

Committee proposal would save Hot Springs VA center, focus on PTSD



July 01, 2012 5:30 am • [Kevin Woster Journal staff](#)

The Save the VA Committee on Saturday unveiled a plan to preserve the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs medical facility in Hot Springs, placing particular emphasis on expanding post-traumatic stress disorder treatment there.

The ambitious plan would incorporate education and job training for veterans, along with PTSD treatment at an aging domiciliary that would be improved and developed into a national demonstration project.

It also would include the creation of a “Veterans Industries” company that would establish a product line for production and sale, with profits to be split between the VA for treatment costs and community development projects in Hot Springs.

It hasn’t been determined yet what the product or products would be.

“We would use the wonderful reputation — a national reputation, really — that the Hot Springs facility already has on PTSD and related illnesses,” committee volunteer Rich Gross said Friday in offering a preview of the Saturday evening presentation in Hot Springs. “We decided to capitalize on that and build what we consider to be a national demonstration project in partnership with the VA.”

Committee members are offering their plan as a counter offer to a VA proposal announced in December that would close most of the health-care facility in Hot Springs and build a new PTSD center in Rapid City. That plan would maintain outpatient services in a new Hot Springs VA clinic and contract other services for veterans with private providers.

A new PTSD domiciliary and expanded outpatient clinic would be created in Rapid City under that original VA plan. VA officials have said they are open to suggestions to improve their plan.

It remains to be seen whether they are open to a wholesale replacement option, as the Save the VA committee seems to be offering.

Gross said the Save the VA Committee has presented the plan to VA health-care officials, as well as members of South Dakota's congressional delegation. He expects discussions on the alternative to begin soon.

The VA is ready for that conversation to begin, said Steve DiStasio, director of the VA Black Hills Health Care System. DiStasio said Friday that he was reading the report on the committee's plan and couldn't yet speak in specifics.

But he expects to organize a meeting in Rapid City within the next two weeks. Attendees would include the VA, the Save the VA Committee, congressional staffers from South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming, state military and veterans affairs officials and representatives from the Oglala and Rosebud tribes and veterans organizations.

"We'd like to take everything from our plan and put that on the table, take their plan and put them on the table and consider some other ideas, so that everybody sees everything," he said.

DiStasio said that by sometime in early August he will take what is now a proposal for the Black Hills system and turn it into a recommendation that will work its way up to VA officials in Washington, D.C. Officials there should make a decision by sometimes this fall, he said.

Meanwhile Gross and other committee members are going to argue that they have a better plan that will prove less expensive than the original VA proposal. The state's congressional delegation members say it deserves a close look.

"The Save the VA group put a lot of time and effort into their proposal, and I will do everything I can to ensure it receives fair consideration from the VA," Sen. Tim Johnson, D-S.D., said.

"Over the next several weeks, the VA, along with representatives from the community and congressional offices, will engage in a thorough evaluation of the proposal, including financial analysis," Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., said.

"It is clear the members of the committee put their hearts and souls into this counterproposal and I look forward to learning how it is received by the VA," Republican Rep. Kristi Noem said.

Moving forward

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http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/committee-proposal-would-save-hot-springs-va-center-focus-on/article_9e053d39-64f9-5fc0-9766-43660d122ddd.html

Keep up the fight, Hot Springs

July 02, 2012 11:45 pm • [Guest Editorial by U.S. Representative Kristi Noem](#)

The Hot Springs community has been an inspiration to many, including myself, during the fight to keep the VA hospital open since the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) first circulated its proposal in December. The number one concern that has surfaced time and time again is ‘what is best for our veterans?’ Keeping veterans and their care the number one priority is a testimony to how this community has wrapped its arms around our heroes.

Earlier this year, the Hot Springs VA was officially designated a National Treasure, but it is more than that. It supports the livelihoods of hundreds of families. More than 300 people are employed there, and flower shops, coffee shops and hardware stores in Hot Springs rely on the business of these employees and their families. More significant than the economic impact, however, are the services the VA facility provides to thousands of veterans annually.

I have to hand it to the Hot Springs community, because residents haven’t stopped being noisy from the second the proposal was released. The Save the VA Committee wasted no time getting in touch with my office. I’ve visited Hot Springs twice this year, and both times I’ve been overwhelmed by the community support for this facility and the veterans it serves.

I’m grateful I could help pressure the VA to provide answers and finally produce a cost-benefit analysis. Getting answers is a relief, but much more work remains. The community has submitted its counterproposal, and I have been assured by the VA that they will work closely with the community on it.

