2. \$1.9 million from the Federal Affordable Care Act
3. Payments from third-party insurers (primarily Medicaid and Medicare).

The State of Florida contributes \$98,000, required to be spent on primary care.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. March 4, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to Governor Scott
2. March 31, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to Governor Scott
3. May 12, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to Surgeon General Armstrong
4. June 12, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to Governor Scott
5. July 14, 2015 letter from DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill
6. March 10, 2015 letter from Charlotte County Commission Chair Truex to Surgeon General Armstrong
7. April 13, 2015 letter from the Town of Longboat Key Mayor Duncan to Surgeon General Armstrong
8. April 13, 2015 letter from the Mayor of the City of North Port to Surgeon General Armstrong
9. September 28, 2015 letter from CHCSC Chair to DOH Deputy Secretary Barnhill
10. October 14, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to Surgeon General Armstrong
11. October 14, 2015 letter from County Commission Chair Mason to legislative delegation
12. October 14, 2015 letter from Rep. Pilon to Surgeon General Armstrong