



Eileen Donoghue  
*City Manager*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor John Leahy and Members of the City Council  
**FROM:** Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *ED*  
**DATE:** January 14, 2019  
**SUBJECT:** Lowell General Hospital

On December 10, 2019, I provided the City Council with a report regarding Lowell General Hospital's future plans as they relate to the Saints Campus based on information conveyed by President and CEO Jody White during a meeting on December 2. This information was provided in response to a motion filed by Councilor Kennedy and passed by the City Council on November 11, 2019.

The attached letter from Mr. White and the additional notice prepared by Barrett & Singal on behalf of Lowell General Hospital provide further details on the Hospital's strategic plan and forthcoming changes, including the consolidation of services amongst its campuses.

My office will remain in contact with Lowell General Hospital as these anticipated changes and will keep the City Council informed of pertinent developments.



December 27, 2019

City Manager Eileen Donoghue  
Lowell City Hall  
375 Merrimack Street  
Lowell, MA 01852

Dear City Manager Donoghue,

I appreciated the opportunity to meet with you earlier this month to provide an update on Lowell General Hospital's strategic plans and some upcoming changes as we work to ensure we are best positioned to meet the evolving healthcare needs of our community. Thank you for your comprehensive report at the December 10, 2019 City Council meeting. As you know, these planned changes include the current intensive care unit at the Saints campus and temporary surgical consolidation at the main campus and the Lowell General Hospital Surgery Center at Research Place in North Chelmsford. I am providing this letter to summarize these changes and the broader strategic context we discussed.

At Lowell General Hospital, we are continually evaluating our programs and services in order to position our organization for sustained success. As the area's leading hospital and the city of Lowell's largest employer, we must ensure that we are investing in the areas that best support the current and future needs of our patients, providers, and employees. The reason for the changes is we must also proactively respond to industry trends and regional declines in volume for these services, which is even more pronounced in the summer months. The overall decline is both a regional and hospital industry-wide trend which is occurring because insurers and consumer preferences to care access have been redirected to outpatient settings.

### **Consolidation of Critical Care Services**

During the summer months, we traditionally see lower inpatient volumes and continued to experience reduced demand for Intensive Care Unit (ICU) services in general, but particularly at our Saints campus. In response, based on those volumes, we temporarily closed the Saints campus ICU beds and redistributed staff to our two main campus ICUs. The acuity of the patients cared for at the Saints campus ICU has been consistently lower than that of patients receiving care at the recently constructed main campus Gil and Marilyn Campbell ICU. Therefore, during the summer months, staff were reallocated to the main campus ICUs. All of our highly skilled ICU staff were offered positions to remain on our team.

Since that time, we have successfully implemented many processes to manage the care of our critical care patients, including transfer procedures, dedicated rapid response nurse and inbound coordinator roles, and other activities. Over the course of the past few years, we have also conducted a comprehensive evaluation of our services and determined that we have sufficient space with 23 ICU beds at the main campus to meet our patients' needs in the two Intensive Care Units there based on

current and projected volumes. Following the successful temporary closure over the summer, we have elected to keep those beds closed.

### **Surgical Services Changes**

As we noted, we are also experiencing year over year declines in surgical volumes, as payer and consumer preferences have shifted surgeries to outpatient settings. With those declines in mind, we conducted a comprehensive evaluation of our surgical services to determine how best to meet the needs of our surgical patients and their families, our surgical providers, and our staff. Following this evaluation, we have made the decision to consolidate our surgical services to two locations – our Lowell General main campus and the Surgery Center at Lowell General Chelmsford and temporarily close the Operating Room at the Saints campus as we evaluate and finalize our strategy for outpatient surgical services at the Lowell General Surgery Center. We have notified the Department of Public Health (DPH) of our intention to temporarily close the operating rooms at the Saints Campus for a period of 6 months (see attached communication to DPH for reference). All of our highly skilled OR staff will remain on our team to continue to meet the needs of our surgical patients.

We are confident that these consolidations will allow us to meet our goal of providing a consistent, high-quality experience for our patients, while dedicating our resources in the most appropriate way possible based on expected critical care and surgical volume in the short- and long-term.

### **Continued Commitment to the Lowell General Hospital Saints Campus**

Understanding these changes may raise questions, we want to reassure our patients, community, staff and physicians that we remain committed to the Lowell General Hospital Saints campus as a vital component of our health system. In fact, we are in the midst of a multi-year planning process for the expansion of the Emergency Department (ED) to provide a better experience for the 40,000 members of our community who visit our ED at the Saints campus each year, while also renovating the first floor to improve our vital diagnostic services at that campus. These efforts follow the significant improvements we have made over the past several years to the Saints campus inpatient units and technology infrastructure.

