

**RESUME OF MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE COUNTY BOARD,
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY, ILLINOIS
OCTOBER 10, 2007**

The County Board of Champaign County, Illinois met at a Study Session, Wednesday, October 10, 2007 at 7:00 P.M. in the Lyle Shields Meeting Room, Brookens Administrative Center, 1776 East Washington Street, Urbana, Illinois with C. Pius Weibel presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

The Study Session was called to order at 7:12 p.m. by Chair Weibel. Chair Weibel appointed Kathy Bork as Temporary Recording Secretary. There were no objections from the Board.

ROLL CALL

Roll call showed the following Board Members Present: Anderson, Betz, Carter, Cowart, Gladney, James, Jones, Langenheim, McGinty, Melin, Moser, Richards, Tapley, Weibel, and Wysocki – 15;

Absent: Beckett, Bensyl, Doenitz, Gross, Hogue, Hunt, Jay, Knott, O'Connor, Putman, Sapp, and Schroeder – 12. Thereupon, the Chair declared a quorum present. Board Member Putman arrived after the start of the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION REGARDING NURSING HOME OPERATIONS

Chair Weibel stated the County Board was assembled to discuss how to make the Champaign County Nursing Home a better place for Nursing Home residents and employees. In the Chair's opinion, a better nursing home is one that maintains the reputation of a warm comfortable place with cutting edge programs for the elder citizens. In addition, it should be a nursing home that is economically viable and stable, one that is able to shoulder the often changing landscape of a growing industry as the median age of this country and county increases. Chair Weibel encouraged the Board to listen carefully to what Andrew Buffenbarger and fellow Board Members have to say.

Andrew Buffenbarger, Champaign County Nursing Home Administrator, began his presentation to the County Board with the statement that nothing he says is an effort to privatize the Nursing Home. This is an effort to protect the Nursing Home from privatization. Buffenbarger has been meeting with residents, employees, and residents' families to discuss a possible operating board and other pieces to the plan for the Nursing Home. So far, the plan has garnered a lot of support. Buffenbarger said his greatest concern was that the people against this proposal would come to this session and those in favor of it would stay at home. Buffenbarger described a successful governance structure, including a constant presence for support, stability from internal experts who know the business, seamless leadership transitions, predictable financial results, and the development of strategic plans. He reported on the state of the Nursing

Home and highlighted that the FY2007 deficit is predicted to be half of the FY2006 deficit. The FY2008 budget is predicted to be the third balanced budget in the last 10 years. On the clinical side, 18 of the 34 quality indicators were in the top indicators of 50% of Illinois nursing homes, which is remarkable, and 6 of the 34 quality indicators in the top 25% of Illinois facilities. The Champaign County Nursing Home has had a deficient free nursing staff in the last two surveys. The satisfaction survey is performed every month to measure residents' and families' satisfaction. In August, the Nursing Home was at the highest point ever in resident satisfaction. In continuing efforts, Buffenbarger and staff are trying to obtain grant money to construct a memory garden where residents can enjoy the nice weather in a safe, secure, and handicapped accessible environment. They are developing neighborhood friendly décor to make the Nursing Home feel less institutional and looking to exterior improvements. Buffenbarger said the 17% of solidified care teams means less turnover and a decrease in absenteeism. A volunteerism drive is underway with the University of Illinois fraternities and sororities who do community services. He noted the auxiliary volunteers got bedspreads for every resident.

The operation audit performed by the management consulting firm, Management Performance Associates (MPA) looked at what the Nursing Home was doing and the services it was providing for a comparison to see how it was meeting the needs of the community. The Nursing Home learned through the audit that it could be doing better in contracts, needed to provide more memory and rehabilitation care, and grow the adult day care program. As a result, the Nursing Home is about \$1 million better off because of investing in a \$20,000 report.

