

# NuHealth gets chairman

Curran chooses longtime health care executive

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Nassau County Executive Laura Curran named longtime health care executive Robert Detor on Thursday to succeed George Tsunis as chairman of the public benefit corporation that runs Nassau University Medical Center, turning to an industry veteran to help steer the struggling institution out of political and fiscal strife that was on full display during a meeting on the eve of his tenure.

Detor, 72, of Port Washington, who starts Friday morning, then watched Thursday evening as hospital board members took significant actions hours before he was to start his position and meet with senior hospital leaders.

Detor arrives more than three weeks after Tsunis announced his abrupt departure as chairman of NuHealth, which runs NUMC and the A. Holly Patterson Extended Care Facility in Uniondale.

NuHealth trustees, in a raucous meeting marked by angry employees and union leaders worried about downsizing, voted to install chief medical officer Anthony Boutin as interim chief executive and president for 18 months, effective immediately, while a national search for a permanent successor is conducted.

Board member Warren Zysman introduced the motion that appeared to catch hospital officials by surprise. Tsunis accused Zysman of frequent absences at board meetings — a no-show for the past 14 months, he charged — while Zysman did not say how long it had been since he attended a meeting and accused Tsunis of changing meeting times at the last-minute. Zysman said “we have not had a stable CEO” and called the position a “revolving seat.”

Tsunis and board member Ryan Cronin opposed the measure and another resolution that put on hold nearly two dozen statements of works and a strategic plan with Manhas-

set-based Northwell Health, effectively dealing a blow to a nine-month collaboration with the state’s largest health system that county and hospital officials had last year heralded as key to righting NUMC’s fiscal problems. Board member Linda Reed introduced the proposal, saying the agreement has caused her significant concern.

The board also approved issuing a request for proposals to hire a firm to perform a search for a new chief executive.

Earlier Thursday, Detor said finding an interim chief executive and president was his top priority. The board resolutions Thursday night angered officials in the county executive’s office.

Christine Geed, a spokeswoman for Curran, said in a statement: “Tonight’s action by the NUMC Board of Directors, including a member who has not shown up for a meeting in many months, was all for show. The incoming Chairman is a highly respected and experienced health care professional. The board’s actions were disrespectful to him, and show that for the majority of this board, politics are more important than providing quality services to residents who rely on Nassau’s only safety net hospital.”

Earlier Thursday, Detor laid out his vision for NUMC in an interview with Newsday, saying the hospital provides “a critical service that has to continue, and so we have to figure out how do we continue it, how do we make it financially sustainable for the future?”

“We want to make sure it continues to serve the community,” Curran said of NUMC, Nassau’s only public hospital, in an interview with Newsday. Tsunis also was serving as NUMC interim president and chief executive because the position had been vacant. His last day is Friday.

Detor is chief executive of the Huntington-based Advanced Health Network Inc., an association representing behavioral health providers.

A social worker by training with experience in the field of mental health and substance abuse treatment, Detor also served as president and chief executive of The Long Island Home, which operates South Oaks Hospital and Broadlawn Manor Nursing & Rehab Center, both in Amityville.



Robert Detor with Nassau County Executive Laura Curran. ■ Video: newsday.com/li

Detor said health care is transitioning to ambulatory settings, referring to patient care outside of the hospital.

“The ability to decamp patients from the hospital, or to avert from the hospital, actually has financial benefits to the hospital,” Detor said.

Asked about union concerns, Detor said before the meeting: “I know they’re concerned about what’s going on.”

“Right now there’s more money going out than coming in, that’s basically the problem,” Detor said.

NUMC relies on millions of dollars in federal and state funding for its annual operating budget of roughly \$600 million. NuHealth’s 2018 operating deficit was \$46.6 million, compared with \$25.7 million in 2017.

In June, an audit of NuHealth’s 2018 financial statements included a “going concern” note from consulting firm Grant Thornton. The auditors wrote that federal, local and state aid were scheduled to end or be cut back, prompting “substantial doubt about [NuHealth’s] ability to continue as a going concern.”

Addressing NUMC’s future, Detor said it will always need help from private and public partners as a hospital that treats many uninsured and low-income patients.

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