As this process continues, I encourage folks in the Hot Springs community to keep fighting. It was the residents, not any elected official that compelled the VA to provide answers, and the commitment of the Hot Springs community is inspiring.

I will continue to listen to the veterans and residents in Hot Springs as I work with the VA to ensure its process is transparent and collaborative as we move forward. The most important part of this discussion is our veterans. They sacrificed so much for our country and deserve the very best care.

I commend the doctors, nurses and other employees at the Hot Springs facility for their dedicated care of our veterans, and encourage folks to continue reaching out to me with questions or suggestions on how I can better serve in this matter.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/keep-up-the-fight-hot-springs/article_50c39e44-c466-11e1-b5c3-001a4bcf887a.html

Save the VA proposal touts national demonstration model



July 02, 2012 9:31 am • [By Curt Nettinga](#)

Committees' work revealed at Saturday meeting

HOT SPRINGS - The Save the VA campaign revealed its much-awaited proposal to a near capacity crowd at the Mueller Civic Center last Saturday night, as spokesman Rich Gross made a presentation interrupted often with spontaneous applause from those in attendance.

The 42-page proposal touches on what was begun by the Dec. 2011 proposal from VA Black Hills Health Care Systems director Steve DiStasio, to close the Medical Center at the Hot Springs VA and begin the process of moving the Substance Abuse and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) therapies from Hot Springs to a yet-to-be-constructed building in Rapid City.

The proposal by the Save the VA group focuses on the expansion of the PTSD program at the Hot Springs campus to one that seeks veterans from not only the local service area, but throughout the nation. The program would intermesh with a unique business approach to training its participants, preparing them for life after their treatment ends and offering a unique national demonstration model upon which other VAs in rural areas could model themselves.

“We as the Save the VA created the proposal that would put the Hot Springs VA out in front, building on the top-notch reputation for PTSD treatment that exists and growing it into a program that can treat our deserving veterans while creating a opportunity for education and community partnership,” said Executive Committee spokesman Rich Gross.

“We’re very excited to present this proposal.”

The bones of the proposal revolves around the creation of two distinct entities.

First, a not-for-profit Hot Springs Community Partnership Corporation, to create, oversee and manage the second entity, a new company established in the proposal with the placeholder name

“Veterans Industries,” in partnership with the City of Hot Springs, Fall River County and the VA.

The new seven-member corporation board of directors will be tasked to create a business plan, establish a product line and hire management staff for the Veterans Industries, in addition to securing commercial space for the company. Veterans would receive training in a field of operation – sales, production, marketing, accounting, etc. – for the new company and would become its employees. As those veterans receive additional training, they could be trained to move into management positions.

Gross said that work has begun to secure the services of several successful business people to serve on the board.

As the business becomes profitable, the majority of the company’s post-expenses revenue, 75 percent, would go to the VA to offset treatment and other costs, with 25 percent flowing to the corporation for community development such as a revolving loan fund and economic development.

The Save the VA group proposal touts the program as a national demonstration project, showing how a partnership between the VA and the local community can have a positive impact for both. At the same time, the group feels that having such a program could show that providing this type of service in a rural area such as Hot Springs could ultimately result in a cost savings.

The proposal calls for renovations of the existing domiciliary in Hot Springs, increasing capacity from 100 to 200 residents, with primary focus being on veterans in the regional area, then nationally, as the success of the treatment program continues.

“We are especially interested, with our large Native American population, to see if traditional native healing rituals and remedies could be incorporated into the treatment program,” Gross said.

The group requests a minimum of five years for the treatment project, citing a doubt on statistics provided by the VA concerning in-patient services. A five-year service plan would allow new data to be gathered.

With the increased patient base, the proposal also outlines how medical services – which it states have been methodically removed over a period of 20 years – would be replaced to accommodate the additional veterans expected in the program.

Additional bed spaces for Substance Abuse Residential Treatment, after-care treatment, Compensated Work Therapy and Care Management Team, as well as care for PTSD and women’s veterans, would require substantial renovations.

In addition, the proposal calls for four state-of-the-art classrooms, complete with Smart Boards, to provide educational opportunities for veterans, VA employees and community members, through partnerships with Western Dakota Tech, Oglala Lakota College, Black Hills State

University and Chadron State College. Offering college courses in addition to the Compensated Work Therapy programs will be a bonus to the program according to the proposal.