Buffenbarger reviewed the financial history of the Nursing Home. The Home operated at a deficit for a long time and was able to do so because it had a fund balance that was depleted by the deficits. The fund balance ran out in 2005, so the Nursing Home had to lean on the County's General Corporate Fund to cover its deficits. In FY1998, Medicare placed caps on its payments and the Champaign County Nursing Home lost \$452,000. This change in the Medicare system bankrupted some nursing homes. Between FY2004 and FY2007, the Nursing Home depleted its fund balance, its depreciation fund, and accumulated a \$3 million deficit. Buffenbarger described the losses that occurred during the transitions from one Nursing Home Administrator to another. In order to stabilize and develop the central office, the County Board could contract for those services or work with local professionals to obtain those services at no charge. Buffenbarger views an operating board as a way to get the expertise of local professionals for free. He and Debra Busey have been discussing the problem of the Nursing Home's lack of financial stability for quite some time. Other nursing homes take steps to protect themselves from instability, such as contracting for external support, which yields positive results. Buffenbarger has researched the nursing homes in DeKalb County and Peoria County who have implemented ongoing external support to see what is working in their operations that could benefit Champaign County. Buffenbarger explained that DeKalb County has a 194-bed, skilled facility. This nursing home was out of funds, similar to Champaign County, and in 1996 switched to an operating board structure and hired professional consultants to watch over the facility all

the time. DeKalb County has been very successful with this approach. The DeKalb County Rehabilitation and Nursing Center requires no property tax subsidy, built a new facility, support their own debt, have a fully funded depreciation fund, and have a \$4 million fund balance. Buffenbarger has observed the DeKalb facility and reported it provides outstanding care to its residents. The keys to DeKalb's success are the use of an operating board and Management Performance Associates.

Buffenbarger spoke about the intergovernmental transfer program that gets a higher Medicaid rate and results in a facility being paid faster. He explained the federal government is not interested in participating in this and is withholding money. The Medicaid funding the Nursing Home currently receives will go away and the Home will earn \$1 million less a year to care for the impoverished elderly.

Buffenbarger described the proposed operating board for the Champaign County Nursing Home. It would consist of 7 members, with 1 County Board member from the Justice & Social Services Committee (he suggested Anderson) and another County Board member likely from the Finance Committee. The other 5 operating board members would be local health care professionals. The operating board would set both short-range and long-range goals and be connected to the community. Several matters for the operating board to consider are in the memory care unit, which is full and has a waiting list so the decision has to be made whether to expand these services, build onto the facility, forgo other services, or other possibilities. Buffenbarger would love to talk to other health care professionals in the same situation. Contract nursing is other area of concern. Agencies are hiring nurses and bringing them here. The County does not have enough regular, local nurses. The Nursing Home offers great employee benefits and a new facility, so he would love to hear ideas about getting more nurses from other professionals. The operating board could not privatize the Nursing Home, sell off its assets, or issue more debt. The operating board would hold monthly meetings to start. Buffenbarger suggested appropriate types of members as professionals with experience in non-profit healthcare, for-profit healthcare, the clinical aspect of healthcare, and banking. Buffenbarger recommended hiring MPA and letting the firm employ the Nursing Home Administrator in order to stabilize the Administrator position and protect the County from transitional losses that have occurred in the past.

Busey and Buffenbarger recommended the County Board take action to appointment a 7-member operating board for the Champaign County Nursing Home with the recommended bylaws and to authorize the County Board Chair, County Administrator of Finance & HR Management, and the Nursing Home Administrator to negotiate a contract for services with Management Performance Associates or a selected consulting firm to participate in the management of the Nursing Home, including the employment of the Nursing Home Administrator position. Buffenbarger stated he has been in the nursing home industry for 18 years and Busey has impeccable budgetary knowledge and is an expert in her field. He thinks this action is in the best interest of the Nursing Home, its residents, and its employees. He requested that at the next County Board meeting on October 18, 2007 the County Board take a vote to appoint a 7-member operating board with bylaws and a resolution authorizing

Busey and Buffenbarger to negotiate a contract with a consulting firm such as MPA. Buffenbarger described his experience with the Missouri Veterans Commission and the steps that organization took that lead to being nationally known for high quality long-term care. Buffenbarger wants Champaign County to have a similar setup of administrative and market expertise to raise the bar for long-term care in the community.

