



KershawHealth negotiating new ER services contract

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The KershawHealth Board of Trustees authorized CEO Terry Gunn to enter into negotiations and execute a potential emergency department professional services contract during its meeting Monday night.

The 6-0 unanimous vote -- with Trustee Eric Boland absent, Trustee Bobby Jones needing to leave early and another unseat unfilled -- came after an approximately hour-long executive session at the end of an otherwise short meeting.

The motion, by Board Vice-chair Dr. Tallulah Holmstrom, did not mention with whom Gunn will be negotiating -- a decision allowed under the S.C. Freedom of Information Act since the contract is not yet finalized.

A second unanimous vote after the executive session is more directly tied to the pending \$36 million Capella/MUSC Health takeover. Ogburn motioned to authorize Parker Poe, the law firm advising KershawHealth on the transaction, to work with the hospital's local accounting firm, Sheheen, Hancock & Godwin. The firm will assist Parker Poe with "various issues relating to the operation of the hospital and the performance of KershawHealth's post-MUSC/Capella transaction."

Once the transaction is completed, the board will transition to overseeing the Kershaw County Hospital District, the legal entity which will remain after the lease/purchase. The board will, in effect, ensure the conditions of the transaction are met during Capella's 40-year lease of KershawHealth's real estate and oversee the use of Capella's \$36 million payment.

In an email Tuesday, KershawHealth officials said they are still accepting resumes for the position of executive director of the hospital district.

Also Monday, Holmstrom announced a “win” for KershawHealth in terms of a quality measurement tool called ORYX, used by the Joint Commission (JC) in its accreditation of hospitals. ORYX is a composite of individual quality and accountability measures, which are reported on a quarterly basis. Holmstrom said KershawHealth anticipates the JC visiting KershawHealth before the second week of August.

She said ORYX expresses, in terms of a percentage with a perfect score being 100 percent, how well a hospital is doing on its inpatient and outpatient core quality measures on a rolling 24-month period.

“When you look at our performance over the last six 24-month rolling periods ... it’s a very favorable trend,” Holmstrom said. “We’re starting at fourth quarter of 2011 ... and what we see is our ORYX score going from 93.2 percent to 95.5 to 96.6 to 97.7 to 98.6 and the score reported today is 99.1 percent.”

While Holmstrom said there is no single metric that can fully express the quality of an institution, ORYX is a comprehensive look.

“And when you see a favorable trend regardless of what the absolute numbers are, I think 99.1 percent is cool. Hopefully, we as trustees can feel confident that administration and the team is putting forth the right systems, monitoring the right circumstances to allow this facility to achieve excellence,” she said.

Holmstrom also reminded trustees the next quality committee meeting is scheduled for June 17, saying they should expect a “robust” quality report at the board’s next full meeting scheduled for June 23.

Gunn and other top administrators were not originally expected to be at Monday’s meeting because they were going to be attending a new employee orientation at Capella’s headquarters in Franklin, Tenn. Gunn said the orientation has been moved to June 29 and 30 -- when the Capella/MUSC deal is expected to close.

Gunn announced KershawHealth has hired a new Home Health & Hospice director, Teresa Fry, who has worked for the hospital before.

“She started last week, and we’re really glad to have her,” Gunn said. “Her experience level in the time that she was with us and, subsequently, at

another organization, really put her head and shoulders above all other candidates that we were able to review.”

Gunn also announced he has moved into a new home in the area, saying his “feet are firmly planted in the city of Camden.” Earlier this year, the board voted to amend Gunn’s contract to have him stay on as CEO through the Capella/MUSC Health takeover. Gunn’s comments would appear to indicate he will have a role with Capella and MUSC Health beyond the transaction.

At the beginning of Monday’s meeting, former Camden City Councilman X. Willard Polk once again spoke during public comment. He thanked the board for its diligence on the Capella transaction and for helping him and another cancer patient understand more about changes in KershawHealth’s oncology department. Polk did, however, express “surprise” at the June 30 closing date with Capella and MUSC Health because he understands the transition from non-profit to profit would be complex. He also asked the board to be more forthcoming with changes affecting lines of business and how the takeover would affect the KershawHealth Foundation and KershawHealth Auxiliary.

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