

BOC approves MOU, but still stalling on Grady's \$26 million allocation
By John H. Eaves, Ph.D.
Chairman, Fulton County Board of Commissioners
May 6, 2009

On Wednesday May 6, 2009 at the Regular Meeting of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners, four members of the Commission voted against making retroactive payments to Grady Hospital for indigent care. My motion would have provided nine million dollars to Grady for payments that were promised since January.

The detrimental result of this action is that Grady will have to find another way to pay for costs to serve our citizens. Since January—because of the actions of a majority of the BOC—the hospital has been forced to borrow money at a considerable interest rate to keep the hospital open.

This critical situation was created when at the January 21 Board meeting a majority of the commissioners approved a motion to withhold \$26.5 million of the \$76.5 million already approved in the 2009 county budget. As part of that motion and vote, the Commission agreed not to release the \$26.5 million until a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority was negotiated and approved.

I voted against this original MOU because it tied the hands of the hospital by making unreasonable requirements in order to receive the money coming from the County. Today I voted to execute the agreement because, quite simply, without it Grady would not receive any of the \$26.5 million.

When you look at the wording of the (January 21) motion, actually today's formal approval of the MOU satisfies the terms for release of all of the \$26.5 million. I will be asking that the county manager release that money to Grady immediately. Unfortunately, a majority of the commissioners were misinformed and ultimately voted against the very people we are supposed to look out for—Fulton County's poorest citizens.

This is a terrible blow to an institution that seeks to provide quality healthcare to those Fulton County residents most in need. It is unconscionable to me that four of my colleagues, by their vote today, would deny Grady the ability to provide healthcare in this time of such economic stress.

VOTING FOR GRADY: John Eaves, Tom Lowe and Nancy Boxill.

VOTING AGAINST GRADY: Emma Darnell, William "Bill" Edwards, Robb Pitts and Lynne Riley.

Please let me know what you think? Write me at chairman@fultoncountyga.gov