Chair Weibel opened the floor for the County Board to ask Buffenbarger questions. Board Member Carter asked when Buffenbarger became aware of the financial losses at the Nursing Home. Buffenbarger explained that every year the Nursing Home budget is prepared and it is determined much the facility earns against how much it spends. This is how the loss/run rate is determined. Board Member Carter asked if Buffenbarger did an audit of the institution before accepting the Administrator position. Buffenbarger said he did not review the audits of the Nursing Home before he took the job. Board Member Carter asked why then when the County Board asked questions, had Buffenbarger said it was always good before. Board Member Carter indicated the facility was missing some money. Buffenbarger stated the facility has lost money for quite some time and he has been pretty contentious about bringing that to the County Board's attention. Board Member Tapley requested to make an answer to Board Member Carter's question because he was one of those on the subcommittee involved in hiring Buffenbarger. Board Member Tapley stated that the County Board was unaware of the dire straits of the Nursing Home when Buffenbarger was hired. Board Member Tapley later apologized to Buffenbarger after his hiring for bringing him into a situation that was this bad without telling him. The last report from the prior Administrator was fine. The County Board did not know the full extent of the Nursing Home's negative financial conditions, so Buffenbarger was not made aware of it when he was hired. Board Member Carter said then you are paying someone to audit your business who does not look at it. Board Member Tapley indicated that would be a question for the Auditor. Board Member Tapley wanted to make it clear that it was not fair to expect Buffenbarger to know the extent of the financial situation when he was hired, when the County Board themselves did not know how bad it was. Board Member Carter said he could not have somebody run a business this way and not know where the money was going. Board Member Carter accused Buffenbarger of telling the County Board the Nursing Home was fine when they asked questions. Chair Weibel interjected that no one had been saying the Nursing Home was doing fine. On the contrary, everyone has been complaining about the losses at the Nursing Home. Board Member Carter said his Boy Scout Troup would have kept better records than this.

Board Member McGinty asked for Buffenbarger to explain the differences between Buffenbarger being employed by the County Board versus being employed by a separate contractor like MPA. Buffenbarger explained the contractor provides the stability, especially if the Administrator changes. Board Member McGinty requested the difference of a governing board versus an operating board. Buffenbarger answered an operating board would understand the day-to-day operations of the Nursing Home and could act and make corrections if necessary in particular situations. Wysocki asked who would set the Administrator's salary if the person was an employee of a consulting

firm. Buffenbarger said the County Board would negotiate with the consulting firm on the salary. If the County Board takes this action he would recommend that his current salary package pass through so there is no benefit for him one way or another.

Board Member Betz stated he did not see the advantages of an operating board meeting once a month because it would not bring any more experience than the Justice & Social Services Committee. He likes hearing from Nursing Home employees. Board Member Betz stated he has huge problems with a private agency running the County Nursing Home and employing Buffenbarger. He wants the County to maintain its position of hiring the Administrator as a County employee. This is a deal breaker for Betz because he wants the County Board to have the direct authority to hire and fire the Administrator. Board Member Betz stated Buffenbarger does a good job and he respects the Administrator. Board Member Betz wants to get away from using agency nurses for the same reasons that Buffenbarger stated. He felt the operational audit was useful and contracting for operational audits periodically would also be useful. Board Member James said having authority over Buffenbarger is one thing, but discussion amongst officials is a long, drawn-out process. Board Member James liked the idea of bringing in experts that have knowledge lay people do not and pointed out the County contracts with people for their expertise. Buffenbarger acknowledged the difficulty in seeing aspects of the nursing home business from where he sits because he is on the floor everyday with residents. The present governance structure of the Nursing Home has historically resulted in losses. Buffenbarger stated the County Board would still be in complete control of the Nursing Home. Board Member James inquired, if the Administrator was contracted through a consulting firm, the County Board could terminate the contract in a certain number of days if they wanted the Administrator removed. Buffenbarger said at that point you would switch to being a customer and the firm has a built-in incentive to keep the customer happy.

Board Member Richards asked, on the subject of saving the County money, what the magic ponies for free plan is that the County will get from the private management firm if the County Board gives them tax payer dollars. Board Member Richards saw only two ways to increase profitability at the Nursing Home: increasing revenue or cutting expenses. Buffenbarger explained DeKalb County was able to increase revenues, there were no cuts to staffing, the facility's beds have been full, and DeKalb has always in the right kind of business. Richards asked what DeKalb County is doing that Champaign County is not. Buffenbarger replied that DeKalb County maximized its rehabilitation services, increased its therapy revenue, grew its dementia care services dramatically because of decreased demand in the community, and they were responsible for negotiating the intergovernmental transfer that benefits all homes.

