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A chooses contractor for Butler VA health center



Department of Veterans Affairs

An artist's rendering of the Butler VA health care facility planned for Center.



By Bill Vidonic
Friday, Jan. 2, 2015, 12:57 p.m.

The Department of Veterans Affairs could pay more to rent a new health care facility in Butler County than under an old deal that collapsed when the VA inspector general raised questions about the developer.

The VA announced Friday that it agreed to a 20-year lease with Cambridge Healthcare Solutions PA LP of Vienna, Va. The firm will oversee construction of a 168,000-square-foot center off North Duffy Road in Center, about 1½ miles from the main VA campus along New Castle Road in Butler Township.

The VA said it will pay Cambridge Healthcare Solutions \$8.4 million a year in rent after a "rent abatement period" of unspecified length. Cambridge officials declined comment. The VA did not return requests for comment.

The VA's old agreement with Westar Development Co. of Aurora, Ohio, to build a \$75 million center adjacent to the Butler campus would have cost taxpayers an average \$7.6 million a year in rent.

U.S. Rep. Mike Kelly of Butler has been critical of how the VA handled the project and how the original contract went to Westar in 2012. The Republican said Friday that he was disappointed he had to learn from a reporter, and not the VA, that Cambridge landed the latest contract.

"Because of the history of the project, I think it brings up certain questions," Kelly said. "There are genuine concerns about the taxpayer investment and the ability to handle veterans' health issues."

The company is among subsidiaries of Cambridge, a real estate firm based in Vienna. One subsidiary, Childress Klein-Cambridge Healthcare Solutions of Naples, Fla., is building a \$150 million VA health care facility in Charlotte, scheduled to open in 2016, according to the company's website.

The VA on Aug. 9, 2013, canceled its lease with Westar. The VA Inspector General's Office became concerned that Westar misrepresented itself, claiming that it was veteran-owned when it's not, and that it may have had ties to a businessman sentenced on federal charges of racketeering, bribery and fraud unrelated to the Butler project.

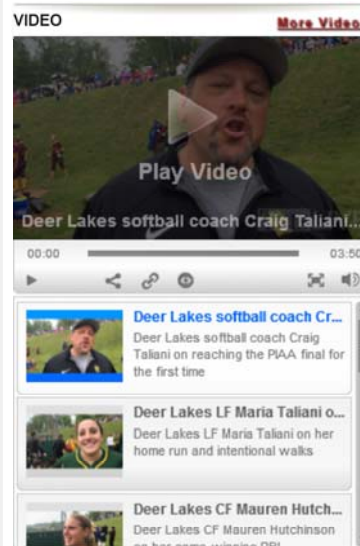
Westar officials denied any wrongdoing.

Cambridge proposed the North Duffy Road site when the VA sought bids in 2012 for the contract that eventually went to Westar, according to Center supervisors.

The site constitutes about 45 acres and is part of a farm owned by the Dale Herold family, said Andrew Erie, a Center commissioner. The Herold family did not return messages seeking comment.

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"It will bring a lot of jobs for Center Township. We have been hoping to get this project for a while. We have done a lot of work," Erie said.

township agreed to pay for and build turning lanes on th Duffy, Erie said. He did not give a cost. VA did not provide a start date for the project, though it in a statement that construction could take 31 months. facility will include primary care, specialty care, dental, lab, nology, radiology, mental health, ancillary and diagnostic ices, the VA said.

is is a milestone that renews VA's commitment to providing 1-quality medical services to our veterans and preserves our sence in the Butler community," said John Gennaro, VA ler Healthcare's director.

ile the new facility is being built, health care services will continue uninterrupted at the main campus and at outpatient clinics in Butler, Armstrong and surrounding counties, the VA said.

ff writer Rick Wills contributed to this report. Bill Vidonic is a staff writer for Trib Total Media. He can be shed at 412-380-5621 or bvidonic@tribweb.com.

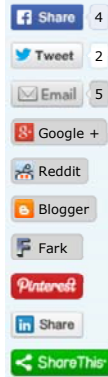
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Butler Health System was going to do this. But no. Instead they build a crappy kohls, ect with minimum wage jobs. Butler has it's head up its ass.
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Tammy Owens · Mars Area High School
ill never understand why veterans cant just go to regualr doctors like the rest of us. all they need is a veterans govt issued health insurance card and all doctors should be required to take them.
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Bob Shearer · Top Commenter
Millions were recently spent to renovate the current VA "facility" while at the same time reaching a sweetheart deal with a fraudulent contractor to build a new structure. VA Butler currently prohibits their primary care physicians from performing any procedure that involves a cut of any kind. Even a procedure as simple as lancing a boil cannot be performed. Time limits are imposed upon primary care physicians as to the amount of time spent with patients. Butler even has a police chief who has never worked a day as a police officer. The VA doesn't need new hospitals it just needs flushed of career bureaucrats. There is no point in building new hospitals when conditions for staff are such that they will not work in them.
Reply · Like · January 3 at 6:13am

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