

Hospital takeover faces 1-month deadline



Discussing the fate of U.S. Public Health Service Hospital, Clifton, are, from left, Councilwoman Mary T. Codd, Borough President Gaeta, Congressman Guy V. Molinari, John DePierro, executive director of St. Vincent's Medical Center, Aldo Benedetto, adviser to the council of the hospital, and Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly. S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

Congressman Guy V. Molinari and John J. DePierro, executive director of St. Vincent's Medical Center, said yesterday that although all avenues have not been exhausted in attempts to keep the U.S. Public Health Service Hospital in Clifton open in some form, the facility's future remains uncertain.

Budget cuts have forced the closing of all eight public health hospitals by October but three localities, including Staten Island, are attempting last-ditch efforts.

Molinari and DePierro stressed that if federal funding to allow for a conversion process is not forthcoming by October, the plan to turn the hospital into a private voluntary operation may be doomed.

That assessment came at a meeting attended by political and hospital officials yesterday.

morning in Molinari's Ft. Wadsworth office.

In attendance were Borough President Gaeta, Deputy Borough President Ralph Lamberti, Assemblywoman Elizabeth A. Connelly, Councilman Nicholas LaPorte, Councilwoman Mary T. Codd, Aldo Benedetto, adviser to the council of the hospital, Joan Barnes of Councilman Anthony I. Giacobbe's office, Al Thompson, representing Assemblyman Robert A. Straniere, and Philip Straniere of Sen. John J. Marchi's office.

In August DePierro submitted to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services a takeover plan proposing the formation of a new corporate entity involving the federal facility and the West Brighton hospital.

Under the 338-page proposal, the hospital would be operated

under a new corporation with its own board of directors. But the facility ultimately would be responsible to the Sisters of Charity of New York, a private non-profit agency that oversees St. Vincent's and hospitals in Manhattan, Westchester and Yonkers.

The takeover bid is in jeopardy unless the federal government comes up with more financial assistance, including \$24 million to upgrade the PHS facility to state standards. The proposal also involves \$3 million to cover start-up expenses.

In its formal proposal, St. Vincent's estimated the cost of the conversion at \$39 million and annual operating deficits over the next three years of \$4.2 million, \$4.9 million, and \$5.7 million over the next three years.

With the October deadline ap-

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proaching, Molinari, Gaeta and Lamberti have been holding meetings with officials to gain financial commitments for the proposal.

According to DePierro, the city has agreed to contribute \$200,000 and the state another \$500,000 towards the effort.

"But right now the whole situ-

ation is on 'iffy' ground. I can say that without federal money and commitments on the state and city levels, we can not take over the facilities conversion," he said.

Molinari stressed that he would "continue to fight" for the hospital's survival but said time is running out and the next three weeks were extremely important.

If the facility is converted it

would be scaled down from 407 beds to 204, including 160 general medical and surgical and 25 acute care. Nineteen beds would be reserved for patients from the Staten Island Developmental Center and the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility.

It would maintain its dialysis and training programs, such as those for anesthetists, radiology technicians and laboratory assistants.

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