



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie to Albany: Let Us Be Heard on St. Lawrence Psych's Future

PATTY RITCHIE May 6, 2013

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Senator Objects to 2-hour “Listening” Limit; Urges Community Turnout

State Senator Patty Ritchie is urging Albany officials to extend next week’s “listening session” on the future of St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center in order to give North Country community members more time to express their support for the facility, the only full-service mental health facility north of the Thruway, which employs over 500 local residents.

In a letter sent to the state’s acting mental health commissioner, Senator Ritchie objected to a two-hour time limit for next week’s “listening session,” to be held at the facility’s Unity Center on Wednesday, May 15, from 10 am to noon, when similar sessions were allotted more time.

“With more than 100 local residents already signed up to attend, I am concerned that the compressed time frame won’t be sufficient to allow state officials to fully gauge the community’s support for the St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center,” Senator Ritchie said.

The Ogdensburg listening session is the last of 12 being held across the state to collect the public’s comments on a plan that could result in consolidation and reduced services at some of the state’s mental health facilities.

With the exception of Ogdensburg’s, all of the sessions are scheduled to stretch at least 2-1/2 hours. The Orangeburg, Binghamton, Rochester, Buffalo, Long Island and New York City visits were each three hours. And the Office of Mental Health scheduled two sessions in each Albany and Syracuse.

Senator Ritchie also said she was concerned that holding the Ogdensburg session in the middle of the workday might suppress public turnout. Sessions in some other communities were held after regular working hours.

The Senator has been working with the local community leaders to try to increase public awareness of the event. Toward that end, she convened a meeting last week in her office to strategize on ways to boost participation.

Senator Ritchie urged community members to attend, and [pre-register online by clicking this link](#).

A copy of Senator Ritchie’s [letter to the commissioner can be found by clicking here](#).