

Greenville Hosp cash help vote is tonight

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The Jersey City City Council is set to vote tonight on a \$1.5 million stocking-stuffer for Greenville Hospital.

But it's not clear if the money is a gift or a loan.

According to the resolution, the money represents "a contribution to offset the costs of providing medical services to the Jersey City community . . . for a period of six months."

Jersey City Mayor Jerramiah Healy pledged the money last month at a state hearing that was considering an application by the hospital's parent company, LibertyHealth Systems Inc., to shut the 100-year-old hospital.

The goal is to keep the hospital afloat long enough to find a qualified health provider interested in buying it.

But at Monday's council caucus, City Council President Mariano Vega said he wants to make the \$1.5 million repayable to the city if the facility is sold within five years.

LibertyHealth has no interest in continuing to operate the facility because, according to officials, the hospital loses nearly \$4 million a year, 85 percent of local residents already use other hospitals, and the same services are available at LibertyHealth's Jersey City Medical Center, roughly two miles away.

Vega said his intention is to protect "taxpayer dollars" and he's spoken to Healy, who supports his caveat.

Ward F Councilwoman Viola Richardson and others at the meeting said they've met with state Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Joseph V. Doria Jr., who oversees the state Local Finance Board, which has to sign off on any monetary arrangement between the city and Greenville Hospital.

Doria, the former mayor of Bayonne, said he's willing to approve any deal that mimics the agreement between Bayonne and the debt-ridden Bayonne Medical Center, they said.

Bayonne Medical Center has received \$6 million from the city of Bayonne, which is expected to help tide it over until the sale of the hospital is complete next month.

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