The cost of renovations to the domiciliary, including the installation of bridges and tunnels to maximize handicap accessibility, upgrades to windows and insulation and the boilers, as well as to medical residences to house short-term family stays is estimated in the proposal at \$26,247,000.

Factoring the renovation costs, and an annual maintenance cost of \$8.89 per square foot based on the average for the past 15 years, the 30-year life cycle cost for the Hot Springs facility is estimated to be \$144 million, slightly less than the \$148 million cited in the VA's financial analysis of its own proposal, in early June.

"We're very comfortable with our numbers," Gross said. "Most of the calculations were based on numbers from the VA. That's one of the reasons we are rolling this out on June 30 instead of two months ago – we were waiting for numbers from the VA so that we could compare apples to apples."

Proposal is out....now what?

Proposal is out....now what?

HOT SPRINGS – The rollout of the Save the VA group's proposal marks the end of one race and signals the beginning of another.

But what happens now?

Black Hills Health Care System's director Steve DiStasio said that he is glad to have a chance to go through the Save the VA's proposal.

"I believe that we will be scheduling a meeting as early in July as we can," DiStasio said, "to sit down with the Save the VA group, legislative representatives and others who may have other proposals and see what we can put into a plan to send up to Washington, D.C."

Save the VA spokesman Rich Gross said that planning for a joint meeting with all parties is underway and he is enthused about the support the group has received from state and national legislators.

"We will discuss our proposal with VA officials at the VISN 23 (Veterans Integrated Service Network) level," Gross said. VISN 23 oversees the Black Hills Health Care System.

"From there it will go one of three ways," he added. "Either we reach an agreement to move forward with our proposal and we take it to General Shinseki (Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki). Second, we can agree and disagree on parts and work from there; or we will figure out that we are talking apples and oranges with nothing on which to agree."

Gross said that regardless of how the meeting goes, it is the intention of the Save the VA group to take its proposal to Washington and deliver it to Sec. Shinseki. “We want to hand it to him and tell him why we believe this is the best way to proceed to restore treatment to veterans in Hot Springs.”

Gross added that he has been assured that when that Washington trip takes place, the state’s Congressional delegation will be in attendance when the proposal is delivered, along with members of state government, including both the governor and lieutenant governor.

“We greatly appreciate the support we have received from our elected officials,” he said.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/save-the-va-proposal-touts-national-demonstration-model/article_20083360-c45b-11e1-b615-001a4bcf887a.html

SD Labor Throws Support Behind Hot Springs VA Hospital

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. - The U.S. Veterans Administration has proposed closing its medical facility in Hot Springs, South Dakota, after a decade of slowly moving services out of the area. In response, the "Save the VA" committee has organized, working to keep and expand veterans' services in southwest South Dakota.

Mark Anderson, president of South Dakota AFL-CIO, says they are joining with the committee in wanting to see the services continue at that VA hospital.

"We have a lot of members that work there, so it's important for the jobs, not only for the members but for the community. And it's also important for the people that are veterans that can use that facility."

The "Save the VA" committee has highlighted a plan that would expand services, especially to treat soldiers with PTSD, and alcohol and substance abuse problems. Anderson says the facility and area seem to be ideal for that type of treatment.

"It's important for at least four places: the community; the members that work there; the outlying veterans that are on the reservations, and in different small towns around. There's a lot of facilities that spend a lot of money on making a peaceful, calming, healing environment, and that stuff is all there in Hot Springs naturally. So I think it's important that they update it, expand it, and keep that facility open."

The State of South Dakota is also spending about \$25 million to rebuild the State Veterans Home, which is near the VA facility in Hot Springs.

<http://www.publicnewsservice.org/index.php?/content/article/27301-1>

Opinion - Dave Batchelor

July 09, 2012 11:45 pm

To the Editor:

I express my appreciation and say a personal thank you to everyone who was involved in the proposal that was produced by the Save the VA Committee. The proposal contains a well-thought-out, cost-effective solution for addressing the needs of our veterans.

I fully support the approach that has been developed and I have increased optimism that we will prevail in addressing the current and ever-increasing needs of those veterans who have given so much and deserve no less than the best we have to offer in their support. Seeing the community come together as it has in this case and produce such a high quality solution makes me proud to say I live here.

I hope we can use this experience as a model to continue to address projects that will make Hot Springs an even better place to live.