Board Member Anderson said the costs of a consultant firm were discussed at the joint meeting of the Justice & Social Services Committee and the Policy, Personnel, & Appointments Committee. Buffenbarger had distributed documents to the committees that included cost figures. He explained that he made a public request for information and Management Performance Associates was the only respondent. MPA described their experience and qualifications. MPA's fee is \$150,000 a year. Buffenbarger

advised that this amount is a fraction of what traditional management companies would charge. This amounts to about 1% of the Nursing Home's revenue. Board Member Anderson noted the operational audit by MPA cost \$20,000 and she asked if the County could have an annual operational audit of the Nursing Home to measure what has been done and to share new ideas. She inquired about other counties who have worked with MPA. Buffenbarger explained Livingston, Peoria, Monroe, and DeKalb Counties work with MPA regularly. He said the County could do an annual operational audit. It would not get the Nursing Home where he and Busey believe it needs to go. Board Member Anderson said some public perception was that Buffenbarger would become MPA's employee instead of being a County employee, making it possible for MPA to change the Administrator. Buffenbarger said he would like to mirror DeKalb County because it is the one county nursing home in Illinois that seems to be able to stay in the black at the end of each fiscal year.

Board Member Wysocki asked, if the County Board agrees to hiring a management firm under the current proposal and the County Board chooses to terminate services with the firm after several years, where would that leave Buffenbarger. Buffenbarger suspected that would be a part of the contract negotiation.

Board Member Putman asked what kind of a person has an MBA and could go at a moment's notice to another city to manage a nursing home during a crisis period. She prefers an Administrator with roots in the community. Buffenbarger said MPA has worked with other County Boards to recruit and hire the next Administrator. This happened in the last six-month in Peoria County and the person selected was born and raised in Peoria County. MPA tends to work with the folks with links in the community to find the right person. Board Member Putman asked who would be the Interim Administrator until the next Administrator was hired. Buffenbarger said it might be the Assistant Nursing Home Administrator. MPA would then provide the type of leadership support an Assistant Administrator would need. Board Member Putman asked if a management firm who employed Buffenbarger could remove him from Champaign County to manage a crisis in another county nursing home. Buffenbarger stated that scenario would not be possible if the County Board included in the contract that the Administrator could not be removed without its permission.

Board Member Langenheim stated that he was wary of the operating board because the members of the board would be those making their careers with the Nursing Home's competitors. He did not like the notion that County Board is not capable of appreciating the problems at the Nursing Home. Board Member Langenheim said an advisory board and consultants hired as needed is the way to go. Buffenbarger said he is relying on history when he draws the conclusion that this has not worked in the last fourteen years financially. He is trying to find a solution that remedies it. Buffenbarger said the collective will and intelligence of the County Board is tremendous, but historically the Nursing Home has operated in the red, exhausted its savings account, and exhausted its depreciation fund so he is looking for a different solution.

Board Member Tapley said he thought people were raising reasonable questions and good points. He felt the Board could agree Buffenbarger is very competent and capable with great credentials. The County Board is extremely fortunate to have hired Buffenbarger and have him clean up the mess at the Nursing Home. The Nursing Home has made positive progress under Buffenbarger's leadership and with the operational audit report. Board Member Tapley said he did not think the same ideas would have been implemented without MPA because the Board's track record speaks for itself with years of financial losses. Board Member Tapley compared Buffenbarger to a ground general and spoke of the value of having a birds-eye view of the operation. Buffenbarger will not be the Nursing Home Administrator forever and the County needs to have a contingency plan in place because transitions in management have been very costly. Board Member Tapley noted Buffenbarger has a phenomenal track record and he will be highly sought after in his field. Board Member Tapley did not think the County Board has done a good job of operating the Nursing Home, not for a lack of caring and competency. The Nursing Home is a business and functions differently than other County departments, plus the Board does not have many healthcare professionals familiar with the industry. He felt the operational audit was definitely money well spent. Board Member Tapley urged the County Board to be willing to try new ideas to manage the Nursing Home and the expertise that is needed to properly do so. He would not like the idea of an advisory board because it would be a token board. He noted the County Board could collapse an operating board at anytime. He thought the County Board owes it to the public to try something new to improve operations at the Nursing Home instead of continuing to do the same thing and expecting new results. MPA, in the request for information, has a definite emphasis on repositioning institutions for challenging market, which Champaign County is. As a member of the Justice & Social Services Committee, Board Member Tapley expressed the committee has never talked about repositioning the Nursing Home for a fast-changing market to achieve results. Board Member Tapley summed up by stating that, even though Buffenbarger is well on the way to fixing some problems at the Nursing Home, does not mean the County Board should not try the operating board.

