

Clergy from region seek meeting with Waterbury Hospital chairman over preserving 'community benefits'

By DAVID KRECHEVSKY REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

WATERBURY -- A group of nearly 50 religious leaders from Greater Waterbury wants to meet with the chairman of Waterbury Hospital to discuss preserving the hospital's "long-standing community benefits program" after it is acquired by a for-profit hospital chain.

In a news release, the group said it plans to deliver a letter to Carl Contadini, chairman of the board for the hospital and its parent, Greater Waterbury Health Network, at 1 p.m. today at the hospital on Robbins Street. The one-page letter is signed by Bishop Lionel French, pastor of the Gospel Tabernacle Ministries in Waterbury, and co-signed by 47 other clergy.

The clergy are all members of the Naugatuck Valley Project Inc., a coalition of churches, unions and citizen groups that advocates for public and private services in the region. They represent a variety of denominations, including Catholic, Evangelical, Methodist, Protestant and Jewish congregations, "all of whose congregants are served by Waterbury Hospital," the group said in the release.

"We are writing as leaders of Greater Waterbury faith communities to request a meeting with you to discuss the importance of the community benefits that Waterbury Hospital has offered to the community for many years, and our concern that they be preserved in the event of the sale of the hospital to another entity," the letter states.

Waterbury Hospital is pursuing a joint venture with Tenet Healthcare Corp., a for-profit hospital management company based in Dallas. Tenet is seeking to acquire Waterbury Hospital, as well as Bristol Hospital and the Eastern Connecticut Health Network, which consists of Manchester Memorial and Rockville General hospitals.

"The community benefits we seek to preserve -- ranging from care for those too poor to pay, to public health education -- have helped thousands of our members and the community at large over generations," French, who is also president of the Naugatuck Valley Project, states in the release.

The letter seeks "the opportunity to discuss ways to preserve these (benefits) in a face-to-face meeting" with Contadini.

Wednesday, June 18, 2014 9:33 AM EDT

<http://www.rep-am.com/articles/2014/06/19/business/doc53a18f63a63f0653011726.txt>