

PRESS RELEASE

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Second Line for Charity Hospital Scheduled for Monday, August 31st at 6:00 P.M.
A Show of Support for the Plan to Gut & Rebuild Charity Hospital
Second Line formation at 5:45p.m.

August 31st, 2009 -- Supporters of Charity Hospital are calling on New Orleans residents to attend a second line march and parade tonight, August 31st at 6:00p.m. to exhibit public support for the plan to gut and rebuild Charity Hospital that is faster, less expensive and less destructive than the currently proposed medical complexes for Lower Mid-City.

The second line will start at Charity Hospital, 1532 Tulane Street, at 6:00p.m. sharp. The Rebirth Brass Band and the Hot 8 Brass Band will lead the second line for about one hour around the footprint of the proposed LSU medical center in Lower Mid-City, marching up Tulane Avenue, turning right on South Galvez Street, right on Canal Street, and right on South Robertson to end with a rally in front of Charity Hospital.

"There is a plan to gut and rebuild Charity Hospital that is faster, less expensive, and less destructive to our community than the current proposal for Lower Mid-City," Jonah Evans, editor of SaveCharityHospital.com said. "At a time when New Orleans needs health care facilities more than ever, this is an opportunity to show our support for the Charity Hospital plan."

Though proponents of the LSU/VA proposal are touting the recently-inked governance agreement between LSU and Tulane as a major success, backers of the plan to build a modern hospital inside historic Charity are quick to retort.

"This governance dispute was never anything more than a sideshow that served to expose how unprepared the state is to make this project work," says Eli Ackerman, the other editor of SaveCharityHospital.com. "Without the financing to complete construction or even a plan to obtain it, watching Tulane and LSU bicker over who gets to name which board appointees is like watching a fist-fight over how to distribute the winnings from a losing Powerball ticket."

Today, the Department of Homeland Security is expected to release the details about the structure of arbitration panels expected to settle the ongoing dispute around FEMA's reimbursement offer for damage incurred at Charity Hospital during Hurricane Katrina. Proponents of Charity Hospital have raised concerns in recent weeks after federal officials indicated the arbitration panels would be held in secret, behind closed doors.

"Given the history of closed meetings and back room deals associated with this boondoggle it is upsetting that the federal government would set up yet another process that would explicitly exclude citizen stakeholders from witnessing the procedure, let alone participating in it," Jonah Evans explained. "This is why our continued demand for the City Planning Commission and the City Council to hold the public hearings required by law is so important."

The second line comes in the wake of a summer of problems for the Lower-Mid City proposal, and follows a new scientific public opinion poll that shows growing support for the Charity Hospital plan.

"There is a sense that the Mayor and City Council are out of touch with what the citizens of New Orleans want and need," Michael 'Aldo' Andrews, parade chairman and member of the Committee to Reopen Charity Hospital, said. "This second line is chance for our voice to be heard."

A recent poll commissioned by Smart Growth For Louisiana, Inc. found that New Orleans voters prefer building a new, state-of-the-art hospital inside Charity Hospital by a margin of 2-to-1 over an alternative plan to locate the new medical center in the Lower Mid-City neighborhood.

About 500 New Orleans registered voters in the public opinion survey conducted by political scientist Edward F. Renwick were asked if they favored one of the two hospital locations. Sixty percent said they favored the Charity location, while 30 percent chose the Lower Mid-City location being proposed by Louisiana State University. (Four percent favored neither, and 7 percent said they didn't know or declined to answer.)

The second line is sponsored by SaveCharityHospital.com, the Social Aid & Pleasure Club Task Force, and the Committee to Reopen Charity Hospital. Our goal is to force City Council to hold open and transparent public hearings on the hospital controversy, and an independent analysis comparing the two hospital proposals.

For more information about the plan to gut and rebuild Charity Hospital, visit <http://www.savecharityhospital.com/learn-more>

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