

Jailhouse medical firm mum on probe

By Francis Scarcella
The Daily Item

SUNBURY — Ten representatives of Northumberland County Prison's medical provider, including PrimeCare's president and corporate director, on Wednesday met with the jailhouse board for nearly 90 minutes regarding allegations the company did not provide proper health care to inmates.

And they all did it in private.

Carl A. Hoffman, PrimeCare Medical Inc. president, was among those who spoke to the Northumberland County Prison Board



Carl Hoffman
PrimeCare



Todd Haskins
PrimeCare

for nearly an hour and a half — all in executive session, against the wishes of Northumberland County Commissioner Vinny Clausi.

Clausi's motion to have the talks in public did not receive

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a second.

Two individuals who were in a position to know came forward in March alleging employees for PrimeCare Medical Inc., of Harrisburg, were dispensing the wrong or no medicine to inmates over a significant period.

The former employees also claimed inmate records were doctored.

PrimeCare representatives confirmed they were conducting an internal investigation into the claims, but that's as far as the company went.

Before the prison board broke for the long executive session, a county resident addressed the panel with concerns.

"I ask you all that someone from an outside agency investigates this medical provider," she said before breaking down in tears.

"I came here today to ask this board to have someone else investigate these concerns and problems that are happening here in this jail."

She echoed similar sentiments made by Dave Sprout, paralegal with the Lewis-



Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

Northumberland County Commissioner Vinny Clausi, left, talks with Commissioner Steve Bridy at a county prison board meeting Wednesday.

burg Prison Project, late last week.

When the meeting reconvened, PrimeCare representatives made a statement regarding MRSA being found in the prison rather than about the two former workers' allegations.

"There are cases of MRSA in hospitals, schools and it is present in the community," said Todd Haskins, PrimeCare vice president of operations.

"This facility has no more or no less than what we expected and we found out the number of cases is actually

lower than other facilities. We have policies and procedures for treatments."

PrimeCare reported the MRSA cases to the U.S. Department of Health once the medical provider was made aware, Hoffman said.

"We contacted them and we followed our policies and procedures," he said. "We treated inmates accordingly."

And then the group of about 10 were dismissed by the board.

PrimeCare representatives did not address the results of the alleged "internal investigation," but Hoffman said in a hallway of the jail, "The allegations made by these people were baseless.

"We addressed this and found nothing," he said.

Added Haskins: "We will not talk about what we discussed with the board."

Commissioner and prison board Chairman Steve Bridy was satisfied with the results from PrimeCare, he said.

"I feel they were frank and addressed all of our questions and I am thankful we have this relationship with them," Bridy said.

"They have all the policies in place and I am glad they got involved and at this point no one has been injured or harmed. The allegations were addressed. It's PrimeCare's job to determine what was factual and what wasn't. However, there is some room for improvement in anything we do."

Bridy would not say whether an outside agency was ordered to conduct an investigation.

"I don't see any other reason to look into it," he said. "If an outside or state agency wants to look into it that's fine. We did our jobs by bringing this up to the medical provider and they addressed our concerns."

Clausi said he has no choice

but to trust PrimeCare.

"If it comes to be incorrect, then PrimeCare will be responsible," he said. "Right now we have to give them faith and trust, but if it is not true, I will hold them responsible."

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