



Editorial: The Karesh wing

July 29, 2015

While it may seem troubling on the surface to have KershawHealth's letter of intent with Capella Healthcare extended to Aug. 31, the reason for the delay actually provides good news to those who rely on an important component of the hospital: the Karesh Long Term Care Center.

A little more than a month ago, according to a July 22 internal KershawHealth memorandum and a hospital press release, Capella approached the board to continue its ownership and oversight of the Karesh Long Term Care Center. As reported on today's front page, the KershawHealth Board of Trustees voted unanimously Monday night to extend the letter of intent. It also voted, 6-2, to purchase remaining parcels of the old Pine Tree Hill Elementary School (PTHS) property. KershawHealth's strategic plan includes one day moving the Karesh wing to the old PTHS site, potentially expanding services to independent and assisted living.

As revealed in today's article, KershawHealth receives approximately \$1 million a year in governmental reimbursements through Karesh by virtue of its status as a governmental healthcare entity. Capella, being a for-profit, non-governmental company would not be eligible to receive those benefits. By having KershawHealth continue to own the long term care center, it will be better able to pay for its operations by receiving the government money.

We do wonder, however, why Capella waited nearly six months after being chosen as KershawHealth's partner before asking the board to retain ownership of Karesh. It didn't do so until sometime in June, after the board's second letter of intent extension. Certainly, Capella should have known of Karesh's existence and status and, as with emergency management services, stated from the outset it didn't want to purchase the center.

We're glad Capella's agreed to help, at least temporarily, manage the Karesh center even though it is not leasing nor purchasing it. As for the future, we hope the KershawHealth board -- which will operate as The Health Services District of Kershaw County after the Capella transaction -- is able to realize its apparent goal of keeping the Karesh Long Term Care Center a healthy and growing part of the community.

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