

Board of Commissioners Resolution

B2020-208

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102
651-266-83506

Sponsor: Property Management

Meeting Date: 10/20/2020

Item Number: 2020-452

Title: Lease Agreement with HealthEast Care System for the Bethesda Hospital, 559 North Capitol Boulevard, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103

Background:

Ramsey County, working in close collaboration with the City of Saint Paul, has been working to expand low-barrier shelter by at least 100 beds to respond to the unprecedented rise in unsheltered homelessness before the onset of winter. A city-county staff workgroup has been meeting on issues related to unsheltered homelessness since 2019, and this group began meeting in late July 2020 with a focus on seeking options for a 100-bed winter expansion. During this process but through an unrelated connection between Fairview Health Services, owner of HealthEast Care System, and Ramsey County leadership, an opportunity for the County to achieve the initial objective materialized and has been the subject of intense planning during the past month.

Fairview Health Services, as a result of a series of system-wide changes, will be vacating the Bethesda Hospital site in November 2020 and the facility is available for partial lease by Ramsey County to address the expansion of available shelter beds. The hospital is licensed at 252 beds with a current patient capacity of 126 beds.

The site is approximately 7 acres primarily surrounded by green space and institutional/office space. The site has ample parking for staff and clients and the area is well served by the METRO Green Line's Rice Street/Capitol Station, Route 3, Route 62, and Route 67. The building and the physical plant are in very good condition. The facility has multiple elevator banks, staircases and wings that can be secured from one another. Patient rooms are large and the facility has enough toilets and showers for shelter use. Laundry and kitchen/dining facilities are available as well.

County staff envision the operation of two shelter programs at Bethesda Hospital that would address immediate and significant community needs. It will also allow us to relocate and consolidate services at one location for higher quality and more efficient service provision that effectively complement other programs and build continuity of operations into our systems response.

One program would have up to 100 new low-barrier shelter beds that would be provided from referral through our homeless outreach teams. The low-barrier model recognizes that many of our unsheltered residents are chemically dependent and would aim to create a safe environment for those who may be intoxicated and provide programmatic support that currently does not exist. Complementing the emergency overnight shelter model at Ramsey County's Safe Space, guests would be able to use an individual room for multiple nights to provide stability with a limited amount of congregate space available. Meeting space and day space for case managers and outreach are available and would be programmed in coordination with partner service providers and expand upon our aligned service delivery model currently being implemented at Higher Ground Saint Paul.

In a separate wing of the large site, we propose transitioning the site to becoming the County's primary respite care site (which is currently provided at Boys Totem Town). The new facility is better suited for isolation with individual rooms and toilets, negative air flow and closer proximity to our homeless service network. We are also exploring financial and programmatic opportunities to partner with Hennepin County and Catholic Charities for health care, testing and service provision on a larger scale that better helps us serve residents that end up on both sides of the river.

Ramsey County has lacked continuity of operations planning since the transition of Mary Hall into overnight shelter and the need to then utilize Boys Totem Town as the County's respite space. This site provides opportunities for the County to develop actionable continuity of operations plans for food preparation and delivery, COVID respite and hotel programs. In all these areas no backups currently exist and the opportunity to ensure resiliency to the existing system, while also expanding the number of available beds, is significant.

Residents using the shelter will have incidental use of the adjacent green space. To enhance the safety and security of the green space for the shelter residents and the surrounding community, security services will be provided by Ramsey County and Fairview Health Services through a security services agreement. The security staff will provide the initial response to non-emergency incidents and work in partnership with on-site service providers and engage partner agencies such as the Saint Paul Police Department for emergency situations.

Fairview Health Services is a flexible partner that is interested in helping to address regional homelessness. We believe this partnership will strengthen our response to the COVID-19 pandemic and unsheltered homelessness.

Recommendation:

The Ramsey County Board of Commissioners resolved to:

1. Approve an 18-month Lease Agreement with HealthEast Care System, 45 West 10th Street, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102 for approximately 109,969 feet of space at the Bethesda Hospital, 559 North Capitol Boulevard, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55103 for the period of December 1, 2020 to May 31, 2022 in the amount of \$1,154,962.
2. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the lease agreement.
3. Authorize the Chair and Chief Clerk to execute the security services agreement (included as Exhibit C in the lease agreement).
4. Authorize the County Manager to execute amendments that do not have a financial impact.

A motion to approve was made by Commissioner McDonough, seconded by Commissioner MatasCastillo. Ayes – 7: Frethem, MatasCastillo, McDonough, McGuire, Ortega, Reinhardt, Carter. Motion passed.

By: _____
Janet M. Guthrie, Chief Clerk – County Board