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October 5, 2018

The Honorable Christopher Shoff, Chairman  
Tom Jensen, Administrator  
Freeborn County Board of Commissioners  
County Administration – Government Center  
411 So. Broadway, P.O. Box 1147  
Albert Lea, Minnesota 56007-1147

Dear Freeborn County Board of Commissioners:

Thank you for your letter dated Sept. 18, 2018. As physician leaders for Mayo Clinic and Mayo Clinic Health System, we are united in our commitment to long-term and sustainable health care services for patients in Freeborn and Mower counties and the surrounding service area. We appreciate the opportunity for continued dialogue with you on areas of mutual concern.

In June of 2017, we announced the reorganization of inpatient services on the Albert Lea and Austin campuses. The announcement on Aug. 16, 2018, provided more specifics about the investments being made to renovate the Austin campus. To gain a better understanding of the care now available for local residents, we invite you to join local leadership at the Albert Lea campus for a community open house to introduce the new Psychiatric Services Unit from 4-6 p.m. on Thursday, October 25. We also would be pleased to arrange separate times for small subsets of commissioners to have a tour of one or both campuses. A complete list of services available on each campus can be found on the [website](#).

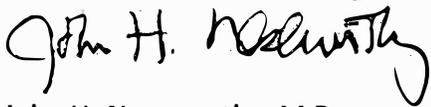
Dr. Sumit Bhagra and Kris Johnson represented Mayo Clinic at the Board of Commissioners meeting on Sept. 4, 2018, to answer your questions. We also are providing written answers to the issues you raised (**Appendix A, Commissioners' Follow-up Questions**). Dr. Bhagra and Ms. Johnson shared information regarding our ongoing efforts to recruit providers to Albert Lea, Austin and the surrounding areas (**Appendix B, Provider Staffing and Recruitment**). In addition, they provided updates on how our staff are engaged in a variety of Albert Lea initiatives designed to strengthen our connections within the community and focus on the key issues of transportation and behavioral health. The board was also provided a summary of the nearly \$10 million Mayo Clinic has invested in Albert Lea over the past two years (**Appendix C, Investments in the Communities**) Therefore, per the options offered in your letter, we respectfully decline the invitation to appear in person and are providing written answers to the issues you raised.

The Facilitated Dialogues moderated by Judge David Minge over the past year have provided a good forum to discuss concerns and share information; we are disappointed the County has chosen to withdraw from these ongoing discussions. Dr. Bhagra and Ms. Johnson shared with you some of the

deliverables that emerged from those meetings, including increased engagement with the community, more in-depth collaboration on behavioral health, and ongoing efforts to understand and address transportation challenges in Albert Lea and Austin (**Appendix D, Albert Lea Community Engagement 2018**). We remain committed to participating in the Facilitated Dialogues process and participation in its productive subgroups.

We are invested in Albert Lea and are working hard to ensure that we can meet the needs of our patients today and into the future. We know that you share our goal of keeping great care available for area residents, and we appreciate your interest in Mayo Clinic Health System's work in this area.

Sincerely,



John H. Noseworthy, M.D.  
President and CEO  
Mayo Clinic



Bobbie S. Gostout, M.D.  
Vice President  
Mayo Clinic



Annie T. Sadosty, M.D.  
Southeast Minnesota Regional Vice President  
Mayo Clinic Health System



Mark R. Ciota, M.D.  
CEO  
Mayo Clinic Health System – Albert Lea and Austin

**Attachments:**

Appendix A: Commissioners' Follow-up Questions

Appendix B: Provider Staffing and Recruitment

Appendix C: Investments in the Communities

Appendix D: Community Engagement Efforts

Appendix E: List of Services Available in Albert Lea and Austin available at <https://mayoclinichealthsystem.org/albert-lea-austin-facts>

## **Appendix A: Commissioners' Follow-up Questions**

In response to the specific follow-up questions in your letter (shown below in italics), we reiterate below the answers we have previously provided on these topics, with the addition of any new detail now available:

### ***General transportation of patients and their families for medical appointments or stays to and from the various Mayo Clinic campuses***

As previously announced, patients requiring ambulance transportation between Albert Lea and Austin will be transported without charge to the patient. This is allowable by Medicare as it is considered moving patients within one facility.

Mayo Clinic Health System is working with the City of Albert Lea and other stakeholder groups to identify other transportation needs between Albert Lea and Austin and will explore safe, accessible and convenient transportation options for travel between Albert Lea and Austin.

It is important to note that the majority of the care most people use on a regular basis – doctor visits, immunizations, emergency care, same-day surgeries, pharmacy, lab, radiology, dialysis and much more – is still available on the Albert Lea campus and will *continue* to be available at the conclusion of the inpatient transition. Routine and emergency care, as well as most surgeries, remains close to home.

### ***Clarification on the commitment from Mayo Clinic to provide overnight observation beds at the Albert Lea location***

We are committed to providing observation beds on the Albert Lea campus as part of the Emergency Department. We anticipate having observations beds available prior to the transition of inpatient admissions to Austin. We are currently evaluating the Albert Lea campus master facilities plan to identify short- and long-term locations for these beds.

Observation beds are highly regulated by Medicare, and Mayo Clinic fully complies with all regulations. Due to the complexity of Medicare and/or insurance coverage, billing questions must be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

### ***To discuss the option of returning inpatient beds to the Albert Lea location***

There are no plans to have general medical/surgical inpatient beds on the Albert Lea campus after mid-2019. The inpatient Psychiatric Services Unit (PSU) will transition from Austin to Albert Lea at the end of October 2018, bringing much-needed inpatient psychiatric care and dozens of nursing positions and other staff members, as well as a steady stream of patients and their friends and family who visit regularly during extended hospitalizations.

