

**ALLEGANY COUNTY BOARD OF LEGISLATORS
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

September 22, 2022

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Philip G. Stockin called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Philip Stockin.

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: G. Barnes, J. Burdick, P. Curran, K. Demick, D. Fanton, G. Hanchett, S. Havey, D.M. Healy, J. Ricci, J. Ricketts-Swales, D. Root, P. Stockin (Absent: A. Cyr, B. Harris, J. Rumfelt)

OTHERS PRESENT: T. Boyde, A. Carrow, S. Decker, J. Helms (*UR-Jones Memorial Hospital*), K. Hooker, C. Knapp, S. Mauro (*Alfred State College, arrived at 10:58 a.m.*), B. Riehle, T. Ross

UR Medicine - Jones Memorial Hospital

UR Medicine - Jones Memorial Hospital CEO Jim Helms addressed the group regarding the hospital's strategic plan for expansion and improvement to healthcare services, including a \$25 million multi-year project. Mr. Helms presented slides of an expansion project that is currently underway. The first slide showed a new parking lot that will add approximately 140 new parking spaces. One of the largest parts of the renovation includes adding 14,600 square feet of clinic space for area physicians. Mr. Helms remarked on how additions done in 1993 were wisely planned by prior hospital leaders to allow for future expansion; the 1993 expansion was designed to allow for additional space to be built on top of it. Mr. Helms said the new space will allow area healthcare providers (Obstetrics, Pediatrics, etc.) to be able to work out of space in the hospital. This will permit physicians to be able to respond to emergency situations much more quickly and save a great deal of time they would normally spend traveling between their office and the hospital. Mr. Helms used the example of an emergency cesarean section and how a couple of minutes time can make a huge difference in the outcome. In addition to saving providers travel time, this new space will free up office space for additional healthcare providers. Mr. Helms noted that they've been able to recruit new providers and will continue to look at some of the underserved areas of the County in hopes of providing better care to people in those communities. He shared plans and pictures for the new MRI tower. He said, this is going to change the way we deliver healthcare in Allegany County. The tower will include new state of the art equipment and will reduce the trips area residents need to make to Buffalo and Rochester for diagnostic services. Currently, the hospital uses a trailer to house the MRI equipment and the images provided aren't always adequate. A new sleep lab is also in the works. Mr. Helms stated that the third floor currently holds specialty services such as cardiology and urology. Cardiology

services are available five days per week, and they want to bring additional cardiology services to the County. The project includes construction of a shell for additional expansion in the future. Renovations to 4,600 square feet of operating room space is also included in the project. Mr. Helms demonstrated a diagram of the plans for that space. The renovations will expand the number of ORs available. Mr. Helms expressed his enthusiasm for the project saying the process began four years ago when he and former CEO Eva Benedict submitted an application for the grant. It took two years for the grant to be approved. Mr. Helms stated that this is a long-term project, and they continue to grow outpatient services. The cost of the project is \$25 million with \$17 million in funding being provided by a grant.

Legislator Healy asked what the MRI tower will provide. Mr. Helms stated that they are now integrated with all of UR and its affiliates. They will be able to transmit images to UR and those images will be read by specialists in Rochester. Legislator Hanchett remarked that this is very exciting as some of our seniors' biggest concerns are having to travel to Rochester for services. She is also glad to see that underserved areas are being considered. Mr. Helms stated that one of the primary reasons Jones Memorial Hospital decided to link with UR was to be able to keep services local. The goal is to keep people here as much as possible rather than sending patients to Rochester for procedures that can be managed here. Having the same IT systems at all of the UR locations also makes it easier for medical providers. Legislator Healy asked about orthopedic services. Mr. Helms stated they just recruited another orthopedic specialist to work with Dr. Axtell. Jones Memorial wants to be sure the services offered are complimentary rather than competing with other hospitals. Mr. Helms stated that they are anticipating an additional two dozen jobs. With each physician that's recruited, we can expect another 3 – 3.5 jobs. He went on to talk about the challenge of staffing the hospital. He remarked that if 25 Registered Nurses showed up on his doorstep, he would have jobs for every one of them. They currently have 54 open licensed positions available. They have been utilizing traveling nurses to fill the gaps and are trying to partner with local colleges and BOCES for recruitment. Legislator Healy asked for the cost per square foot of the project. Mr. Helms stated that cost varies; the renovations to the OR space is a much higher cost per square foot than other areas. Legislator Healy commended Mr. Helms and the hospital board for all that's being done to improve the hospital and expand services. Legislator Root asked if there are any plans for funding to expand services into underserved communities. Mr. Helms stated they have plans, but don't have all of the funding lined up yet. Ms. Root asked if the hospital received any ARPA funding for COVID. Mr. Helms said that the hospital did not receive any federal ARPA funding. Chairman Stockin thanked Mr. Helms for sharing information regarding the hospital and the project with the Board. He said it's wonderful to have these types of services down here.

