

Juan Luis Hospital Reports Increased Surgery Rates and Staff Recruitment Efforts in Recent Meeting

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Ambulance at JFL North By. JFL

ST. CROIX — Despite not having a quorum and thus not being able to move and pass motions, an informational meeting of the Juan F. Luis Hospital Governing Board still convened on Thursday, focusing on hearing from JFL CEO Douglas Koch.

Koch began by acknowledging the success of the End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) program, which he said has maintained a high level of quality care while serving near its maximum capacity of 42 patients despite current staffing challenges.

The JFL CEO also spoke about the hospital's focus on recruitment efforts, especially in nursing. He said JFL has successfully recruited new nursing staff, averting potential service interruptions

after the Pafford contract ended on May 11. Despite the achievement, Koch told the governing board that JFL still needs to recruit and retain additional permanent staff. In the interim, the facility has signed a new contract with Pafford, securing the services of several healthcare professionals, including 12 registered nurses who began work on Wednesday.

Following the move to JFL North, the new temporary hospital, Koch noted that about 100 surgeries had been completed in the first month, compared with an average of between 60 and 70 per month in the hospital's old location. He provided board members with updates on timelines, transition plans, and services. Despite some challenges, according to the CEO things are proceeding as expected. "By and large, we are delivering babies, we're doing surgery, we are taking care of patients, our emergency room is full," he said.

The meeting also shed light on the hospital's efforts to improve billing, collection rates, denial management, and documentation to ensure operational efficiency, given their payer mix is predominantly Medicare, Medicaid, and self-pay, which results in low margins.

Recent celebrations of Nurses Week and Hospital Week were well appreciated by the staff, said Koch. "We did a barbecue, we did an ice cream truck, we did a nurses' breakfast and dinner with the CEO – breakfast actually. We gave away free JFL t-shirts and polo shirts and we had other activities planned for them," he told board members.

Based on feedback received, Koch said the hospital will figure out how to make this kind of engagement a regular thing. "We will work as a team to see how we can continue to reward and think and appreciate our teams on an ongoing basis."

Koch reported a proactive engagement schedule with the community, with activities such as an open house, teddy bear clinic, and a reading session for children with Senator Marise James in the hospital lobby. Furthermore, a [revamped website](#) and regular social media posts have also resulted in improved community engagement, he said.

Before concluding, Koch emphasized that the hospital was actively preparing for the upcoming hurricane season and the ongoing upgrade of the facility's electronic medical records.

The next meeting for the district board is scheduled for Thursday, July 27 at 5 pm.