Board Member Moser suggested the County Board remember back prior to 1998 when Joan Darr was the Administrator. The Nursing Home had personnel problems, a bookkeeping system that was a mystery to the Auditor's Office, and government payments that were late. When Board Member Moser was Chair, they asked Darr to resign and she did. She was replaced with Jeremy Maupin and the Justice & Social Service Committee thought they had hired one of the greatest Administrators they could get their hands on. But the problems continued with the friction between the staff and the administration. Moser said he has not been involved since Buffenbarger has been employed, but he said he no longer receives the numerous complaints that he once did from Nursing Home employees. He has seen a total shift in the relationship between the staff and management since Buffenbarger has been at the Nursing Home. Moser described the negotiations of the first several union contracts at the Nursing Home and the deficits incurred. Board Member Moser said he thought the County Board let the Nursing Home go for years and years. He thought this Board has done a better job with getting involved. He hopes the Board can turn the Nursing Home around so it will earn

enough money to care for the people in the County. If the operating board is a step in the right direction, then the County Board should at least consider it. Board Member Moser applauded County Administrator of Finance & HR Management Debra Busey for getting her hands around the financial situation over at the Nursing Home.

Board Member Richards asked if MPA specializes in public facilities because the Champaign County Nursing Home has a different bottom line than a for-profit nursing home. He asked how the status quo for moving the Nursing Home into the black does not negate the financial crisis and why the Home has not moved on dementia care before. Buffenbarger answered that MPA does not work with any for-profit nursing homes in Illinois. The company originally worked to turnaround hospitals and is owned by a former hospital administrator. Their primary business now is Illinois county nursing homes, so MPA understands a mission-driven business like Champaign County. In response to the other questions, Buffenbarger explained the Nursing Home has not been moving with status quo for some time. The Nursing Home pharmacy and therapy contracts have been renegotiated and they have moved with more focus towards rehabilitation and memory care. These were recommendations from MPA, but the Nursing Home is not moving into FY2008 at status quo, they are moving in a way that best reflects the needs of our community. Buffenbarger thought this is a golden opportunity to put the Nursing Home on the right track for the long-term. MPA has the ability to compare the Champaign County Nursing Home contracts with the contracts other nursing homes have with vendors for the same services. These contracts are proprietary so Buffenbarger cannot access them. MPA can because they participate in the management of other homes. MPA then knows whether the Champaign County Nursing Home is paying too much for its services or if the revenues for any one of the fifty-six different Medicare reimbursements level are in the right amounts. This market specific information is one of the advantages that MPA has that the Nursing Home could never obtain otherwise.

Board Member James stated that he never supported a consultant coming in the first place, but he has changed his mind based on the movement that has been achieved following the audit by MPA. He is in favor of continuing the movement though he does not like the County Board giving up some of its authority. He said the Board needs to look at what is best for the County and he strongly supports the use of a consultant firm.

Board Member McGinty spoke about the labor contract negotiations at the Nursing Home as one of the two County Board representatives on the County's negotiating team. He stated that he is against privatization. A lot of hard work has been done. A year ago the Nursing Home was losing \$100,000 a month and now Buffenbarger is projecting the Home will lose \$200,000 this year. That is a great improvement, but there is still a way to go because the Home is not in the black. Board Member McGinty appreciated what MPA is capable of doing, which is to provide an operational overview to the Nursing Home. He leans towards the County Board creating a governing board to enable the Nursing Home to have the speed to make things happen and gaining the expertise of those with experience in the long-term care

field. The County Board could control how much support the Nursing Home would receive from MPA and it could be put into place on a trial basis. McGinty advocated for the controlled use of a consultant and providing a backup system for the Nursing Home Administrator. He was uncertain about the Nursing Home Administrator being employed by a firm such as MPA. Board Member McGinty reiterated his high respect for the recommendations of Busey and Buffenbarger.

