

*Exerpt from Mayor Larry Friedman's letter regarding the Charlotte
Regional Hospital Cardiac Care Unit*

I am writing to advise of a pending development that, if approved, would have a most detrimental effect on our City and all of its citizens (in fact, all residents south of the Peace River). Unfortunately, the local press has not picked up on the severity of the situation, leaving it to my colleagues on Council and me to publicize and initiate a proactive response.

The Health Management Associates Corp. (HMA), the owners of both the Charlotte Regional and Peace River Medical Centers, has applied for a license to permanently move all cardiac care from Charlotte Regional to Peace River. They have not shared any of these plans with members of our City Council or staff, our citizens, or most of their own medical staff. In fact, they had told the Charlotte Regional Board of Trustees that the move would be temporary, to facilitate the construction of new cardiac facilities at Charlotte Regional. The filed application shows that this is not so. The Charlotte Regional CEO has for several years worked with Council and staff on a proposed new building/tower specializing in cardiac care; he has presented these plans at City Council meetings. The filed application shows that this would not be the case. The application alleges that there is insufficient space at Charlotte Regional for expansion; given Charlotte Regional's previous plans, presentations and pledge, this too is simply not true.

Not coincidentally, Fawcett Hospital applied for a similar license on the same day. It would appear that the primary motive of the proposed move out of Punta Gorda is to thwart the Fawcett's plan to compete in the cardiac care arena. Given that HMA currently has the only cardiac care license in Charlotte County, if it were to be transferred from Charlotte Regional to Peace River, it is most unlikely that a second license would be given to Fawcett, literally across the street.

We must not stand by and allow the quality of medical coverage, particularly in the critical cardiac arena, to be compromised because of marketing and financial factors. Charlotte Regional is currently rated amongst the top heart care facilities in the State. The citizens of Punta Gorda must protect this level of service, which has contributed to many folks moving here in the first place. We have relied on Charlotte Regional as a

partner in our post-Charley recovery efforts and as part of the economic engine that will enable us to fulfill the vision for our City. For Charlotte Regional to walk away from their past commitments, thereby sacrificing the needs of our aging population, would be unconscionable.

I have written to Mr. Jeffrey Gregg, the Chief of the Bureau that will rule on these applications, copying the Governor, the CEO of the HMA Corp., and our local State representatives. I've asked that the Peace River/Charlotte Regional application be denied, so that the latter may fulfill its plans and promises to the City and citizens of Punta Gorda. ***May I ask that, if you share my concerns, you join many of our civic leaders in writing, calling or emailing Mr. Gregg, either copying or separately contacting the others parties?*** To facilitate your efforts, I've attached a summary of the facts/chronology, a list of contact information for the protagonists and a copy of my letter. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require additional information. And thanks in advance for considering participation in this Citywide effort to maintain and optimize health care in our community.

Larry Friedman

Mayor

Charlotte Regional Medical Center
Pertinent Information

- Charlotte Regional is strategically located in Punta Gorda on Route 17, a major north-south connector to Desoto and northern Counties, and within a mile of Interstate 75 and US Route 41
- Charlotte Regional has been long acknowledged as one of the leading heart care facilities in the State and is currently rated as the number one cardiac facility by HealthGrades.Com, Inc., a nationwide rating service
- Charlotte Regional will shortly reopen its fully renovated 20-bed emergency room, including the capability to perform immediate cardiac intervention and care
- Since Hurricane Charley, City staff has worked with the Hospital hierarchy on the construction of another new building to house a state-of-the-art cardiac center

- To facilitate Charlotte Regional's growth and expansion plans, the City has established a "medical overlay" district surrounding the hospital campus
- Last year, the Charlotte Regional CEO made a presentation to the City Council, detailing their plans for an onsite, expanded cardiac facility and multi-story tower
- Charlotte Regional's hierarchy recently informed its Board of Trustees of their plan to apply to *temporarily* move its cardiac operations to Peace River Medical Center, a sister hospital within the HMA Corp., and located approximately six miles north of Charlotte Regional, in order to facilitate the latter's construction plans
- In reality, on June 25, 2008 (the final day allowed for license application and stakeholder input), Peace River, in collaboration with Charlotte Regional, applied to the State Bureau of Health Regulation to *permanently* move the cardiac care facilities from Charlotte Regional to Peace River
- The application, called a "Certificate of Need", stated that Charlotte Regional had exhausted its expansion capability; in reality, given Charlotte Regional's previous plans, presentations and pledge, this is simply not true
- Neither the City, its citizens, most of their medical staff, nor their own Board was apprised of the Peace River/Charlotte Regional application for *permanent* transfer
- Not coincidentally, Fawcett Memorial Hospital, directly across the street from Peace River, applied the same day for permission to provide complete cardiac care
- It appears that the Peace River/Charlotte Regional application was driven by the competitive threat posed by Fawcett, given the unlikelihood of two adjacent hospitals being licensed for cardiac care and the advantage of an HMA hospital already holding a license
- While HMA and Charlotte Regional officials have denied the possibility of a subsequent sale or closing of our local hospital, their credibility is now deservedly open to question
- Punta Gorda and its environs' aging population relies on and deserves continued local service, in particular for heart related care, from its widely acclaimed hospital
- The City has counted on Charlotte Regional's continuing to be a strategic partner in its hurricane recovery and economic development efforts, both of which are now seriously challenged by the Hospital's duplicitous actions
- Plans and decisions should be driven solely by health care parameters, not by a corporation's strategic marketing and financial objectives
- "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" applies, as we now face an upheaval in a most successful cardiac program and potential dilution of overall medical care

Contact information

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