



## Neighborhood Alert: Laguna Honda Hospital Two fires. Assaults on patients and staff. What's next?

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### *Town Hall Meeting*

Thursday, December 16, 2004 • 7:00 p.m.

St. Brendan's Parish Hall

200 Ulloa Street (Ulloa/Laguna Honda Boulevard)

**ARE YOU AWARE OF WHAT IS GOING ON AT LAGUNA HONDA HOSPITAL (LHH)?** The Department of Public Health (DPH) is working behind the scenes to drastically change the mission and patient population at LHH!

No longer is LHH's primary focus on caring for San Francisco's frail elderly. LHH is now accepting mostly psychiatric patients from S.F. General Hospital. LHH was not built for this purpose; the bond-financed Mental Health Rehabilitation Facility was built for that purpose. In 1999 voters approved Prop A, a \$299 million bond measure, to rebuild LHH with the primary intent to house the elderly in San Francisco. The will of the voters is not being honored.

These changes are the first part of Dr. Mitchell Katz's plan to convert LHH from a nursing facility for elderly and disabled San Franciscans into a "Social Rehabilitation Facility for the urban poor." This change in mission — contrary to what was sold to voters — will have an enormous impact on our neighborhoods.

At a recent City Hall hearing, former Supervisor Tony Hall sharply criticized Dr. Katz for exceeding his authority in changing the mission of LHH and endangering its residents. Supervisor Hall called into question Katz's decision making ability. Supervisor Sean Elsbernd has recently expressed concern about the situation, and has engaged Mayor Newsom.

LHH does not have the security in place to protect current patients, hospital staff, nor neighborhoods that surround it. There have been cases of patients attacking other patients and LHH's staff.

An increase of homeless people have recently made encampments around Laguna Honda and neighboring areas, including the Laguna Honda reservoir. In October, a homeless camp started a fire on the LHH grounds. The LHH Institutional Police are unable to monitor the grounds adequately.

There are several elementary schools that surround LHH. We don't want our children placed at risk, any more than we want our elderly relatives and friends at LHH placed at risk!

In 1999, voters were promised implicitly and explicitly that LHH would be built with 1,200 beds. But the tobacco settlement fund was raided of \$25 million through misappropriation. A lawsuit has been filed to recover the *twice* misappropriated \$25 million to ensure LHH is built as promised.

To ensure that changes at Laguna Honda occur in a safe and acceptable manner, and to protect our neighborhood from danger and deterioration, our neighborhood associations must be informed and involved. As a neighbor, we need your involvement. These issues and others will be discussed at the Town Hall meeting.

#### ADMISSIONS POLICY CHANGED

Since Director of Public Health Dr. Mitchell Katz unilaterally changed the LHH admission policy in March 2004:

- LHH doctors have been pressured to admit dangerous patients who can not be safely managed there.
- Virtually all patients are now coming from San Francisco General Hospital (SFGH), resulting in the near exclusion of patients from their homes and from other San Francisco hospitals.
- There has been an increase in younger, transient, and less disabled patients with psychiatric and addiction problems being brought into LHH and our neighborhoods.
- There has been an increase in violent and aggressive behaviors, including a major arson fire inside LHH and an assault by gang members.
- These changes have resulted in citations against LHH from the State's Licensing and Certification division, as well as from the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The citations referred to an increasing population of dangerous patients without having an appropriate safety plan.

***If You Care, Please Plan to Attend This Important Neighborhood Town Hall Meeting!***