Board Member Langenheim said he wanted to flesh out Board Member Moser's memories of the Nursing Home under the Darr administration. Board Member Langenheim stated, at that time, the County Board was investing a considerable amount of money in hiring legal assistance in an attempt to prevent unionization of the Nursing Home. This had a great deal to do with the antagonism between the administration and the staff. Many employees who were employed then continue to work at the Nursing Home.

Board Member Tapley wanted to add to Buffenbarger's response to Richards's question about why the County Board should enter into the consulting arrangement when things are better at the Nursing Home. Board Member Tapley said that is the exact question that is asked whenever someone proposes a change. The County Board has acted in the past only when there is a crisis. Once changes are made and the crisis passes, nothing more is done. This inertia, which is a function of human nature and government, impedes progress in a business like the Nursing Home. MPA told the County Board in the results of the operational audit that the solutions that fix the Nursing Home's problems now will not work in five years because of the nature of the long-term care industry. This is why Board Member Tapley supported a change. He emphasized that he was not picking on anyone, but being reactive instead of proactive has been a core problem of trying to run the Nursing Home from a County Board committee in the past. MPA offers a way to break the cycle.

Board Member Carter stated there were a lot of good people working at the Nursing Home who brought grievances to the County Board that were ignored. He claimed he could not get anyone to process the grievances. He said the Nursing Home lost nurses because the County Board did not step up and serve their grievances, so the Nursing Home has been going down ever since. Board Member Carter further stated that no matter how much money is thrown out there, if no one is made responsible, then they will get the same results.

Board Member Betz indicted there is a long and interesting history at the Nursing Home, most of which the County citizens can be proud of, including a history of excellent care for the Nursing Home residents. This outstanding reputation has continued under three or four Nursing Home Administrators, even when Board Member Betz has personally found the Administrators to be incompetent, which is why the people voted to tax themselves to subsidize the Home and build a new facility. Betz did not want anything to jeopardize that. In answering the notion that the County Board is always afraid of change, Board Member Betz stated he has been supportive of many changes, including the consultants performing an operational audit of the Nursing

Home. He was willing to consider an initial advisory board and than transitioning into a stronger board with more authority. He thought the transitional period was necessary. He spoke about some of the County's remodeling projects. Board Member Betz does not want this issue voted on at the next County Board meeting. He said some people, including him, are terrified of not having the Nursing Home Administrator be a County employee. The County Board hired Buffenbarger to do a job and Betz likes to be able to look his Administrator in the eye. Board Member Betz said he does not think the public is on board with this issue. The public can be brought on board, but time is needed to do this. He suggested buying a portion of the package and see how it goes before transitioning into something more.

Chair Weibel drew the committee's attention to the handouts which included minutes of the Board for the DeKalb County Nursing Home. He was able to download these from the Internet. Chair Weibel categorized the sections of minutes. He described the number of closed sessions, the percentages of words in the minutes that were spent on union issues, and the percentages of words spent on motions.

Board Member Richards exited the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

Board Member Betz stated the DeKalb minutes looked essentially like what is seen at the Justice & Social Services Committee meetings. Chair Weibel clarified that the DeKalb minutes contained more stuff that is pertinent to the nursing home industry. He noted the minutes contained terms he was unfamiliar with that are likely pertinent to the industry.

Board Member Moser and Board Member McGinty exited the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

Board Member Anderson asked who could create the agendas for the meetings. Buffenbarger explained it is a standing agenda with items added as needed. The board would follow the Open Meetings Act. He was not sure exactly how the board communicates what items should be on an agenda. Champaign County could develop its own procedure for such a board's agendas and this would be defined in the bylaws.

Richards, McGinty, and Moser re-entered the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Board Member Putman stated she is not 100% behind the idea of a management firm, but if Buffenbarger wants it then she wants to give it to him. She stated she is sold on Buffenbarger as the Nursing Home Administrator. She totally supports establishing governing board to focus on the Nursing Home. The Justice & Social Services Committee cares about the Nursing Home, but the Home is not always at the fore of their concerns. It would be up to the County Board to determine if applicants have conflicts of interest and choose wisely.