Dave Batchelor

Hot Springs

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/opinion---dave-batchelor/article_31662acc-c9e7-11e1-8479-0019bb2963f4.html

Save the VA meets with BHHCS to discuss the group's proposal

July 16, 2012 11:45 pm • [By Curt Nettinga](#)

RAPID CITY - With the first of what may prove to be several meetings now behind them, Rich Gross of the the Save the VA Campaign's Executive Committee said he was encouraged by the tenor of the discussion.

"I was very encouraged," Gross said following Thursday's meeting in Rapid City, "both by the kinds of questions that we were being asked (about the Save the VA proposal) and by the interest that everyone seemed to be showing in the proposal."

He said that in addition to representatives from the Save the VA group and the (VA) Black Hills Health Care System (BHHCS), Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN), director Janet Murphy and other VISN representatives were also in attendance.

The veterans service organizations were represented and the three congressional offices had sent aides as well.

He said that the day was spent sharing information on the Save the VA proposal and answering questions raised by BHHCS and VISN representatives.

"We appreciated the open dialog that we had and we were encouraged by the interest that was shown in our proposal," Gross said. "We have several meetings to go and we are continuing the dialog and look to come to a resolution."

Another meeting is scheduled in Rapid City for Thursday.

Gross said that he expects that the meetings will continue to be smaller as details are hashed out.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/save-the-va-meets-with-bhhcs-to-discuss-the-group/article_dfbf324e-cf82-11e1-8a1e-0019bb2963f4.html

FORUM: VA plan model for nation

July 17, 2012 6:30 am • Don De Vries, mayor of Hot Springs and member of the Save the VA Committee. He is a member of the Journal Media Company Editorial Advisory Board.

Last December the local Veterans Administration (VA) announced their plan involving veterans' health care in the Hot Springs region, including parts of Nebraska and Wyoming. Part of this plan was to close the entire VA facility in Hot Springs, to create a Community Based Outreach Clinic, and to purchase health services from other health care providers in the region.

Since then, the community of Hot Springs has worked together through the Save the VA committee on a proposal to improve and expand our veterans' health care. The Save the VA committee is concerned this proposed change in veteran care may continue nationwide, and lead to less than satisfactory health care for all veterans. With this concern for veterans' care, we began our quest for a better solution than closing the Hot Springs facility.

Our multi-faceted alternate proposal released in late June presents a new and unique approach to the VA and many veteran's care. We proposed a national demonstration project, which could be used throughout the VA system.

There are numerous goals of the project, including:

- To provide higher education and employment opportunities for veterans in and after the treatment programs;
- To create a viable and sustainable for-profit industry (tentatively named Veterans Industries) for the Compensated Work Therapy Program;
- To serve as a national center for research on PTSD and substance abuse routine treatment as well as traditional Native American healing activities effectiveness, in partnership with the VA national medical research facilities;
- And to demonstrate that the services and ventures of this community partnership demonstration project are viable at the Hot Springs facility and other VA healthcare facilities.

One of the most unique parts of our proposal is the for-profit venture (Veterans Industries). The operation of this corporation will create profits through the production and sale of a specific product. We are proposing that 75 percent of the profit from this corporation go back to the local VA to help reduce the cost of veterans health care. The other 25 percent of the profit will be returned to the local community for economic development, perhaps revolving loans, etc.

Providing veterans with this work program after the initial treatment program will be a benefit in job training and confidence building. This will assist veterans returning to the workforce, or possibly in establishing their own business ventures in the future.

The success of Veterans Industries will not be measured solely by the bottom line profit or loss. The evaluation must also include the success of enabling the return of the veteran into society as a contributor, able to maintain an economic livelihood for himself and his family into the future. Overall, however, the products produced by Veterans Industries must be profitable, to accomplish one of the main goals of the project, which is to reduce the taxpayer cost of veteran rehabilitation and care.

We know our proposal is not perfect, and we will welcome suggestions from the VA concerning any improvements to our plan. We think it is time communities and the citizens of this great country help finance veteran health care in a new way instead of just paying taxes.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/opinion/forum-va-plan-model-for-nation/article_79b3cee1-4599-57e7-8ff2-701577c56e48.html

documentary

Filmmaker documents Save the VA Campaign



July 16, 2012 11:45 pm • [By Brett Nachtigall](#)

HOT SPRINGS – The announcement by the Department of Veterans Affairs last December to close the Hot Springs VA created a sense of unity within the community of Hot Springs, likely never seen before.