We are committed and will be working hard to make this transition as smooth as possible. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions or concerns. We appreciate your support as we make these changes and will ensure that we are doing our very best to meet the needs of our patients and their families, as well as our employees and great community of providers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. White". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Joseph A. White  
President and CEO  
Circle Health and Lowell General Hospital

December 27, 2019

BARRETT  
& SINGAL

Via Email and FedEx

Stephen Davis, Licensure Unit Manager  
Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification  
Department of Public Health  
67 Forest Street  
Marlborough, MA 01752

Re: Lowell General Hospital – Saints Campus – Temporary Closure of ICU & Temporary Closure of Operating Rooms

Dear Mr. Davis:

This letter is submitted on behalf of The Lowell General Hospital, which operates a licensed hospital with two (2) campuses, consisting of a main campus at 295 Varnum Avenue, Lowell, MA 01854, which is known as “Lowell General Hospital,” and a second campus three miles away known as “Lowell General Hospital – Saints Campus” at One Hospital Drive, Lowell, MA, 01852 (collectively, the “Hospital”). Pursuant to 105 CMR 130.122, the Hospital hereby informs the Department of Public Health (“Department”) that on or about January 27, 2020, it intends to submit a formal ninety-day (90) notice of the proposed temporary discontinuation of 17 Intensive Care Unit (“ICU”) beds at its Saints Campus and the temporary discontinuation of all of the Operating Rooms (“ORs”) at Saints Campus, which ORs are mixed use. Of the 17 licensed ICU beds, only 10 have been operational. The use of only 10 beds dates back to the time before the Hospital acquired Saints Campus from Saints Medical Center, which occurred in 2012. The Hospital is confident in its decision to temporarily close these services, as they are underutilized. For example, use of the Saints ICU was only twenty-nine percent (29%) of its capacity over the last year, and LGH as a total used only 55% of its ICU beds. Use of the ORs at Saints Campus represented only twelve percent (12%) of OR usage between both Hospital campuses. To ensure patient safety, the Hospital is prepared to provide Advanced Life Support and Critical Care ambulance transfers from the Saints Campus to the main campus, which is less than ten (10) minutes away.

The Hospital anticipates that the ICU beds would be taken offline for a period of time while the Hospital evaluates its bed utilization and capacity needs at Saints Campus. The Hospital would then reactivate the beds at a later date. Thus, in only temporarily taking the beds and ORs offline pursuant to 105 CMR 130.122(A), the Hospital is hereby preserving its right to operate the ICU beds in the future and, accordingly, reactivation will not require any Determination of Need (“DoN”) review or approval. Likewise, the Hospital is temporarily taking the ORs offline while it plans surgery cases at Saints Campus. It intends to reactivate the ORs thereafter.

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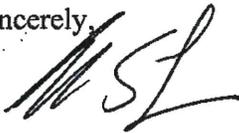
Stephen Davis, Licensure Unit Manager  
Division of Health Care Facility Licensure and Certification  
Department of Public Health  
December 27, 2019  
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BARRETT  
& SINGAL

Please note that in compliance with the Department's regulations, the Hospital through separate correspondence is sending notice today to the Hospital's patient and family council, each staff member of the Hospital, and every labor organization that represents the Hospital's workforce during the period of the essential services closure process. Notice is also being sent today to the members of the General Court who represent the City of Lowell, the Mayor of the City of Lowell, and the Lowell City Manager. The Hospital has already begun to discuss the proposed temporary closures with City officials, State representatives, and the Lowell Sun Editorial Review Board to keep the community informed of this process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Andrew S. Levine

cc: A. Ferrer, Esq.  
K. Haynes, Esq. DPH  
S. Lohnes, Esq., DPH  
W. Mackie, Esq. DPH  
Z. Redmond, Esq.  
R. Rodman, Esq., DPH

Hon. Thomas Golden, Jr. (Rep. 16<sup>th</sup> Middlesex)  
Hon. David Nangle (Rep. 17<sup>th</sup> Middlesex)  
Hon. Rady Mom (Rep. 18<sup>th</sup> Middlesex)  
Hon. Edward J. Kennedy (Sen. 1<sup>st</sup> Middlesex)

Hon. William Samaras, City of Lowell, Mayor  
Eileen Donoghue, City of Lowell, City Manager