

A new GMCB Public Comment has been received.

Submit Time: 10/14/2024

Name: Ellie Primeau

Affiliation:

Town/City: Newport, VT

Topic: Community Engagement: Hospital Sustainability and Act 167

Comment:

This letter is in response to the Community Engagement/ Hospital Sustainability and Act 167 event held in Newport on October 10, 2024. I was proud to be part of an impressive crowd gathered to defend North Country Hospital and its continuance. I learned many things at the event including that there is a lot more to learn about the lines of authority and responsibility in the matter of hospital existence and “recommendations”. I stand with all who spoke about the idea that “closing” North Country Hospital is an utterly ridiculous solution to Act 167’s call to transform Vermont’s healthcare system in a way that will improve access, affordability, quality, and sustainability. Without North Country Hospital the health care system in the Northeast Kingdom will not achieve any of those goals, and will be much further away from any possibility of ever achieving them. Dr. Murman, who (thankfully) came to the meeting as a member of the GMCB, stated multiple times that the report by Oliver Wyman never said to close NC hospital. Let’s face it, the recommendations made would effectively close North Country Hospital, even if not by such a decree! Mr. Frank (NCH CEO) insisted that the hospital will not close. It was further insinuated that the GMCB does not have the authority to close our hospital. Is that true? If the GMCB has the authority to approve (or reject) Hospital budgets, rates and certificates of need, doesn’t it - in a back handed way - have the power to close a hospital? This is a sincere question on my part. If GMCB does not have such authority, I’m not sure why they exist or why they would be tasked with having this report prepared. What are the lines of authority here? The most important take away that I got from the meeting was that the report done by Dr. Hamory at Oliver Wyman was flawed and incomplete. Recommendations were made based on incorrect and outdated data and assumptions, and woefully inadequate projections of the effects and impacts of those recommendations. The report itself is damaging our community right now! There was plenty of press about the results of the report. I personally would like to see a public statement by the GMCB or the author or the consulting firm acknowledging these flaws, if not a public retraction of the recommendations entirely. Our community deserves this justice. We can’t wait weeks or months for the powers that be to re-do the report. It is impossible for me to believe that NCH will be closed any time soon. I do believe that common sense and the unity of our community on this issue will prevail in keeping our little hospital open.

Sincerely, Ellie Primeau

Post Comment: Yes