



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Health Service Regulation

Pat McCrory  
Governor

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Secretary DHHS

Mark Payne  
Assistant Secretary for Audit and  
Health Service Regulation

May 20, 2016

Bill Rich, County Manager  
County of Hyde  
PO Box 188  
Swan Quarter, North Carolina 27885

**No Review**

**Record #:** 1944  
**Business Name:** Hyde County  
**Business #:** 2399  
**Project Description:** Permit existing hospice home care offices to provide services on Ocracoke Island  
**County:** Hyde

Dear Mr. Rich:

The Healthcare Planning and Certificate of Need Section, Division of Health Service Regulation (Agency) received your letter of May 12, 2016 regarding the above referenced proposal. Based on the CON law **in effect on the date of this response to your request**, the proposal described in your correspondence is not governed by, and therefore, does not currently require a certificate of need. However, please note that if the CON law is subsequently amended such that the above referenced proposal would require a certificate of need, this determination does not authorize you to proceed to develop the above referenced proposal when the new law becomes effective.

However, you need to contact the Agency's Acute and Home Care Licensure and Certification Section, DHSR to determine if they have any requirements for development of the proposed project.

It should be noted that this determination is binding only for the facts represented in your correspondence. Consequently, if changes are made in the project or in the facts provided in your correspondence referenced above, a new determination as to whether a certificate of need is required would need to be made by this office. Changes in a project include, but are not limited to: (1) increases in the capital cost; (2) acquisition of medical equipment not included in the



**Healthcare Planning and Certificate of Need Section**

[www.ncdhhs.gov](http://www.ncdhhs.gov)

Telephone: 919-855-3873 • Fax: 919-715-4413

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Mailing Address: 2704 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2704

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original cost estimate; (3) modifications in the design of the project; (4) change in location; and (5) any increase in the number of square feet to be constructed.

Please contact this office if you have any questions. Also, in all future correspondence you should reference the Facility ID # (FID) if the facility is licensed.

Sincerely,

  
Jane Rhoe-Jones  
Project Analyst

  
Martha J. Frisone,  
Assistant Chief, Certificate of Need

cc: Acute and Home Care Licensure and Certification Section, DHSR  
Kelli Fisk, Program Assistant, Healthcare Planning, DHSR

# COUNTY OF HYDE

## Board of Commissioners

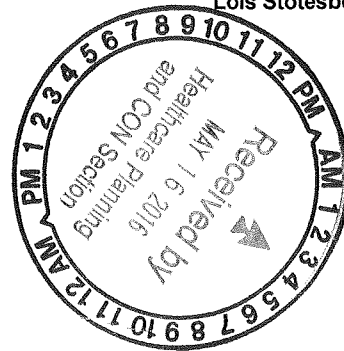
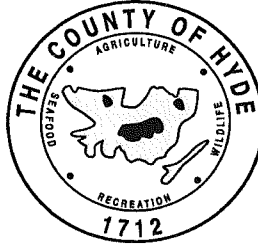
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County Manager

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County Attorney

Lois Stotesberry, CMC, NCCCC  
Clerk to the Board



May 12, 2016

Martha Frisone  
NC Department of Health & Human Services CON Section  
2704 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-2704

Dear Ms. Frisone:

This letter is in reference to hospice services for Ocracoke Island located within Hyde County. Earlier this year, CURO made a corporate decision to shut its offices in Hyde County. While hospice services on the mainland of Hyde County were outsourced to Amedysis, it is our understanding that Amedysis must obtain a modification to their existing certificate of need in order to serve Ocracoke Island.

Ocracoke Island is an unincorporated town located within Hyde County, North Carolina. With a population of 948, the island is supported by the tourism industry and booms with activity during spring, summer and fall. While most people only visit, there are a handful of citizens that reside year round. Many of the residents of the island are multi-generational with roots tied back to the island like the roots of the live oaks that have called Ocracoke home for decades.

Hyde County is a Tier One, economically distressed county that serves Ocracoke Island, providing the island with public safety and other needs. The size, population, and geographical challenges represented by the island necessitate unique solutions to many common needs. Ocracoke residents are, if not anything, adaptable to the changing tides, adverse weather and unique situations that exist.

