

December 2, 2010

TO: Westerville City Council

From: Concerned Residents of the following subdivisions;

Genoa Township

Augusta Woods – Africa Road

Augusta Woods – Frasier Road

Highland Lakes South

Highland Lakes

City of Westerville

Estates At Polaris Village

Re: Proposed Expansion of Ohio Health

The residents of the above subdivisions issue a formal opposition to proposed changes to the Ohio Health property at the corner of Africa and Polaris Parkway. The property is in Westerville, but the residences directly affected by the changes are in Genoa Township. The original plans that the Westerville Zoning Board approved were for an addition of an urgent care facility that would close at 10:00 p.m. Ohio Health now wishes to build a two story, 24 hour, Emergency Center with a separate helipad. The following are the reasons we feel this change would be detrimental to the residents whose properties abut this facility directly to the north and also how it affects the residents in the surrounding subdivisions:

- 1) An increase in traffic along Polaris Parkway and Africa Rd. This traffic is potentially dangerous as it will consist of emergency vehicles and private citizens arriving at the facility at a fast speed. The only way for patients and emergency vehicles to enter the facility when traveling from the west, south or north is off of Africa Rd. A bike and walking path that is utilized by area children and their families crosses that entrance. The safety risk would be greatest not only from emergency vehicles, but from distraught drivers in need of emergency care and not focused on driving. There are several school bus stops located on Africa Rd., just to the north of the facility, along with heavy school bus traffic that enters and exits Africa Rd. to make stops in the various sub-divisions. The only other entrance is off of Polaris Parkway, but is only available to those entering from the east, with no stop light. Ohio Health claims that there will be a negligible increase in traffic on Africa, especially south bound, but in a recent trade article, they stated that the majority of their business will come from the area north of Polaris!
- 2) Several Doctors and Nurses have expressed great concern about the safety of the homes and inhabitants in the area. There is an increase in crimes in and around Emergency Medical

facilities. This would require an increase in police presence in and around those neighborhoods that Genoa Township would largely be responsible for.

- 3) Increased noise from sirens and helicopter landings and take offs. It can and does occur at all hours at a 24 hour facility. Ohio Health cannot mandate when a siren must be turned on and off as the emergency vehicles enter and leave the facility. The majority will enter and leave by the Africa entrance. The closest to the homes.
- 4) To accommodate a helipad, the area must be cleared of trees that would otherwise dampen the noise and various lights must be on during dark. This includes spot lights that are turned on during landings and take offs, lights on top of tall structures, and a flashing green, white or yellow light that will be placed on top of the facility. The homes on the hills to the north will look right at this light. All overhead lines that are within 4000 ft must have the large orange balls attached at intervals and the electrical towers to the north must be marked. There were 9 recorded HEMS crashes in 2009 that resulted in 35 fatalities. The FAA considers this so much of a concern that they have launched a campaign for better safety, but do not have any procedures in place yet.
- 5) Ohio Health owns the land directly to the east of the developed area. The plan that was submitted by Ohio Health originally showed this site as luxury condos. Unless Ohio Health is expecting to get into the Luxury condo business, this will probably become a full service hospital to support the 24 hour Emergency facility. When the residents asked at the last meeting why it was zoned for condos, the Ohio Health people replied that they had to put something there to get the first proposal passed!
- 6) Putting in a 24 hour ER and a Helipad will greatly depress the value of the homes in this area in an already depressed market. If Ohio Health eventually expands to a full service hospital on this site, it will have even further reaching detrimental effects on the home values and the quality of life of those residents in the vicinity. This is of no concern to the city of Westerville, because other than a small group of condos to the east, there is no adverse effects on any Westerville residents.
- 7) Ohio Health made a minimal effort to communicate with neighbors about the proposed changes. Only one resident attended the Westerville Planning Commission meeting on October 25th. Most neighbors knew nothing about the agenda that included a discussion about Ohio Health's proposed changes.
- 8) At the November 22nd Westerville Planning Commission meeting, a number of residents attended and voiced their concerns to the commission. As a result, the issue of the proposed expansion was changed from minor to major. As a major issue, it is now up to you, the Westerville City Council, to hear this issue and vote in favor of the residents.

We fully believe that our quality of life, as we know it today, is in jeopardy. As residents and taxpayers, we implore you to turn down this request.