Immediately following the VA's announced plan, hundreds of community members came together to form committees, organize rallies and begin work to create a counterproposal to ensure the Hot Springs VA would continue to serve veterans in what has commonly been known as "The Veterans Town" for more than a century.

A key player in this united effort is 2007 Hot Springs High School graduate Justin Gausman, who is currently working on producing a full-length documentary about how his hometown has united to protect and save its 105-year-old VA Hospital.

Gausman first became involved with the Save the VA Campaign as a member of the Public Relations Committee after moving back to Hot Springs from Rapid City this past winter. Some of his early contributions to the effort were his creation of the campaign's official Facebook page and subsequent documenting and filming of the "Veterans Welcome Home Ride" held on Feb. 25.

He said the idea for creating a full-length documentary of the town's fight came about during an early PR Committee meeting when local writer Mary Goulet spoke of writing a book featuring testimonials from veterans who had been treated at the Hot Springs VA. Gausman said Goulet immediately supported his idea to also create a similar-based documentary.

Gausman, with the assistance of local photographer and videographer John Davis, began working on the film late this past winter, during the “Vets Ride” in February by producing segments that have already been shown publicly at various Save the VA events and on-line through YouTube.

Karen Meston, another active member of the Save the VA Campaign, said Gausman’s work thus far on the campaign has been instrumental in bringing the message to the masses.

“Justin’s documenting of the Save the VA efforts has been really beneficial to those people who have not been able to attend many of the events we have hosted,” she said. “His work on Facebook and through YouTube makes it available to so many more people. He has been a great to work with – when he says he is going to do something, he does it. He understands the mission, and that it’s all about The Veteran.”

Despite the importance of all his work to date, Gausman said his previously filmed segments represent only the beginning of what he has planned for his full-length documentary.

“I want to be able to capture the emotion of the community and the veterans that have been treated at the VA – the anger and the joy,” Gausman said. “It’s about how a community has come together; against all odds.”

“We’ve accomplished something here that you won’t find anywhere, including Washington D.C.,” he said. “People are working together on this now who before hadn’t even wanted to talk to one another.”

While he said he plans to take an objective look at the VA’s proposal, and that of the campaign’s counter-proposal, there’s no denying the sense of pride he feels for what his hometown of Hot Springs has accomplished thus far during the process.

“The town is up against a VA director who seemingly has made up his mind,” he added. “But I am going to look at this objectively. They came up with a plan that they thought would help our veterans. But it doesn’t. We have a better way.”

As Gausman has discovered, the production of a full-length documentary is no small task, and the funds to accomplish such an undertaking are vast.

This is why he has enrolled his film project with the website indiegogo.com, which according to the site itself, is “a crowdfunding platform where people who want to raise money can create fundraising campaigns to tell their story and get the word out.”

Much like the similar-based website Kickstarter.com, which recently assisted another local filmmaker Skye Ogilvie with her film ‘Drifter’, the website indiegogo.com matches up donors with worthwhile causes in a near endless list of categories from film, health, music, education and more.

Gausman has set a modest campaign goal of \$15,000, which he says is really a shoestring budget for what is needed to produce, film and edit a quality documentary. But he is determined to make it a reality, regardless of how much is raised.

“I have been working on this documentary for nearly eight months now and have invested hundreds of hours and dollars into it,” he said. “But I need a real kickstart so I can execute my ideas properly, which include travelling to areas in which others VA’s have closed, such as Grand Island, Neb., and Miles City, Mont., to get the stories from veterans and former staff impacted by those closures.”

Gausman said he is currently using a borrowed camera, so in addition to funds for travel, he also needs to upgrade and acquire equipment to complete the project.

Just a few days into his www.indiegogo.com/theveteranstown campaign last week, the website had helped Gausman raise \$135 towards his goal.

The campaign is set to conclude on Aug. 7 so there is still plenty of time for those interested in supporting the film to log-on and contribute what they can to his efforts.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/filmmaker-documents-save-the-va-campaign/article_a9c9f51e-cf7f-11e1-b1c8-0019bb2963f4.html

Progress Reached in Hot Springs VA Meeting

Posted on [July 18, 2012](#)

In last week's meeting between supporters of the Save the VA group and the Department of Veterans Affairs in Rapid City, AFGE Local 1539 president Patrick Russell said that there was "some progress reached" in the continuing fight to save the VA healthcare facility in Hot Springs, S.D. The VA proposed to shut down the facility and replace it in Rapid City, S.D., which would threaten the economy of Hot Springs and the surrounding area as well as create unnecessary hardships for veterans.

