



## Holy Cross Hospital committee's nominations approved, but goals and membership unclear

By Andrew Oxford

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The membership of a committee tasked with offering a series of recommendations for the future of Holy Cross Hospital is taking shape but confusion abounds regarding the body's leadership and goals.

The Taos Town Council voted Tuesday (Nov. 12) to appoint councilors Michael Silva and Fred Peralta as its representatives on the Hospital Study Committee.

Town manager Oscar Rodriguez indicated the nominations left only the Intergovernmental Committee and the hospital board with empty seats on the task force. The Intergovernmental Council would name three members at a meeting Wednesday (Nov. 13), he said, and added that the hospital's board planned to convene and nominate three members within the coming days.

Hospital administrators, however, told *The Taos News* they had not been officially invited to join the committee and that the board did not plan to convene before its next scheduled meeting Dec. 4.

That seemed to contradict the town manager's suggestion the committee could hold its first meeting within the next week.

"Honestly, we have not heard anything 'official' although I have had conversations with the county and town managers," Taos Health Systems CEO Peter Hofstetter stated in an email Wednesday. "There are, of course, lots of questions. Who 'owns' this, what is the charge, final product, timeframe, etc., etc.?"

Similar questions were expressed by some local residents nominated to join the body.

John Plummer, a consultant who nominated himself to serve as one of the three "knowledgeable consumers" on the committee, said he was hopeful the body would serve as a platform for informed dialogue rather than arguments.

"I hope that those elected have some experience in economic analysis and strategic planning," he told *The Taos News*.

But Plummer was not certain if he was actually a member of the committee.

"I haven't heard a word back," he said, explaining that he did not receive a response after submitting his resume to a town councilor and expressing interest in serving on the task force.

Plummer's interest in the hospital's economic circumstances was echoed by one of the county commission's nominees for the committee.

"I think we would all like to get a better understanding of the hospital's finances," Commissioner Tom Blankenhorn told *The Taos News*, adding he would seek more information about the budgeting at Holy Cross and the care the current budget can really provide.

He dismissed suggestions that the committee lacked any authority to effect change at Holy Cross.

"I think posing the questions and getting the answers will be beneficial," Blankenhorn said.

Other nominees to serve on the committee were less confident in the body's goals or scope, however, but declined to comment ahead of an initial meeting.

Two nurses nominated to the committee by the union representing health care workers at Holy Cross were clear about the key issues they hoped the task force would address.

"We will press the issue of governance because we need effective leadership to save our hospital," Martha Jaramillo, a nurse and the secretary of District 1199, told *The Taos News*.

"We just want accountability," her colleague and the vice-president of District 1199, Frances Trujillo, added.

The committee's membership currently consists of the two nurses and Holy Cross pharmacist Gina O'Hara serving as an alternate on behalf of the union.

In addition to the two town councilors and county commissioner, county finance director Leandro Córdova was also named to serve on the committee.

Local doctors nominated for the task force include Cipry Jaramillo, Michael Howard, Marti Miller and Erin Doherty. The local residents nominated to serve as knowledgeable consumers include registered nurse Suzanne Schutze, retired nurse Kim Miera, Kim Wilson and Plummer.