Local residents of Ocracoke often rely on the Ocracoke/Hatteras ferry route (60 minute one-way transit) to reach Dare County for basics like groceries, health care and prescription drugs. This is a chore; while not common to the general population of most North Carolina towns, it is common to the good folks of Ocracoke. Residents also frequent the Ocracoke/Swan Quarter ferry (2 hour and 40 minute one-way transit) to reach the county seat of Swan Quarter for doing local business including, but not limited to, paying taxes, registering property and visiting the Health Department or Social Services. Yet again, this is not common for most citizens, but is routine for the people of Ocracoke.

These inconveniences have made the people of Ocracoke and the Hyde County government resilient in the face of adversity and dependent on creative ways to serve the needs of the people. Until recently, CURO Homecare and Hospice served the people of Ocracoke by offering residents hospice services in their homes during the last days of their lives. CURO nurses gladly braved the ferry rides and often adverse conditions to serve the good folks that patiently waited for these much needed services. CURO closed the doors of their Hyde County location, stopped serving Ocracoke Island, and left the residents of the island with no hospice care. This has been devastating to the residents of Ocracoke, particularly the people and their families that are currently in need of hospice services.

Imagine a young couple with parents, grandparents, and great grandparents that called Ocracoke home. Each generation of their families resided along Howard Street, worked in the fishing industry or maintained local shops and relied on the goodness of their close knit communities. They sent their children to the small school, joined civic organizations for the good of their community, and attended local church services each Sunday. Now imagine this young couple ages, draws to the end of their lives and find themselves in need of hospice services. To ask that couple to leave their homes, friends, and other family members in the last days of their lives after adapting to and living happily on the island for their lifetimes is not an option. The people of Ocracoke deserve better.

As alluded to the above, life on Ocracoke is by far not cookie cutter in design. The people that live there often must adapt to meet their daily and long-term needs and that adaptation is gladly embraced and has been mastered. Hospice nurses often travel the ferries to see their patients, which is not what one would consider a normal commute but is necessary in this case. The NC DOT ferry service is very responsive to the needs of the people of the island and has worked tirelessly to serve them.

Ocracoke is easily reached by the two ferries that have made numerous concessions to suit the needs of the residents. Ferries run continually and priority is given to healthcare providers and residents. In the event of an emergency outside of the normal ferry schedule, the ferry system keeps an emergency ferry at the Ocracoke/Hatteras ferry terminal. In the time it takes EMS staff to access and load a patient for transport, the ferry can be staffed and mobilized with engines primed and lines ready to be untied as the ambulance pulls into the ferry terminal. In the event of an emergency that requires a quicker transport, various helicopter services are available and commonly utilized. Vidant air flight, Nightingale, Dare County EMS, and the US Coast Guard all serve the island's emergency air lift needs efficiently.

Twiford Funeral Home of Dare County serves Ocracoke in the unfortunate circumstance of death. There is a full-time physician at the Ocracoke Medical Center who can pronounce a death and this is usually done after consultation with Hyde County EMS. Hyde County offers paramedic level services to Ocracoke. Body storage was previously in a cold storage locker at the Ocracoke Medical facility until it was recently decommissioned. Hyde County EMS is now storing bodies in a secondary ambulance with the internal temperature held to an appropriate level until the funeral home arrives. The arrival of the funeral home is typically no more than a 6 to 8 hour wait. Hyde County is currently examining options for purchase of a cold storage locker to more efficiently meet these needs in the long-term.

During a hurricane, Hyde County Emergency Management is able and responsively working to ensure our most vulnerable populations including hospice patients are well cared for and transported off the island if necessary. Ocracoke residents travel to the Hatteras Island pharmacy for their prescription drug needs. Again, while not conventional, it is a system that has worked for generations. With cooperation of the pharmacy, the ferry service, physicians, nurses, EMS staff, patients and their families, all obstacles can be overcome.

It is with great sincerity that Hyde County asks the State of North Carolina to allow hospice services to be delivered to Ocracoke Island. This action will allow good people and long-time residents of Ocracoke to remain in the comfort of their own homes surrounded by family and friends during the last days of their lives as it should be. Please remember the young couple described earlier and realize this couple is now old and gray and in the last days of their lives. When CURO suspended services to the island, this couple did not leave. They merely adapted as always. Hyde County has done what they can by coordinating with the island physician. The families do what they can to provide their loved ones comfort. However, this couple and their families deserve hospice services and anything less is unacceptable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bill Rich". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and "R".

Bill Rich  
County Manager

cc: Paula Vincon, CURO  
Joe & Henri McClees