

HEALTH

Temporary manager chosen for Bergen Regional hospital

A consulting company will serve as interim manager if a new contract and operator aren't in place by March.

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Bergen County officials hired a consulting company on Thursday as interim manager of Bergen Regional Medical Center in the event a new contract and operator aren't in place by the March 2017 deadline.



With seven entities submitting proposals to take over operations of the Paramus facility, the Bergen County Improvement Authority signed a contract with ToneyKorf Partners, a nationally recognized health care advisory firm, to ensure there are no gaps in care at the 1,070-bed hospital, the state's largest.

“While this diverse pool of respondents represents a greater opportunity to make the best choice for the future of BRMC, it also requires more due diligence than fewer respondents would,” said Mauro Raguseo, acting executive director of the BCIA.

More than 12,000 pages of records must be reviewed from proposals submitted by a coalition of five North Jersey hospitals, another bid by Rutgers University's New Jersey Medical School and two partners, as well as five other entities.

A 19-year-contract between the BCIA and the for-profit Bergen Regional Medical Center LP expires next year. When the contract was signed, the company was the only bidder, Raguseo said

Selecting a manager and drafting a new contract are among the most consequential decisions the county will make because they will affect regional health care — not to mention taxpayers — for decades to come.

ToneyKorf has been retained to provide transition services. If no manager is selected, the company will take over operations of the hospital temporarily until a new manager is chosen. It will appoint an interim chief executive officer, interim chief financial officer and any other temporary staff that's needed.

The company specializes in short-term assistance, county officials said. As such, the contract establishes a monthly cap of \$1.3 million for interim management and any temporary staff. Any requests to increase the cap would need BCIA approval, county officials said, and the agreement is expected to last for six months to a year.

The contract also calls for the BCIA to reimburse the company for expenses, which are estimated at \$20,000 per month. The BCIA signed a \$500,000 retainer Thursday.

Bids submitted a week ago include a coalition of Hackensack University Medical Center, Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, Englewood Hospital and Medical Center, the Valley Health System in Ridgewood and Christian Health Care in Wyckoff. The coalition would hire the Carrier Clinic, a noted psychiatric facility, to run day-to-day operations. In another bid, CarePlus Bergen would hire Rutgers New Jersey Medical School in Newark to manage acute care, and Integrity House in Newark to handle substance abuse treatment.

Three men long affiliated with the current manager also have submitted proposals: David Sebbag and Hersch "Ari" Krausz, who are principals in BRMC LP, and V. Robert Salazar, who had been a principal in the company until September. Salazar is submitting a proposal through a new venture he created in May, the Hackensack-based Progressive Health Management

Bergen Regional serves a diverse and challenging population. More than half the beds are allocated for long-term care. The hospital also provides psychiatric care, addiction and acute care services. It treats patients with some of the most complex health care needs, including people suffering from mental illness, substance abuse and myriad health issues.