



Ogburn, Tidwell to Lead KershawHealth Board

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Members of the KershawHealth Board of Trustees voted Monday night for Derial Ogburn and Wayne Tidwell to serve, respectively, as chairman and vice chairman as the board transitions to overseeing, primarily, the Karesh Long-Term Care Center.

Trustees voted 5-0-3, to have Ogburn succeed Karen Eckford as chairman, with Ogburn and trustees Bobby Jones and Susan Outen abstaining.

"I have big shoes to fill," Ogburn said of Eckford. "You have worked tirelessly to draw consensus. We're not always going to agree, but we have a new challenge and we'll all have a learning curve together."

It took five rounds of voting, however, to elect Tidwell to succeed Dr. Tallulah Holmstrom as the board's vice chairman.

Jones made the first nomination, for Trustee Eric Boland, while Trustee Steve Holliday Jr. nominated Tidwell. At the first show of hands, Boland only garnered three votes, including his own. Tidwell garnered four, including his own as well. Ogburn abstained. The voting would have seemed to wrap things up for Tidwell, but KershawHealth attorney David Summer announced this was not the case.

As it turns out, according to Summer, the board's by-laws require the election of officers by more than merely a simple majority. The vote would have to be at least five votes in favor of either candidate, he said.

Trustees voted again, by a show of hands. The result was the same: four for Tidwell, three for Boland, this time with Holmstrom abstaining.

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“You cannot function as an organization without officers and you are going to have to have a simple majority. That is the problem by having unfilled seats on the board,” Summer said, referring to one vacated in February by Paul Napper. “Had the county council filled the seat, you would have nine as you were designed to have, and you would not have this problem. But, for whatever reason, you do not have that seat filled.”

Eckford, still acting as chair, called for a five-minute recess. When trustees returned, the board decided to move to voting by paper ballot. The result: an even 4-4 split between Tidwell and Boland.

Eckford asked Tidwell and Boland to address their fellow trustees about why they should be vice chair. Tidwell said he had been on several committees and attended every board and committee meeting he could. Boland agreed vice chairmen have to be available as much as possible, but said the board also needed to have a “diversity” of voices so it could hear different sides of various issues.

A second round of paper balloting resulted in a change of vote, giving Tidwell the five votes he needed to become vice chairman, with Boland garnering three votes.

The board will need to choose a secretary in the near future. According to its current by-laws, the secretary has always been KershawHealth’s CEO or their designee. For many years, executive assistant Janet Sheheen has filled the role. Eckford, however, noted current CEO Terry Gunn and Sheheen would be working for Capella and not the board as of Nov. 1. Therefore, she said, the board will need to elect its own secretary.

Ahead of the vote and during her chairman’s report, Eckford thanked her fellow trustees for allowing her to serve as chair and facilitate its meetings. She also thanked KershawHealth’s administrators, saying she had “learned a lot.”

Trustees praised Eckford and Holmstrom for their work as chair and vice chair during the last two years, having been elected in Oct. 2013. Summer praised Eckford as well.

“In my 30 years of working with hospital boards, I have never seen a chair work as hard. Her commitment is pretty phenomenal,” Summer said.

In other business:

- Gunn reported on conditions at the hospital’s main campus during the recent flooding. He said there were a number a leaks, but staff was able to keep them contained. He said some staff stayed overnight, using sandbags and temporary coverings to mitigate problems, and made sure patients were fed and taken care of. Gunn said KershawHealth returned to full strength Oct. 7, saw some Veterans Administration patients from Columbia and was on standby for other facilities if necessary. “I’m proud of the team,” Gunn said.

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