

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Harris County Public Health Care System Council

FROM: Rob Mosbacher

DATE: February 23, 2005

I want to thank all of you that expressed a preference for me to Chair the Council. I am honored and look forward to working with my Vice-Chair, Dr. Lewis Foxhall, and each and every one of you.

Some have asked whether the Council is a "study group," or an "action group?" While some ideas and issues clearly will require further study, I come down most decidedly on the side of our focusing on action. For instance, what should we recommend to Commissioners Court that can be done to address the severe overcrowding of our emergency rooms, the lack of sufficient primary, preventative, specialty, and critical care clinics, and the growing numbers of uninsured?

After visiting with Dick Raycraft and Dr. Foxhall, I wanted to suggest three immediate priorities: first, look at every option available to increase clinical capacity as quickly as possible in certain key strategic areas of the community; second, take advantage of the offers from Memorial Hermann and Texas Children's to donate information technology packages that could help "jump start" the creation of a community health information network; and third, engage in the active pursuit of both public and private sector options on providing health insurance to more people, and making sure that the state does not make matters worse by reducing financial support for the county.

These three immediate priorities are not meant to exclude work on other issues, but rather to focus on areas where the need is most critical and the opportunity to make tangible progress is most pronounced. I look forward to discussing these suggested priorities with you at our meeting on Thursday.

Dr. Foxhall and I also wanted to suggest a somewhat consolidated committee structure for the Council. We would propose five committees: Community Clinics; Behavioral Health; Insurance and Financial Support; IT Network; and Alternative Futures. At the council meeting, we can go into much greater detail on what each committee's agenda would include. Also, there is significant overlap among the committees, particularly as it relates to behavioral health.

Finally, some of you may have seen a story in the newspaper about whether the Council's meetings will be open to the public. Those of you that attended the first Council meeting heard that the County Attorney's legal opinion is that there is no statutory requirement that our meetings be open inasmuch as the Council is only "advisory" to Commissioners Court and has no legal authority to implement decisions. However, I will recommend to you that the Council open its plenary meetings to the public, but reserve the right to hold executive sessions at its discretion. If you disagree with this approach, please call me in advance of our meeting Thursday afternoon. Otherwise, we will conduct our meeting on Thursday as an open meeting.

Thanks for your attention, and I look forward to seeing you Thursday afternoon at 5:30 p.m.