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Broward hospital commissioner a no-show

BY AMY SHERMAN

The governor appoints commissioners to hospital districts in Broward to oversee tens of millions of taxpayer dollars that go toward taking care of the poor, but one commissioner hasn't shown up at a single regular board meeting in almost two years.

Shane Strum last participated in a South Broward Hospital District board meeting in June 2007, and that was by telephone, according to meeting minutes. And he missed at least two meetings before that date, too -- the oldest listed on the district's website.

In January 2007, Strum was hired as deputy secretary by the Department of Management Services in Tallahassee. He was later appointed deputy chief of staff to Gov. Charlie Crist, his current job.

So why didn't Strum -- whose term expires in June -- simply resign his unpaid post in 2007 rather than be a regular no-show?

"The hospital board indicated to Mr. Strum there was no need for him to resign," wrote Crist spokesperson Erin Isaac in an e-mail Friday in response to questions. "He made himself available upon request to the CEO, CFO and others as needed. In the absence of applicants to the board, there was no immediate need to vacate the position."

Specifically, it was hospital district CEO Frank Sacco who told Strum he did not need to quit.

"He said, 'Do you want me to resign?' I said, 'That's your call.' I said as far as I'm concerned there is no need to resign if you are available when I need you," Sacco said.

Strum has been available by telephone when necessary, Sacco said. For example, he participated by telephone last year when a board committee needed to take action to refinance bonds, Sacco said.

Since the board generally acts in unison, "one vote is not going to make a difference," Sacco said.

Strum could not be reached for comment.

Commissioners, who generally meet once a month as a full board, oversee the district's budget and make decisions about the CEO's salary, hospital construction and other financial matters.

Republican Gov. Jeb Bush, appointed Strum, a Hallandale Beach resident, to the hospital district in 2001. He later served as chair of the board. Strum also served as the Broward County Republican Party chair in 2005 and 2006.

The current hospital district chair is Kevin Tynan, also a former county Republican party chair.

"He is in regular contact with our CEO," Tynan said. "I know when we've needed things he has done what he needed to do to help out. It would be nice to see more of him, I like him. I understand coming down for the monthly meeting is a bit of a challenge."

Commissioners oversee a more than \$1 billion budget for the district, which includes Memorial Hospital West in Pembroke Pines and Memorial Regional Hospital in Hollywood. There are no attendance requirements for commissioners, Isaac said.

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