

March HealthCare Campus Brings Out Community Supporters

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By BVN Staff –

Over 700 community members attended a hearing of the March Joint Powers Authority (JPA) to consider the March HealthCare Development's medical campus.

The March HealthCare Development includes: March Community Hospital; A Continuing Care Retirement Community; Medical Office buildings; An Ambulatory Surgery Center; A Wellness and Education Center; Partnership with Riverside Community College District Allied Health Programs; and A Faith and Healing Garden.

JPA members voted in favor of moving the project forward.

Riverside City Councilman Andy Melendrez, representing the City of Riverside with two votes, voted NO on each of the four initiatives that would move the project closer to groundbreaking. Melendrez was the lone dissenter on the JPA Board. The area's top community leaders gathered to support the project that is projected to bring over 5000 jobs to the area in Phase 1. (14,000 projected jobs upon campus completion in ten years.) The speakers described the need for increased healthcare options, with many telling personal stories of having to travel outside the area for specialized treatment.

Speakers included: Jamil Dada—Chairman, National Association of Workforce Boards, Dr. Bakhtiar Ahmad—Chairman, Department of Surgery Moreno Valley Community Hospital, Dr. Ronald L. Ellis, -- President, California Baptist University, Cheryl Brown – Co-Publisher of the Black Voice News, Dr. Wolde-Ab Isaac—Dean of Health Sciences, RCCD, Moreno Valley Campus, Robin Zimpher McDonnell—Retired Director, Riverside Economic Agency, Dr. Lawrence Geraty, -- Past President, La Sierra University, and, Diana Christiansen—CEO, The Atticus Group, Inc, and others.

Lacy K. Sykes, Jr., Chief Pastor, Cross Word Christian Church gave an informative presentation on the activities and future plans for his church. He described creating an environment where all community members will be served, not just church members. The church property adjoins the MHD development. Hundreds of Cross Word members, along with Moreno Valley, Perris and Riverside residents attended the meeting to show their approval of MHD.

Don Ecker, project manager and managing member of March HealthCare Development, gave an impassioned talk on the need for health care options in the area, and the opportunity to make the campus a "Medical Destination" like the Mayo Clinic.

Oscar Valdepena, President and CEO of the Moreno Valley Chamber of Commerce, said he supported the project for two reasons. First, he cited the jobs that MHD would bring, saying "these aren't just jobs, these are careers," Second, he said the project would "pave

the road to success in Moreno Valley,” saying other businesses would be more inclined to come to the area because of the MHD project.

The next JPA meeting is November 18, at which time the board can vote final approval.