

# Medical Center OKs Open Meetings

By David Zinman

Newsday Science Writer

East Meadow—The board of managers of the Nassau County Medical Center voted yesterday to open all its regular monthly meetings to the public—making it the first Long Island hospital to agree to conduct its business before the community.

However, the eight-member board stopped short of agreeing to hold its sessions at night—as requested by consumers—so a larger cross-section of county residents can attend. “Nobody on the board wants it [night meetings],” said Warren J. Freeman, board president of the county-owned hospital. The panel’s two female members, he said, are particularly reluctant to go out at night.

Nevertheless, the board’s open-meeting decision was precedent setting. Acceding to consumer demands, the board held its first open session last month since the hospital opened in 1935. But that meeting ended in confusion when board members declined to make any commitment about future public sessions. The panel’s action was unpopular with the 30 consumers present. Some said they thought the board was going to resume closed sessions.

Freeman ended this speculation yesterday by announcing that the panel would open its regular sessions permanently. The board, which sets policy for the 725-bed hospital, meets in the morning on the fourth Monday of every month.

The boards of all other hospitals in Nassau and Suffolk hold their business sessions in private. These hospitals are voluntary (nonprofit) and private (profit-making) institutions—not tax-supported like Nassau Medical Center. But some consumer advocates believe that these hospitals, too, have an obligation to conduct their business in public because they get financial support from community donations, government grants, and from Medicaid and Medicare fees.

Reacting to the center’s open board announcement, consumer leaders said that no other decision would have been appropriate. “There shouldn’t be any secrets,” said Henry Doliner, president of Nassau Senior Forum, an activist group of elderly citizens. “It’s a county hospital.”

However, both Doliner and Lorenzo Merritt, local chairman of the National Association of Black Social Workers, said they thought it was important that all meetings be held at night so working people could attend.

“If there are people in the community so interested in going to these meetings, why don’t they take a little time off [from work],” Freeman said. “They should put themselves out a little, too.” The next board meeting will be at 10 AM on Oct. 28 in the center’s activities building.

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## N.J.’s insurance costs four times more than claims

By BOB CUNNINGHAM

The Record Trenton Bureau

TRENTON — The State of New Jersey paid four times as much in insurance premiums over the last five years as the insurance firms paid back on claims, an audit disclosed yesterday.

The report by the legislature’s Office of Fiscal Affairs recommends that the state study its insurance coverage and determine whether it might be cheaper for the state to insure itself — paying for claims against the state out of the treasury instead of paying insurance firms to cover losses and claims.

A spokesman for the Treasury Department, which handles New Jersey’s insurance, said a full-time consultant was hired three weeks ago to review all insurance coverage. He is Arthur Livney, former manager of the insurance needs of the huge New York real estate firm, the Uris Building Corp.

‘An undermanaged area’

“Historically this has been an undermanaged area in state government,” the spokesman said. Livney will advise how the state can cut costs, where there is too much insurance, where there may be inadequate coverage and where changes should be made in policies or in how they are purchased.

The state already insures itself against claims for workman’s compensation —

and a few other types of insurance — from treasury revenues rather than an insurance policy.

Another possibility for some state insurance needs is policies to cover only large claims, with the state absorbing losses from smaller claims.

The audit yesterday, which gave good marks to other programs of the Treasury Department, said that from 1969 through 1973 the state paid \$5.6 million in premiums for 70 types of insurance, excluding auto coverage. Claims paid by the insurance firms over the period totaled only \$1.25 million.

A question at this point

“I couldn’t say at this point whether that gap is justifiable,” the treasury spokesman said. “With insurance, in some years you have good years. But that seems to be a pattern.”

The gap reached its highest in 1973 when premiums were \$1,374,767 and claims paid were \$190,595.

The audit noted that for auto insurance, premiums were only slightly higher than claims — \$2.9 million to \$2.6 million. In 1971 the claims were \$36,000 more than the premiums.

But the treasury spokesman said those policies will be reviewed also. “We’re not sure if we even got a premium reduction for no-fault coverage,” he said.