### ***To discuss the removal of labor and delivery services to Austin rather than Albert Lea, which is more centrally located within the service delivery area. Specifically the reasoning why Mayo Clinic chose the Austin campus for Labor and Delivery.***

Integrating all acute care inpatient services (hospital admissions, ICU, major surgeries requiring hospitalization and childbirth) on one campus allows us to better use our staff and other resources to provide safe, high quality care for all patients in the Albert Lea/Austin service area. The Austin campus was selected to house all inpatient services, including labor and delivery, because the facility has a footprint that is more conducive to meeting future space needs for all transitioned services.

## **Appendix B – Provider Staffing and Recruitment**

Dr. Sumit Bhagra and Ms. Kris Johnson shared the following information on provider staffing and recruitment at the Freeborn County Commissioners meeting on September 4, 2018.

### **National Provider Recruiting Landscape**

- By 2030, there will be nationwide shortage of nearly 50,000 primary care physicians, at a time when the aging population needs more health care. *(Source: American Association of Medical Colleges)*
- The crippling student debt associated with medical school and many years of residency is forcing most medical students to choose the highest paid specialties, and drawing them to urban practices.
- The majority of physicians in their last year of residency have 50-100 job offers before they finish training. To hire the best talent, we need to beat out up to 99 other offers.
- On average it takes us over one year to recruit a provider. Some positions take much longer – for instance, three years or more to recruit surgeons and obstetricians.

### **Staffing/Recruiting Update for Mayo Clinic Health System – Albert Lea and Austin**

- Since January 1, 2018, we have added 22 new providers to the Albert Lea/Austin practice. This includes 17 physicians and 5 nurse practitioners.
  - 6 practice in Albert Lea; 5 practice in Austin
  - 11 practice in both Albert Lea and Austin, which is typical of our practice. Most of our providers practice across both campuses.
- In Albert Lea, we've added three pediatricians to improve access to care for children and adolescents.
- We've added hospitalists, emergency physicians and radiologists who work on both the Albert Lea and Austin campuses.
- We've increased our staff for Urgent Care and Express Care to create more access for same-day care.

We are committed to continuing our strong efforts to bring additional providers to serve the needs of this community and we are heavily focused on recruiting primary care providers to serve our patients' needs.

## **Appendix C – Investments in the Communities**

### **Albert Lea**

Over the last two years we've invested nearly \$10 million in the Albert Lea campus. The following critical updates to our facility in Albert Lea include:

- A new Radiology suite and state-of-the-art, low-radiation MRI and CT scanner. Albert Lea now has the same equipment as Rochester. This investment alone was almost **\$3 million**.
- Renovation of the Albert Lea Cancer Center, adding amenities to enhance privacy and comfort for patients and visitors. (**\$720,000**, included Naeve Foundation contribution)
- Patients are now utilizing the remodeled space for Fountain Centers Men's Residential Unit for addiction treatment (**\$540,000**)
- We installed a new cooling system for the entire Albert Lea campus, which lowered energy consumption and costs and creates opportunities for further remodeling and expansion (**\$2.75 million**).
- New Observation beds will go into service in 2019 to accommodate patients who may not need to be admitted to an inpatient setting but are in need of additional monitoring. (**\$750,000, plus a generous \$200,000 donation from Naeve Health Care Foundation**)
- We are nearing completion on construction of the inpatient Psychiatric Services Unit, a safe and therapeutic environment for patients who need extended inpatient care for mental health issues. The transition of patients from Austin to this new unit in Albert Lea is scheduled for late October of this year. (**\$2.5 million**)
- In addition, Mayo Clinic invested **\$2.1 million** to build a large new ambulance barn and training facility in Albert Lea to support high-quality, prompt emergency services and transport for local residents.

These key investments ensure that our facility is safe and well-equipped for future years as we continue to care for current and future generations of Freeborn County residents.

### **Austin**

- On August 16, 2018 we announced the \$11.2 million investment that will be made on the Austin campus to accommodate the Family Birth Center and inpatient hospitalization. This updated facility will serve both Freeborn and Mower counties and the surrounding area, ensuring that the highest-quality care and top-tier medical facilities remain available regionally.

### **Looking ahead**

- Both the Austin and Albert Lea campuses will offer a wide range of services at both sites with a number of unique offerings designed to meet the regional need at each site. The Albert Lea campus will continue to offer patients in Austin and Albert Lea dialysis, hyperbaric wound care, Physical Medicine and Rehab at Health Reach, Cancer Center and soon the Psychiatric Services Unit. These services are unique to the Albert Lea campus.
- As we proceed with these upgrades and transition of services, we want to be sure that community members know we are here to serve them. A list of services available by campus is attached and available online. It is a lengthy list that includes a 24/7 emergency department, family medicine, pediatrics, general surgery, and a broad range of specialty services.

- We are developing clear communication to share widely in the community on various ways to access care and the most cost effective options depending on the issue. This has been a great partnership with many including Freeborn County Public Health. A magnet outlining options is available free of charge.
- We have added new staff dedicated to Community Engagement outreach and programming to develop new and expand successful programs. These include:
  - Open Houses where community members can learn about services available,
  - Wind Down Wednesday where new providers recently had the chance to meet community members,
  - The successful MCHS booth at the fair this year featuring “12 Healthy Habits of Well-being” positioned right next to the Freeborn County Public Health Booth
  - Partnerships and programs that address the health and well-being of the community as evidenced by our active participation in the Blue Zones and Wellbeing work.
    - One example of a program is the Health Talk Series geared toward seniors on topics such as diabetes, Alzheimer’s and depression. This program is initially starting at Thorne Crest senior living but we hope to expand this program.
- Additionally the new Community Engagement positions will help ensure we focus on keeping our partners, such as all of you, updated on key happenings at MCHS Austin/Albert Lea.