



CITY OF MELROSE

POLICE DEPARTMENT

MICHAEL L. LYLE
Chief

Office of the Chief
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June 19, 2009

VIA FIRST CLASS MAIL

Michael V. Sack, President & Chief Executive Officer
Hallmark Health
Melrose-Wakefield Hospital
585 Lebanon Street
Melrose, MA 02176

Dear Mr. Sack:

Following our recent conversations regarding the ongoing efforts of the Melrose Police Department ("Department") to respond to calls for service at the Emergency Room at the Melrose-Wakefield Hospital ("ER"), I have recently learned of a number of serious incidents which required the deployment of additional police personnel to your hospital facility within the past two weeks. I am writing because these latest incidents are causing me great concern given their tremendous impact on the Department's patrol capabilities throughout the rest of the City of Melrose.

Specifically, on June 11, 2009 the Department was called to respond as a result of an irate patient in the ER who – after being treated with narcotics – had left the hospital before being properly released. Apparently, the treating physician determined that this individual was such a danger to himself and others, due to the heavy sedation he was under, that she called the Department for assistance. Again, on June 13, 2009 the Department was called for assistance because a patient in the ER was being loud, obnoxious and threatening to staff. I should point out that during both the June 11th and June 13th incidences, the hospital's security personnel took no proactive steps to address either of these situations. In addition, on June 14th, the Department was called again to assist in dealing with a man with a blood alcohol level of 4.0 and traces of cocaine in his system. Each of these incidents – occurring within days of each other – represents a small fraction of the time and

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resources the Department is required to expend in the interest of protecting the patients, visitors and staff of the hospital.

In light of the most recent incidents which have occurred, I have serious concerns for the safety of those who either use or work in your emergency room. Unfortunately, each call for service to the hospital directly reduces the level of protection the Department is able to provide throughout other parts of the City, thus jeopardizing public safety in those areas. As you are aware, closure of the psychiatric unit at the Somerville Hospital is only going to exacerbate this problem in the future. Given the economic downturn we are experiencing – as well as the increased demands on the Department throughout other parts of the community – the Department's ability to respond to calls for service at the hospital is reaching the point of being unsustainable. I should also point out that the hospital's recent decision to eliminate the annual payment it has been making to the City only further exacerbates the Department's staffing problems.

Given my authority as Police Chief – and in the interest of ensuring the safety of all involved – it may be time to implement an alternative security detail in the hospital. In this respect, the City is exploring all options to deal with the safety issues which exist at the Melrose-Wakefield Hospital Emergency Room. Among these options are: (a) consideration of a charge to the hospital for each call for service; or (b) the imposition of a police detail in the emergency room every Friday and Saturday during the hours of 9:00p.m. and 7:00a.m.

In the interim, and before implementing any of the options the City is considering, I would appreciate hearing from you as to what additional measures the hospital might be able to employ in order to immediately address this public safety problem.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

Michael Lyle

Cc: Mayor Robert J. Dolan

Patrick Dello Russo, CFO/Auditor

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