

**MINUTES**  
**LOWER FLORIDA KEYS HOSPITAL DISTRICT**  
**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
**JANUARY 6, 2026**

**PRESENT:** Mrs. Ovide, Mrs. Sterling, Mrs. Swift, Dr. Thompson, Mrs. Spottswood, Mr. Hammond, Dr. Chambers & Mr. Muir

**ABSENT:** Mr. Toppino

**ALSO PRESENT:** Mr. Fishman, Mrs. Nowels (sign in sheet for community members in attendance)

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Sterling called the meeting to order at 2:31 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Mrs. Ovide motioned to approve the agenda as presented, Mr. Muir seconded and the agenda was approved unanimously.

**COMMUNITY SPEAKERS:**

Mr. Kaufman praised the board for their transparency and professionalism in this complex generational decision and process. He also asked that memos accompany action items to help board members, stakeholders and members of the public more fully understand the rationale behind decisions being considered and made.

John Moeller shared a personal experience highlighting issues with temporary doctors.

Mr. Padget stated that he was unclear regarding the consultant and engineering responses and questioned if an RFP had been issued for this service

Mr. German stated that he believes the engineering study for an RFP must be mandatory as none of the potential operators would want to enter any kind of agreement without knowing the status of the building.

Mr. Martinell is the co-owner of MRI of Key West and stated that a huge issue is housing.

Chairman Sterling asked Mr. Fishman to clarify for the record there was no obligation for the district to issue an RFP for professional services, just as the board did not issue an RFP before it engaged Akerman as its legal counsel. The hiring of a consultant and an engineering firm would fall within that same ambit. The only professional service that is required to have an RFP issued for is auditors.

### **AKERMAN RFP REPORT**

Mrs. Nowels from Akerman was in attendance as well as Mr. Slavkin who was attending via phone remotely. Akerman is giving an update from the last meeting where they had presented a draft RFP and invited the board and the public to submit comments to the RFP. Akerman also had a meeting with medical staff and stakeholders to get feedback and comments to incorporate into the RFP. Akerman received and reviewed all comments submitted. Akerman incorporated some of the comments that they deemed valuable whether written or verbal and revised the RFP.

Akerman also recognized that at the close of the last meeting in December that the board was going to move forward with an engineer to do an assessment of the building Akerman has also been in discussions with potential consultants to support the process. Akerman believes that the help of a consultant would strongly improve the RFP process and recommends the district hire one. Akerman believes the engineering report would be a key piece to the RFP and wants to wait to finalize the RFP is complete. This would allow any significant changes noted to serve as an exhibit to the RFP.

Akerman agreed to provide a revision of the RFP 30 days after the engineer report which was scheduled for late January. Mrs. Nowels stated that the hospital district board owns the land that is being leased and the district board is the only entity that must approve it. The only reason KDI comes into the picture is because of licensing, so to make that licensing work, the operators must be the same.

Mrs. Swift made a motion to postpone the approval of the RFP until the engineering report is complete based on legal advice from Akerman. Mrs. Thompson seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

Mrs. Swift made an additional motion to allow 30 more days of public input on the RFP, but there was no second to that motion and it failed as there was already a deadline of Dec 15<sup>th</sup> for the public to submit comments.

A copy of the draft RFP is attached to the official minutes.

### **CONSULTANT DISCUSSION & APPROVAL:**

Mrs. Nowels stated that the board prior to engaging Akerman had taken many steps to move the RFP forward and thanked the board and fact-finding committee for all their assistance. Mrs. Nowels mentioned there are aspects of the RFP and the RFP process that the board could benefit by Akerman hiring a consultant as they are experts in this field. Akerman recommended Stroudwater as the consultant as they have strength in rural community health care and they have been extremely responsive to the board's change from the original proposal to a reduced fee proposal that deducts the work that was already completed. Akerman stated the Stroudwater would assist in finalizing the RFP, reviewing the engineer report, gathering facts to help the board with the criteria presented, working through the interview/negotiation phase and any regulatory approval process if needed. Akerman would hire the consultant and work directly with them and the board, but the invoice would come to the district for payment.

Mrs. Thompson made a motion to authorize Akerman to hire Stroudwater as the district's consultant. Mr. Muir seconded and the motion carried unanimously

A copy of the consultant proposals from Stroudwater and Juniper are attached to the official minutes.

### **ENGINEERING STUDY DISCUSSION & APPROVAL:**

Mr. Fishman prepared a comparative analysis reflecting time, cost and experience of the (5) engineering firms who submitted proposals.

Mrs. Thompson made a motion to hire ISES as the engineering firm to conduct the engineering study on the hospital and request their time frame be quicker. Mrs. Ovide seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

A copy of all the engineering firms' proposals are attached to the official minutes.

### **GOOD OF THE ORDER:**

Mrs. Ovide praised Mrs. Sterling on her leadership and efforts. Mrs. Hiller reminded the board to trust the process.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the District Board, Mrs. Ovide motioned to adjourn, Mr. Muir seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.

Kathryn A. Dunde  
Approved, Secretary

2-3-24  
Date