Board Member Tapley noted there are issues in the DeKalb minutes that have never been discussed at a Justice & Social Services Committee meeting. He

expressed that if the County Board does not use a firm like MPA then the County leaves itself vulnerable to management transition, market changes, and unforeseen changes that have cost the County large amounts of money. He stated it is worth the \$150,000 cost to have that level of support. Furthermore, he looks forward to wage increases that would be possible for employees if the Nursing Home's financial picture improves.

Board Member Melin asked, if one of the advantages of the operating board would be to have instant access to experts in the nursing home field, then how that could be achieved if the board meets once a month. Buffenbarger explained that MPA is the instant access to experts.

Board Member Jones asked how long Buffenbarger has been employed by the County. Buffenbarger's answer was two years. Board Member Jones asked how long Buffenbarger was at his previous job. Buffenbarger explained he stayed at his previous job for five years and at the job before that he stayed two years. Board Member Jones noted that when an Administrator is able to improve an operation, then that Administrator possesses more marketable skills. He recommended the County Board plan for a transitional period because Buffenbarger might not be here in a few years.

Board Member Gladney asked if an operating board would meet once a month. Buffenbarger answered yes. Gladney asked what would trigger a special meeting of the operating board more than once a month, if they are in fact more nimble than County government. Buffenbarger explained the operating board would be subject to the Open Meetings Act, but a special meeting would be caused by the same types of things that cause the County Board or a committee to hold a special meeting. He clarified that it is the expertise of the operating board members in the nursing home field or other fields that would make them more nimble. A board comprised of members with expertise in the healthcare or long-term care industries could come to conclusions much faster because they possess knowledge a layperson does not. A shorter learning curve results in the decisions happening faster.

County Administrator Debra Busey stated that she has been working with Buffenbarger on this issue for several months. It was an issue because the transition period between Jeremy Maupin and Buffenbarger as Nursing Home Administrators caused a downward financial and operational spiral at the Nursing Home. This is a request for investment in the management in the Nursing Home. The County Board has invested in the Nursing Home employees and their benefits. Currently, the Nursing Home Administrator has to come to the County Board with ways to meet the needs of the day and this changes much faster at the Nursing Home than it does for other County departments. If the Nursing Home was asking for the approval of two more management positions, then Busey thought the County Board would approve it. This proposal provides that additional management support. The crucial difference between an operating board and an advisory board is the board member. Operating boards such as the Mental Health Board and the County Board of Health are able to recruit members with expertise in the respective fields. The Nursing Home is valued by the citizens of Champaign County and appointing a Nursing Home operating board would be

equivalent to appointing the Mental Health Board or the County Board of Health. Members of an operating board would be capable of providing excellent decisions on how to move public health forward in Champaign County.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Chair Weibel reminded the public of the rules allowing each person to speak for a maximum time of five minutes.

Kent Beauchamp from AFSCME Council 31 spoke first. He reported the union members are proud of the Nursing Home. He said the plan was to rebalance the beds in the Nursing Home to provide more memory care and rehabilitation to make more money, but the turnover of residents has been slower than anticipated. He said the proposal is a radical change that does not seem to be warranted. Beauchamp stated the County Board should keep the operations of the Nursing Home accountable to the public. The expertise argument for an operating board is one Beauchamp is wary of. He claimed the union members approved a contract that froze their wages and made other concession, so now the County Board thinks they have the money to hire a new layer of bureaucracy. He reiterated the situation does not warrant radical changes.

Marsha Morris, a union member and twenty-nine year employee at the Nursing Home, said that the union agreed to contract concessions and a wage freeze because Buffenbarger presented a plan that included no mention of a management firm. Morris said the Nursing Home lost almost all of their nursing staff because of the way employees were treated by previous administrations. Employees were told they were not doing their jobs. Morris claimed twenty-five nurses left the Nursing Home in one year because they were treated horrendously, even though they were not unhappy about wages or benefits. Morris stated if the Home was ever lucky enough to get back those staff, they should be treated right.

Carter exited the meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Patricia Roderick, President of the local AFSCME, expressed concerns about the proposal. She asked whether the Nursing Home as an accountant and questioned exploring other avenues. She raised the issue of a memo from County Auditor, Tony Fabri, about the cost of contract nursing at the Nursing Home. Roderick claimed Jeremy Maupin, as Nursing Home Administrator, brought the level of contract nursing down, but it went up after he left. She stated it does not take a high-priced management firm to tell the County Board what is wrong at the Nursing Home; they just need a good cost accountant. She agreed a change needs to be made at the Nursing Home. Roderick stated the County Board would care if this backfires at election time.

