



***BROWARD COUNTY PBA
DAILY CLIPS***

October 19, 2016

MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: Broward sheriff wants \$2.3 million more for 911 dispatch

BYLINE: Brittany Wallman

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-911-broward-sheriff-money-20161018-story.html>

STORY: Broward Sheriff Scott Israel is asking for an additional \$2.3 million for operations of the 911 dispatch system, the latest in an ongoing tug-of-war between the sheriff and county.

The county in October 2014 launched a dispatch system that covers all the cities, so callers don't have to wait while their emergency call is transferred. Two cities, Plantation and Coral Springs, don't participate. The county pays Broward Sheriff's Office to operate it.

But the system has been dogged by troubles with technology, aging radios, and dispatcher difficulties. And the sheriff's office has repeatedly said more money is needed. Israel in May asked for a \$6.2 million increase to \$45.4 million, or 16 percent more, to operate the system.

A recent consultant's report said the system isn't operating efficiently and doesn't need more money. Fitch and Associates praised the call-taking and dispatch but did not support the sheriff's demands for more money.

The \$2.3 million Israel is asking for now is to balance his books for the budget year that ended Sept. 30.

Commissioners Tuesday said they don't have enough information to give the sheriff the money. A staff memo said the sheriff's office can't justify most of the extra money but might be entitled to up to \$464,000.

"For us to just arbitrarily say, 'Gee, you're really nice people. I think I'm going to give you \$2 million today,' we can't function like that," Commissioner Lois Wexler said. "It's got to be verified, it's got to be data driven."

Though it wasn't the chief selling point, advocates for the new countywide system predicted there would be a financial savings. It's unclear whether that will be true, or not.

Israel told the Sun Sentinel Editorial Board recently that the system is "performing in an amazing manner" but needs more money.

"They are severely underbudgeted," he said. "I'm going to be asking for the amount of money we need to successfully manage and operate the system and if we don't get the money I know we need to make Broward County the safest we can, there's a very good chance I'm going to write a letter to the county, a year notice to get out" of operating it, he said.

Based on those comments, Pembroke Pines Commissioner Jay Schwartz is proposing his city take over the call center in their boundaries. Pines commissioners will discuss it at their Wednesday meeting, he said.

The countywide system operates three call centers, one in Pines, one in Sunrise and one in Coconut Creek.

In other action, Broward commissioners:

- SOLAR:** Agreed to hire a consultant to help the county create a "solar cooperative," or bulk purchasing program, to make rooftop solar panels more affordable for homeowners, and to help them through the process. Commissioners also voted to officially oppose the November ballot question regarding solar energy, on the basis that it would "diminish access, reduce the competitiveness, or otherwise create disincentives for solar investments."
- AIRPORT:** Heard an update from Aviation Director Mark Gale about expansion and improvements at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport. Gale said FLL is the "fastest growing airport of any large hub airport in the United States." Each of the past two years an additional 2 million passengers used FLL, he said, with 29 million passengers expected in 2016.
- AMBULANCES:** Debated but did not decide whether to allow more ambulance companies to operate in Broward.
- AIRBNB:** Postponed to Oct. 25 a decision on whether to sue Airbnb, a short-term vacation rental website, for unpaid tourist taxes. County staff said in a memo that Airbnb requested more time to negotiate with the county.

MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: Three finalists emerge to lead Broward Health

BYLINE: David Fleshler

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-broward-health-ceo-search-20161017-story.html>

STORY: Three finalists began interviews this week for the difficult job of leading Broward Health, the public hospital system shaken by state and federal investigations, staff unrest and the suicide of its previous chief executive.

