

Parking Ramp Triggers Hospital Feud

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St. Vincent Hospital's decision to build a large parking ramp has angered Bellin Hospital officials because of the way it was handled.

St. Vincent officials say they don't understand Bellin's position.

St. Vincent said in press releases last weekend it would build a ramp expected to serve 1,500 cars. It said the location is still undetermined.

David McKee, St. Vincent assistant administrator, said Wednesday St. Vincent considers its proposal a solution for the entire medical corridor, not just for St. Vincent.

Size and location still aren't decided, he said, although a lot on Van Buren between Porlier and Eliza streets is one possibility.

Donald Gaetz, administrative assistant at Bellin, said the hospital looks on St. Vin-

cent's press releases "as a breach of faith."

He acknowledged that St. Vincent Administrator Ted Jamison phoned Bellin Administrator Daniel Smith to announce "the unilateral decision. It was announced to us a few hours before."

But Gaetz said the phone call came as shock, especially in view of discussions at a meeting Feb. 28. Since the phone call, Bellin has learned all its information from the news media, he complained.

"You can't wiggle through the space between the walls of the two hospitals. It seems strange that St. Vincent found it impossible to communicate with us."

"I'm not opposed to a ramp. Bellin has said for months a parking ramp was the solution and St. Vincent has been unable to agree even in principle until last week."

Clyde Crabb, the city director of public works, had called the Feb. 28 meeting. Bellin responded to say it was committed to negoti-

ating but dissatisfied that past discussions were producing no solution.

McKee said St. Vincent still plans to go to the next meeting prepared to discuss location and financing with the others. He said the mutual agreement Feb. 28 also called for "each party to come with some possible solution at the next meeting. This is our proposal," he said.

McKee said St. Vincent really had hoped the Feb. 28 meeting could be postponed because its plans weren't firm.

"When you have a joint problem and need a joint solution, you don't necessarily have to have joint risk," said McKee. "Because of what we feel the future holds, we are willing to take the risk and not share it with the city, hospitals..." McKee said.

"If you were going to build a ramp with mutual access to patients, employees and visitors, would you build it there (on Porlier)?" Gaetz asked. "It is hardly a common

or joint solution if, indeed, that is the proposed location."

He said if 1,500 spaces are built there will be no on-street parking and everyone will be forced into the ramp.

St. Vincent officials note they were unwilling to back a ramp until all other alternatives were exhausted. Their board agreed that was the case after their effort to rezone an Allouez parking lot was rejected by the Allouez Town Board.

Meanwhile, city officials and neighborhood spokesmen had a "basically positive" reaction to St. Vincent's ramp plans simply because they think a ramp is needed.

Paul Willems, city administrative assistant, said "the mayor's office doesn't have a position."

He said the St. Vincent announcement "wasn't a total surprise knowing they were considering alternatives and had finally concluded there was need for a parking ramp."

Richard Filings, president of the Astor Neighborhood Association, said "We've been working three years to solve the parking problem. We're pleased with any sort of final decision that will improve the situation."

"The area of Astor's concern would be what it will look like and we'd like to be involved in what the architectural structure is like. We don't want it to distract."

Astor Association also expressed concern that St. Vincent is acquiring residential property "at the following locations: 900, 918 and 938 S. Van Buren and 721 Eliza streets."

"We are also aware of several attempts by St. Vincent and other medical organizations to purchase property within the neighborhood yet well away from the present hospital complex. The continued failure of St. Vincent to reveal long-range planning policies raises several questions as to the motives and good faith of current hospital policy makers..."