Jeremy Maupin, a former Champaign County Nursing Home Administrator, stated that he has no personal gain here but he wanted to speak to a part of it. Maupin explained that a general organizational chart in a normal nursing home would include a board of owners, then a regional department. He is familiar with this because he

worked for a management company before working for Champaign County. He described the inspections the regional office would perform and then report to the nursing home's Administrator. Maupin stated there are core issues concerning the nursing home industry that the County Board is not familiar with. The County Board is not set up to achieve financial success in this industry. He explained that he now owns three nursing facilities and employs an Administrator. Maupin explained that it is impossible for the County Board to expect an Administrator to fulfill the duties of that position, plus be a CEO and other roles in a facility the size of the Champaign County Nursing Home. There is no way the Justice & Social Services Committee can perform the quality assurance checks. Maupin spoke of the different challenges the Nursing Home faced in the past. Maupin listed several aspects of day-to-day operations of the nursing home industry, such as reading cost reports, that he doubts the County Board is familiar with, but are necessary to running a nursing home. The County Board has great opportunity here, but help is needed. Buffenbarger is asking for help because he cannot do this on his own. Maupin recalled feeling the same way. He gave the example of the Child Day Center that was in the Nursing Home and lost money every year, but was an emotional issue. He raised this issue for three years before it was taken care of and the center was removed. Maupin stated a governance board could act faster than the current structure. He thought it would be difficult to find governance board members with the appropriate level of expertise who would also be willing to serve for free. He suggested possibly giving the board members a per diem.

Carter re-entered the meeting at 9:45 p.m.

Maupin advised the County Board that Buffenbarger would not stay forever because he would easily get a better paying job elsewhere. He recommended the Nursing Home needs the expertise of the governance board.

Eva Jehle said, in her opinion, nursing homes are better run by counties. The quality of a home depends greatly on staff. She asked if Buffenbarger had continuing education hours that could address the issues of industry trends. She asked if someone could be hired to do an audit without going whole hog.

Charlene Stevens stated she thought Buffenbarger was doing a great job and Champaign County has riches of professionals in the community.

Board Members Moser, McGinty, and Wysocki exited the meeting at 9:49 p.m.

Stevens offered to bring clinical nursing from colleges to the Nursing Home for non-monetary rewards. She urged further investigations to try and find free consultants in the community.

Board Member Wysocki re-entered the meeting at 9:51 p.m.

Chair Weibel suggested discussion over any the topics raised by the public.

Board Member Tapley said, in to answer the question of what happens if hiring a management firm and creating an operating board does not work, the County Board could stop doing it. What the County is doing now is not working so a change needs to occur. This change could result in a positive financial picture for the Nursing Home.

Board Member Gladney exited the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

Board Member Betz said he did not think the County is ready for this change. He wants more discussion over the issue to get more investment in making the change. He is not precluding the idea of a change, but to wait.

Board Member Gladney re-entered the meeting at 9:57 p.m.

Board Member Betz continued by saying he wants to hear more ideas before taking a vote on this proposal. Chair Weibel asked if Betz had any ideas. Board Member Betz wanted to have a public hearing about this issue and have the County Board members visit other nursing homes, both public and private homes.

Board Member Tapley stated universal buy-in for this proposal to work. He reminded the County Board that there was opposition when hiring MPA to perform an operational audit of the Nursing Home was proposed. That audit has had many positive results and was worth the money. Board Member Tapley stated the County Board was having a public hearing in the form of this study session. He encouraged the Board to take a vote on the proposal at the next meeting and not drag their feet.

Chair Weibel stated more than ten County Board members were not present at the study session. He recommended taking ideas to the respective caucuses and then bringing them to the November County Board meeting. The County Board agreed to this issue being placed on the November agenda. Board Member James inquired if this issue could be placed on the October County Board agenda for discussion only. There was no consensus for placing a discussion item on the October agenda.

RECESS

Chair Weibel recessed the study session at 10:09 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Bork
Administrative Services