

Pete Correll, Chairman Emeritus of Georgia-Pacific, and co-chair of the Greater Grady Task Force:

Pete Correll is co-chair of the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce's "Greater Grady Task Force"—a group that has recommended the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority commit to creating a new non-profit Board to govern Grady Hospital. When we spoke with Mr. Correll earlier, he pointed out that the purpose of that change is primarily to attract new financial resources....

PETE CORRELL: Grady needs additional funding. The additional funders—the state, the philanthropic community, and the surrounding counties—said, 'We are not going to fund, unless you change the governance structure, so the hospital is not governed by a politically appointed board appointed by the county commissioners of two counties.' So nobody held the 501(c)(3) out as the solution, it is a necessary step to begin the solution.

STEVE GOSS: Well you've mentioned that the current board is political quote-unquote. Do you have any evidence of how they may have acted in a political fashion?

CORRELL: No, except to say they have not been getting the money from Fulton and DeKalb County to fund Grady Hospital. Yet they have a contract with Fulton and DeKalb County which says they must fund Grady Hospital. So they have been in a real political dilemma.

GOSS: Who will appoint the new members of the non-profit board, and who will they be accountable to?

CORRELL: Like any non-profit board, they will be accountable to themselves, and to the charter that they are organized under. And this group would be organized with a charter to provide indigent care to the citizens of the metro Atlanta area, and the first board would be appointed by the hospital authority. Then that board would have the authority to perpetuate itself. That is to say, when the director left, that board would replace that director.

GOSS: So how do you respond to those who say this is just a, I think someone termed it a 'white power grab' by the Chamber of Commerce to take control over the hospital?

CORRELL: Who in their right mind would want control of a bankrupt hospital? Now I think that is the silliest accusation I have ever heard. This is an attempt by the community to come together to save a major asset of the community. As I said, this is not about black and white, it is about green, it's about money. It's about only money.

GOSS: If I recall correctly, the task force began your work in the spring. Did you

foresee how politicized this would all become? I mean, here we are in November already, and nothing has been done yet.

CORRELL: Well I've been very disappointed with the urgency of which this community has moved to deal with this issue. This hospital is running out of money. This hospital is going to close. Now I don't know whether it is December, or January, or February, but it's running out of money very rapidly. But I am encouraged that we are slowly plodding toward a solution.

GOSS: On November 26, the Grady board is scheduled to vote yea or nay on a non-profit board. What if they vote it down?

CORRELL: Well if they vote it down, I just hope they have a source of funding to keep the hospital open. Because if they vote it down and have no funding, this hospital is going to close. All I care is that Grady survives. The chamber came up with a solution. We said, 'We can't think of anything else, but if somebody's got a better idea to get the money, that's fine.'

GOSS: Well, Pete Correll, we appreciate you taking the time today, thanks.

CORRELL: Thank you very much. Thank you for your coverage of this issue.