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## State Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez frustrated by Goddard House closure plan

Posted by Matt Rocheleau August 6, 2012 10:43 AM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

State Rep. Jeffrey Sanchez said he and other members of the community are frustrated by the sudden announcement that Goddard House skilled nursing home in Jamaica Plain will close.

“The entire neighborhood community and the broader Boston community has been blown away,” he said by phone Friday. “We were all taken aback by it.”

The trustee board of the 163-year-old nonprofit that runs the Goddard House Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center [announced three weeks ago](#) that it plans to close by Sept. 8. The site is home to more than 100 patients and about 135 workers, some of whom have expressed [shock and concern](#).

Sanchez, a Jamaica Plain resident, said he learned of the planned shutdown when constituents, including staff at the facility, began calling him a few days after the news broke in mid-July. Sanchez said some of the employees cried as they spoke to him.

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they spoke to him.

The calls prompted the legislator to write a [letter](#) to the trustee board president Elizabeth Molodovsky last week urging the nonprofit that runs the facility to look into alternatives to closing permanently or at least push back the scheduled Sept. 8 closing date.

The board's unpaid volunteer members have said they began exploring options for the facility's future. The needed renovations would have meant relocating residents during construction and would have cost more than \$10 million to expand small rooms, lavatories and hallways and federally-required sprinkler system upgrade.

Along with the need to modernize, the board considered a recent drop in the rate of nursing home use nationally and that the number of empty nursing home beds in Massachusetts has risen and is expected to continue to rise despite declines in the total number of beds.

All of that amounted to a determination by the board that trying to continue forward with Goddard would be an inefficient use of resources toward its mission of supporting Boston's elderly population, particularly those who have limited access to healthcare and other services, the board has said. Instead, the board plans to invest in other options that help fulfill unmet needs of local seniors.

Since the shutdown was announced, Sanchez said he's had several conversations with board members but remains frustrated by what he said has been a lack of clarity over why the threat of a closure was not communicated earlier, why it has to close in 60 days and ultimately, why the option to close was chosen.

Three longstanding nonprofit senior care facilities, the Goddard, Sherrill House and Mount Pleasant Home are located along a quarter-mile stretch of South Huntington Avenue nicknamed the "Eldercare Block."

"We had two institutions [the Mount Pleasant nursing home and the Sherrill House Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center] on that same block that were under the same if not more pressures and not only stayed open, but have expanded," Sanchez said Friday.

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Sanchez said he was among a group of community members and other public officials who attended a celebration of the partnership between the three organizations earlier this spring.

“We never got the sense that [Goddard] would be shut at the drop of a dime,” he said.

Patients and staff received 60 days notice, the minimum required by federal regulations, according to the state Department of Public Health.

“We are doing everything possible to assure that the transition is smooth and orderly and believe it is proceeding very successfully,” trustee board spokeswoman Diana Pisciotta said.

Goddard’s board has vowed to do all it can to help with the transition, including working with patients’ families, giving workers bonus pay and holding multiple job fairs that officials said have been by more than 25 employers with available positions.

The spokeswoman said that by the end of last week about 85 patients moved to new facilities, leaving about 30 at Goddard.

To read the entire letter Sanchez wrote last week, click [here](#).

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