



Lakewood City Council OKs service changes at Lakewood Hospital

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LAKEWOOD - Following **weeks of negotiations**, the Cleveland Clinic is now able to move forward with **plans to change services at Lakewood Hospital**. Lakewood City Council voted 6-1 in favor of changes that include moving services for critically injured patients and pediatric care lasting more than 23 hours four miles away to Fairview Hospital.

The Cleveland Clinic, which rents Lakewood Hospital from the city for about \$1 million per year, must provide certain services under the lease agreement. This means that council members must approve the service changes, part of the hospital's multi-million dollar **Vision for Tomorrow** strategic plan.

The plan will also turn Lakewood Hospital into the hub of acute rehabilitation for Cleveland's west side, ending those services at Lutheran and Fairview hospitals. Other changes include an expansion of the Neurological Institute and the creation of "centers of excellence" in areas such as diabetes and orthopedics.

The city negotiated with the Clinic over their desire to see new services such as acute rehabilitation and the "centers of excellence" required under the lease, but the Clinic rejected the idea. David Bronson, president of Cleveland Clinic regional hospitals said in a letter that the Clinic seeks the same goals as the city, but needs flexibility to respond quickly to the changing market.

"Their argument has been, in my opinion, very reasonable," said Council President Kevin Butler who represents Ward 1. "In a dynamic health care industry they don't want to be bogged down by an extra review process that involved the city and gives the city overview it didn't have before. This whole time we've been trying to reach an agreement that satisfies the city's goals and the clinic's goals."



KATE SPIRGEN/SUN NEWS

LAKEWOOD - Following weeks of negotiations, the Cleveland Clinic is now able to move forward with plans change services at Lakewood Hospital. Lakewood City Council voted 6-1 in favor of changes that include moving services for critically injured patients and pediatric care lasting more than 23 hours four miles away to Fairview Hospital.

City officials, including Mayor Ed FitzGerald, have expressed tentative support for the changes, particularly due to the hospital's difficult financial state. They have shown general approval of the Vision for Tomorrow plan, but sought language that would protect Lakewood if the Clinic were to withdraw proposed services in the future as they are not required under the lease.

"From my standpoint, this has never been about whether this is a good plan or not," said Councilman at large Brian Powers, who serves on the hospital board. "I believe for the Clinic and hospital and citizens that this is a very good plan but if we are to remove two guaranteed services from the lease, we need some assurance that we'll have some input if the four new services are changed. I think this is a good thing and I'm in favor of where we're at."

The two organizations came to an agreement through a letter from Bronson on June 9. The document assured FitzGerald and City Council that the Clinic will notify the city 60 days before any service changes are proposed to the Lakewood Hospital Association Board of Trustees. Bronson wrote that the Clinic will also "permit the city to make inquiry of the LHA board members and appropriate Clinic officials regarding the proposed change."

According to Law Director Nora Hurley, the letter does not have the "full force of a legal contract" but has legally binding assurances.

The only dissenting vote came from Councilwoman at large Monique Smith who expressed concerns about the loss of services, saying that it could draw patients out of Lakewood, sending them to Fairview Hospital instead.

"I have to say I'm not comfortable with the plan because it seems like a blow to a community that has a few strikes against it already," she said. "I wonder if we couldn't have reduced services instead of moving them to Fairview (Hospital). I think we asked for more information than we got and I don't feel like I can vote for this and feel good about it."

Lakewood Hospital will continue to offer a full-service emergency room and outpatient pediatric care. The 23 members of the Lakewood Hospital Board, 10 of whom are appointed by City Council and the mayor, will also retain oversight on inpatient pediatrics and trauma care at Fairview Hospital.

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