

Hospitals say they're united to save PHS

By CHRIS OLERT

Staten Island's three voluntary hospitals yesterday issued a statement reaffirming that they are working together to save the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital, Clifton, and at the same time, vowed to continue talking about a joint effort to keep the East Shore hospital open.

"All Staten Islanders should be aware that the three voluntary hospitals have been working cooperatively in the efforts to preserve the resources of the Public Health Hospital and that St. Vincent's role at this juncture is to develop, with input from the other health care providers on the Island, a proposal to convert the Public Health Service Hospital to community sponsorship," John J. DePierro, executive vice president of St. Vincent's Medical Center, said in a statement released late yesterday afternoon.

DePierro met yesterday morning with Barry Zeman, executive director of Staten Island Hospital, and Anthony Succo, executive vice president of Richmond Memorial Hospital, and members of all three voluntary hospitals' boards of directors.

The meeting (yesterday) was one of a series of ongoing sessions that have been held to develop an appropriate corporate

entity to ultimately run the Public Health Service Hospital if the medical center's (St. Vincent's) proposal is accepted and funded," DePierro said in his statement.

All three hospitals' executives have said and maintain that they face serious financial consequences if at least some of the services provided by the federal hospital, specifically some inpatient beds and many outpatient services, are not continued.

The so-called "consortium" isn't possible for St. Vincent's because it is a Catholic institution and it conforms to Catholic doctrine prohibiting abortion services and the majority of birth control services offered by other Island hospitals.

The specific plans for a "corporate entity," including financing and governing the federal hospital, are being developed by all three Island voluntary hospitals.

The Sisters of Charity of New York, which also operates St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center of New York in Manhattan and St. Joseph's Hospital in Yonkers, have pledged their support to help oversee the operation of the Clifton hospital.

St. Vincent's formally told the Department of Health and Human Services it would submit a proposal by Aug. 15 to convert the Clifton hospital to a community-operated facility.

Hospital administrators yesterday recoiled after Dr. John Marshall, director of HHS' Bureau of Medical Services, de-

clared that cooperation among Island hospitals, including Doctors' Hospital, was dead.

Yesterday's statement emphasized that cooperation continues vigorously, and St. Vincent's administrators insisted that that cooperation and meetings about how best to develop a community-based takeover will continue.

In his June 30 letter to HHS Secretary Richard Schweiker, DePierro wrote "Our intention and that of the other two facilities (Staten Island and Richmond Memorial hospitals)...is to work cooperatively."

DePierro's letter also emphasized that administrators from all three hospitals are meeting to negotiate what roles each would have in the new corporate entity, which would be separate from all three hospitals.