The candidates are:

- Timothy J. Harlin, chief operating and acceleration officer of the Denver Health and Hospital Authority, Colorado's largest safety-net hospital system. He holds an MBA from Emory University and a D. Sc. from the University of Alabama.
- Brett S. McClung, executive vice president of Texas Health Resources, a non-profit health system. His area of responsibility encompassed several hospitals, with a total of 1,100 beds. He holds a master's in health care administration from Trinity University.
- Christopher T. Olivia, former president of Continuum Health Alliance, a company that manages physicians' practices, with operations in several states and more than 1,200 doctors. He had interviewed unsuccessfully for the CEO job at the Memorial Healthcare System, which serves southern Broward County. The only physician among the finalists, he holds an M.D. from Hahnemann Medical School and an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

All the candidates seemed prepared for any challenges that are ahead for the district.

— Broward Health board member Maureen Canada

After completing interviews Wednesday and allowing the three candidates to meet with staff members, Broward Health's five-member board plans to meet Oct. 31 to make a decision.

"We have a good bunch," board chairman Rocky Rodriguez said Tuesday after McClung was interviewed. "It shows you there's a lot of talent out there."

Although the CEO's salary has not been set, Broward Health's contract with its executive search firm, DiversifiedSearch, envisions a total compensation package of \$950,000 for the successful candidate's first year, counting salary, bonus, signing bonus and any other incentives. That amount would be significantly higher than the \$675,000 earned by the previous CEO, Dr. Nabil El Sanadi.

The new CEO, who will take over from interim CEO Pauline Grant, will preside over a troubled system that includes Fort Lauderdale's Broward Health Medical Center, three other hospitals and dozens of outpatient facilities that serve the northern two-thirds of Broward County.

The system, legally called the North Broward Hospital District, is partly supported by taxes levied on property owners from Griffin Road to the Palm Beach County line.

"There are some unique challenges here that demand a candidate who has some unique qualities," board member Christopher Ure said. "I'm very happy with the overall quality and qualifications of the candidate pool."

Broward Health's last two years have been rocky. The system was forced to pay \$69.5 million last year to settle a multiyear federal investigation into excessive and improper payments to doctors. As part of the settlement agreement, the system is operating under federal oversight.

Broward Health's former chief executive officer, Sanadi, shot himself last year, leaving no note. After his death, a federal investigation into purchasing came to light and the state's chief inspector general opened an investigation into the awarding of contracts, demanding thousands of pages of documents.

At a recent board meeting, a state representative and incoming state senator both criticized the board over the termination of its auditing firm after the firm refused to submit to written restrictions on the scope of its work. Meanwhile, at board meetings, staff members have complained of a retaliatory atmosphere in which employees are afraid to report wrongdoing.

Board member Maureen Canada said all the candidates appeared to know the challenges they would be undertaking.

"They were well prepared with questions about all that has transpired at Broward Health during the last year or so," she said. "All the candidates seemed prepared for any challenges that are ahead for the district."

During his interview Tuesday, which lasted nearly two hours, McClung's conversation with the board covered such topics as the recruitment of physicians, nurses and other staff, patient care, construction projects, the investigations into the system's operations and its public image.

MEDIA OUTLET: Sun Sentinel

HEADLINE: Broward courthouse air quality complaints exposed

BYLINE: Brittany Wallman

LINK: <http://www.sun-sentinel.com/local/broward/fl-courthouse-mold-complaints-20161018-story.html>

STORY: In a dramatic, courtroom-like session, a Broward commissioner and State Attorney's Office employees accused the county Tuesday of downplaying mold and poor air quality at the courthouse.

The county has known about air quality problems in the courthouse and planned to tear down the building in downtown Fort Lauderdale just south of the New River, between Andrews and Third Avenues. But the new courthouse tower next to it is more than a year late in opening. Assistant County Administrator Alphonso Jefferson, the point person on the project, has not been able to say when it will be complete.

Tuesday, Commissioner Mark Bogen invited employees of the Broward State Attorney's Office to the County Commission meeting. They claim the air is causing respiratory and sinus problems, and even breast cancer.

One assistant state attorney, Elizabeth Kata, told commissioners Tuesday that she developed a serious rash that sent her twice to the emergency room. She dealt with five doctors and had a biopsy and stitches, she said. Doctors said her skin was reacting to something; she said it was the air in the courthouse.