Just the first over a series of planned meetings and dialogue between these groups, the discussion looked at the proposed solution offered by the Veterans Town. That proposal was released on June 30 and calls for the VA facility to stay where it is and expand treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. The talks also gauged how much consensus there is on having the facility stand as a national demonstration project to other VA facilities in rural areas across the country.

"There was agreement from the veterans' service organizations and congressional staffers in attendance, and the VA seems to be slowly coming around," Russell said.

The talks will continue tomorrow, July 19, in Rapid City.

To learn more about Save the VA and get updates on the campaign, visit www.theveterantown.com and www.twitter.com/afgenational.

<http://savetheva.wordpress.com/2012/07/18/progress-reached-in-hot-springs-va-meeting/>

Let your voices be heard

July 23, 2012 11:45 pm • [Guest Editorial By Tom Brown](#)

Fellow citizens of Fall River County: We all know we may be facing a disaster. What is less well-known is that the situation is not hopeless. We have one means to avoid it, and that means is a powerful one.

Everything comes down to what we citizens say to our elected officials and how many of us say it.

Folks in the same positions as those who rescued the Ellsworth Air Base can save our VA, but they must be thoroughly convinced of the validity of their position to do so. That is what this sermon is all about.

The simple act of writing a letter en masse seems surprisingly difficult to accomplish. People procrastinate. I introduced the topic to a group of friends recently and only one - actually, it was his wife - had sent a letter to our representatives. Four others, this writer included, hurried to explain that they would do so shortly; another said he had no intention of writing anything because, falling back on the cliché, "it was just politics." The final member of the group thought it would be unseemly because of his position on a Save the VA committee.

Then there are folks who are intimidated because they have no means of printing a letter. Not to worry. A seasoned congressman once told me, only partly in jest, "The letter that would have the greatest impact in my office would be written in long hand with a couple misspellings and signed by a woman in a union." I don't know about the misspellings, but you get the point.

In deciding what to write, I recommend considering the issue from the standpoint of the addressee. Why is the Save the VA plan the best use of the taxpayers' money?

The financial analysis compiled by the VA is a slick professional job and what it says is very convincing. Its weaknesses are in what it doesn't say. The Capital Cost Analysis, for example, lists six alternative plans for constructions deemed necessary. The alternative for renovating the existing DOM in Hot Springs and its Outpatient Clinic comes to almost \$110 million more than building a brand new DOM and Specialty Outpatient Clinic in Rapid City. Sound reasonable?

Obviously, a comprehensive study to validate the various VA cost schedules would be a major undertaking. Save the VA has compiled its own 30-year estimate in which Hot Springs comes out ahead by \$49 million. Senator Thune is quoted as saying his office would perform its own study. Let's hope it's a thorough one.

My own letter - yes, I finally did write one - refers to statements entitled "Significant Stresses" found in the VA's full proposal. The age of the Hot Springs complex is mentioned twice. My letter, when it is read, will be done so in an annex to an old stone government building considerably older than the one in Hot Springs.

Also on the National Register, like the Hot Springs VA, the U.S. Capitol building still seems adequate for its purpose.

The 112-page Save the VA proposal presents a number of visionary programs, summarized in their attractive brochure, which might be carried out in Hot Springs by a re-programmed facility. Several take advantage of the town's small size and its quality of life.

In contrast, the VA Financial Analysis displays impressive photos of new DOMs in Pittsburgh, Pa., and Waterloo, Iowa. Well.

Pittsburgh's crime rate, according to inf.com, stands at 90 percent, meaning only 10 percent of U.S. cities are more dangerous to live in. Waterloo is two percent safer, but Rapid City is right up there at 90 percent.

Hot Springs is listed by a different website at a mere 22 percent.

VA vets in HS have always been citizens of the community, familiar people on the streets, and welcome to participate in community affairs. Much of the activity is within walking distance of the DOM. Safe walking distance.

Our Senator's and Representatives' contact information is available at the Hot Springs Public Library – 745-3151, or, if you're into irony, at Rapid's library; phone 394 4171.

Tom Brown grew up in Hot Springs, where his great-grandfather, RD Jennings, was the first manager of the VA. Many family members, including both his parents also worked at the facility.

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/local/communities/hot-springs/let-your-voices-be-heard/article_55948ed0-d4e5-11e1-8626-001a4bcf887a.html