(At 10:42 a.m. the Committee of the Whole took a recess and reconvened at 11:03 a.m.)

Alfred State College

Alfred State College President Dr. Steven Mauro introduced himself as the new president of the college and gave an update on Alfred State. There are currently 3,300 students enrolled and the college employs 600. The college specializes in hands on learning that leads to jobs. Dr. Mauro stated the college plays a prominent role in training and education and has gotten a head start in continuing education and training, not just degrees. He stated the college is also an economic player and partner, noting the employees and students the college brings to the area. The college considers itself an anchor partner in economic growth for the region, saying we can't be a successful institution without the success of the region at large. Dr. Mauro talked about enrollment saying they are currently at 3,300 students and have the potential for over 4,000 students. They are looking to increase enrollment to at least 3,700. They also want to focus on the recruitment and retention of employees. Success and wellbeing of our employees leads to the success of our students. They are working to invest and find ways to have a family community within Alfred State. The happiness of a spouse is equally important and it's important to find ways to keep everyone in the family happy. The college also wants to be sure it's paying fair wages. Dr. Mauro expressed the importance of collaboration and remarked on the economic development contract that Alfred State has with Allegany County.

Legislator Hanchett commented on connecting with college alumni and bringing people back. Dr. Mauro stated that a lot of Alfred students go away but they often come back. Our alumni talk about the college but also about the surrounding area. They have great memories of the area. Legislator Ricketts-Swales inquired about increasing the number of students admitted to the nursing program. Dr. Mauro said they have not reached the cap for that program. The challenge isn't increasing space for them, but getting people to come. Alfred State is affordable, but it still costs money. They are working with Jones Memorial CEO Jim Helms. Legislator Healy asked if Alfred State does any targeted outreach to veterans. Dr. Mauro said that they do, but they can do more. One area to grow is in adult education and our veterans are part of that group. The college has an interest in the adult population but family housing isn't available. Legislator Fanton asked if Alfred State had been working with Ljunstrom to fill the need for welders. Dr. Mauro stated that the college has the ability to expand in the trades programs. The welding and electrician programs have been expanded to help meet the needs of local businesses. Modifications have been made to the Wellsville campus to add classroom space. Legislator Fanton asked if electrical vehicle education had been added to the curriculum. Dr. Mauro stated that it's now integrated in the related programs. Legislator Curran asked if the agricultural program was still going strong. Dr. Mauro said that while it's a program that's been on the decline, we've started to think about ways of coupling programs together in order to make them more current. Family farms are becoming fewer and fewer, but agriculture is still a large part of our economy. The type of education has changed to better coincide with larger farms. Chairman Stockin asked about a project with their athletic facilities. Dr. Mauro mentioned that some sports have been added in order to help with recruitment. They made some modifications and improvements to the athletic facilities and have made constructing a field house a number

one priority. Legislator Root asked if the college mostly attracts local students or if they are bringing students in from other areas. Dr. Mauro stated that they've moved forward with a free application service. It seems trivial, but it can make a difference when money is tight. They have a campaign to advertise in-state tuition to out-of-state students. Legislator Barnes asked how many similar schools are in the SUNY system. Dr. Mauro stated that there are five colleges of technology. Legislator Ricketts-Swales remarked that the free application is huge. First generation students can find it difficult to get people to pay the college application fee. Dr. Mauro mentioned gap funding that is available and how sometimes it can be a matter of only a couple of hundred dollars help that keeps a student in college. Finance is a big barrier. Over 75 percent of Alfred State students are able to attend tuition free. Dr. Mauro invited the Legislators to come to campus and stated that he's very interested in any kind of collaborative opportunity.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 11:46 a.m. on a motion made by Legislator Havey, seconded by Legislator Fanton, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah M. Decker, Journal Clerk
Allegany County Board of Legislators