"It sounds to some like it's not that big of a deal," she said, "but it's affecting our lives."

Bogen, an attorney, called an expert witness to the podium to support his claim that complaints of illnesses caused by mold in the courthouse have been treated too skeptically by the county. And then Bogen called top county employees to the podium and grilled them on what they'd done about it, and when.

"We keep being told there's no problem, that these people are making it up, they're just exaggerating, maybe they're looking to sue the county, to make a lawsuit, this can't be real, of course. This is what we got Monday," Bogen said, waving a 400-plus page air quality report citing visible mold, high dust levels and water damage. "I'm outraged by it."

He said he didn't think county staff cared about the health of courthouse workers, and concluded the lengthy session by calling the county's response to the complaints "b-----."

County Risk Management Director John Burkholder, Facilities Director Scott Campbell and County Administrator Bertha Henry said the county has investigated every complaint about air quality that has come in over the years. They said they're in the process of deep cleaning the affected areas, and not for the first time, though they couldn't say how many times they've taken action.

Burkholder disputed claims, including from Monica Hofheinz, the State Attorney's Office's executive director, that the county's air quality reports "always come back as within the acceptable standards."

"We have not said there's not problems," Burkholder said. "We've said some areas were within the [acceptable] ranges and some were not."

Commissioner Barbara Sharief suggested employees in the courthouse were partially to blame, reporting that they continually cover air vents to prevent proper circulation. Campbell confirmed that was happening.

But Commissioners Lois Wexler and Tim Ryan said the county should be more proactive in addressing known air quality problems in the 1950s-era central courthouse.

"What can we do to get on top of this?" Ryan asked.

County staff said they'd come back with a plan.

MEDIA OUTLET: Broward Beat

HEADLINE: Broward courthouse air quality complaints exposed

BYLINE: Buddy Nevins

LINK: <http://www.browardbeat.com/broward-politics-sales-tax-hikes-fishy-math/>

STORY: Supporters of a sales tax hike claim that tourists will pay one third of the new costs.

I've been hearing that figure for decades – tourists pay 30 percent of the sales tax — from the county government. It is rarely, if ever, questioned.

Unfortunately, the figure may be inaccurate.

Visit Florida estimates that in 2012 tourists generated 23 percent of the state's sales tax revenue, according to the Miami Herald. That includes areas much richer in tourists such as Orlando.

The state's Office of Economic and Demographic Research estimates the figure at 13-15 percent, The Herald wrote.

January, 2016 statistics from the state indicate that 21 percent of Broward's roughly \$3 billion in sales tax revenue paid for "tourism and recreation" purchases.

The state defines that category to include hotels and motels, bar and restaurant sales, liquor stores, photo and art stores, gift shops, admissions, sporting goods, rentals, and jewelry stores.

It is a highly arbitrary calling purchases in those establishments part of the tourist industry. Large numbers of locals patronize jewelry and sports stores, plus buy liquor, drink at bars and eat at restaurants.

No doubt some purchases by tourists are included in other sales tax categories such as non-durables: "Food and convenience stores, department and clothing stores, drug stores, antique dealers, bookstores, florists, pet dealers and suppliers, social organizations, storage, communications firms, print shops, nurseries, vending machines, utilities, and any "kind" that doesn't fit into the other categories."

How can you possibly come up with a figure of the number of tourists buying products in these locations?

The 30 percent figure is simply a guess.

It is about as accurate as the cost figures on the downtown street car system The Wave and any city project proposed by the sales tax increase proponents.

Maybe we should remember one current county project currently underway – the new Main Courthouse.

It remains empty more than a year after its first scheduled completion date.

The building was supposed to open in the summer of 2015. It is now October, 2016.

I guess that it close enough for government work.

Close enough, just like the claim that 30 percent of the sales tax hike will be paid by tourists.