

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you and address the County Commission. I am Carter Edge and I am the Chairman of the Elberton-Elbert County Hospital Authority. The Hospital Authority owns and operates Elbert Memorial Hospital and is comprised of eleven citizens who serve on the authority without compensation. We take an oath of office to faithfully and fairly discharge our duties and responsibilities under authority of the provisions of the Hospital Authorities Law. We serve six year terms.

I come before you today to update you on the progress of our efforts to continue providing hospital facilities for the unmet needs of our community. In FY 2006 Elbert Memorial Hospital provided \$731,851.48 in indigent care. This number is consistent with the level of indigent care provided in previous years and does not include write-offs for bad debt nor does it quantify the cost of having **access** to hospital facilities in our community. These are integral to placing a value on the benefit of Elbert Memorial to our community, but the last two are difficult to quantify and I have not attempted to do so.

In 2001, the Authority developed a Facilities Master Plan that detailed, on a high level, the needs of the community and the challenges of meeting those needs with the existing facility. This study identified numerous areas that needed addressing in order to bring the existing facilities up to date. The cost of addressing these areas (in 2001 \$'s) was on the order of \$8M and did not address some fundamental issues like the on-going cost of maintaining 4 physical plants and the penalty associated with operating a facility that does not meet the changed expectations of a more sophisticated healthcare market within which we operate.

The Authority decided to investigate alternate ways to upgrade our facilities, including building a new hospital on a different campus. Ultimately, due to the reduced capital cost and the ability to leverage our existing property, the Authority decided to pursue regenerating the hospital on-site through a series of construction and demolition sequences. We proceeded to scope and price this option in order to fully grasp the magnitude of the project and to provide a baseline from which to speak. Support from the community will be required to fulfill this vision of a transformed Elbert Memorial Hospital.

The design is one that will meet the community's needs. It is not the only design, but it is the best design we have come up with that balances

projections of our future community profile with our community as it exists today. It is a design that will enable Elbert Memorial Hospital to continue serving our citizens well into the future. Several of you were invited to hear details first-hand from the project team that developed the design and had the opportunity to ask questions. I welcome the prospect of engaging the remaining Commissioners in the discussion and request that the Authority be invited to a Commission workshop to review, in detail, the schematic design as well as the assumptions of what our community needs in a hospital. Out of these discussions, I hope to bring to ballot in September a bond referendum that will finance a facility regeneration project. Without your support this project is not possible and time is of the essence.

Just as our County's leaders decided in past years to invest in the buildings we have today, you too have an opportunity to shape the way healthcare is delivered in Elbert County. You have an opportunity to position Elbert County for future growth through upgrading the facilities and keeping the economy diversified for a vibrant tax base. This essential service has returned positive value to the citizens and with your support will continue to do so in the future.

I am not prepared to answer detailed questions right now that may involve potentially commercially valuable plans, proposals, or strategies that may be of competitive advantage, however, as I have mentioned to each of you before, if you have any questions or comments about the hospital, do not hesitate to contact me.