

[<< Back](#)

## State Mental Health Commish cancels meeting with Tusc. officials

Posted: Feb 17, 2012 6:53 PM CST

Updated: Feb 17, 2012 6:55 PM CST

By Kelvin Reynolds - [bio](#) | [email](#)

TUSCALOOSA, AL (WBRC) - We don't know if State Mental Health Commissioner Zelia Baugh is scared of large crowds. But it apparently played a role in her decision to skip a planned meeting with Tuscaloosa-area officials. She drove there from Montgomery and turned around went back to the capital after learning more people than originally thought would be there.



Officials gather after learning that Baugh had canceled their meeting.

"Certainly giving her the benefit of doubt that she had good reason to cancel on us," said State Sen. Gerald Allen.

He and about a dozen others gathered at Tuscaloosa City Hall to meet with Baugh at 2 p.m. this afternoon. A half hour before that, staff alerted Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox that Baugh wasn't coming. He told Fox6 News on Wednesday that she agreed to come to Tuscaloosa and talk about downsizing the Department of Mental Health.

Her plan calls for closing all state run mental health facilities except Bryce Hospital and the Stark Geriatric Psychiatry Center by the end of September. Both are in Tuscaloosa. The new Bryce Hospital currently under construction would instead house court committed criminal patients currently at Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility. Taylor Hardin would close and Bryce could go under the control of the Department of Corrections. The 473 patients currently in Bryce would be placed in community group homes.

Apparently Baugh thought only Mayor Maddox and about four others would be at the meeting. When she learned as many as a dozen people, including several members of Tuscaloosa's legislative delegation would be there she cancelled the meeting.

"It wouldn't be productive with such a large group," Tony Thompson, Baugh's executive assistant, said.

The decision left many disappointed including State Representative Chris England.

"To not come and meet with the local delegation to make us aware of the plans and we're going to be impacted the most," England. "The potential DOC facility here and now the only forensic facility in the state of Alabama will affect that level of trust."

It's unclear if or when a new meeting will be scheduled.

*Copyright 2012 WBRC. All rights reserved.*



**Get a Hassel Free Price Quote!**  
It's Fast and Easy

(888) 706-7545 • 630 Fieldstown Rd. Gardendale, AL



