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SAMPLE INSIDE: A NEW PUBLICATION FOR SENIORS

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SERVING THE COMMUNITIES OF CENTRAL CONNECTICUT

Ukrainian unrest

Area churches react to violence in the old country

By SUSAN CORICA
STAFF WRITER

PLYMOUTH — Ukrainian-Americans in Connecticut are following the unrest in the old country closely.

They're talking about it when they come to church, said Rev. Paul Luniw, parish priest at St. Michael Ukrainian Byzantine Catholic Church in Terryville. "We've encouraged a lot of prayer and for people to help those less fortunate."

Ukraine has been a democratic republic since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. A wave of ongoing demonstrations and civil unrest, known as EuroMaidan (short for Europe and the main square of Kiev, where the protests are centered), began last November with public protests demanding closer integration with the European Union, with a violent response by police.

The scope of the protests then evolved into calls for the resignation of President Viktor Yanukovych, fueled by perception of widespread government

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Braving the cold

Mike Orazzi | Staff

Braving the latest cold snap, Theodor Sherman, 9, and his grandfather, Edwin Miller, spend some time at Page Park in Bristol Thursday afternoon.

Hospital sale is questioned

By JUSTIN MUZSYNSKI
STAFF WRITER

HARTFORD — State lawmakers grilled Bristol Hospital officials Thursday on a plan to sell the hospital to Tenet Healthcare Corp.

During a public informational session at the Legislative Office Building, lawmakers aired numerous concerns about the issue. One of the most prevalent was what impact making Bristol a for-profit hospital would have on the facility and the community it serves.

"Tenet is committed to maintaining locally governed healthcare and to that end has agreed that Bristol Hospital will establish a 10-member local hospital board of trustees comprised of five community leaders, four Bristol Hospital physicians and the current president and CEO," said Marie O'Brien, the hospital's chairman of the board.

A representative from Sharon Hospital, the state's only for-profit hospital, also addressed the oft-aired concern.

"The control is maintained at a local level," said Sharon Hospital President and CEO Kimberly Lumia. She also said Sharon's governing board is made up of mostly community members and physicians.

"Quality comes first," Lumia said. "Our

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Hospital reps questioned about plan to become for-profit

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patients come first."

Another topic discussed at length was some of the negative publicity Tenet has received of late. The federal government recently joined a whistle-blower lawsuit against the Dallas-based corporation that alleges Tenet, along with some of its hospitals, paid kickbacks to obstetric clinics that primarily serve undocumented Hispanic women in return for the clinics' referrals for labor and delivery at the five hospitals.

Kurt Barwis, president and CEO of Bristol Hospital and Health Care Group Inc., put the timeline of these allegations into perspective for the committee.

"When I look at Tenet and how far they've come it's amazing," said Barwis. "I don't see this as an issue. A lot of these occurrences happened under prior leadership. These settlements that keep coming up are things that happened in the past."

Other recent reports suggest that Tenet posted a $24 million net loss in the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2013.

"I can't speak to their finances," Barwis said after the meeting. "But what I can tell you is that having been in this business for 30 years you're going to have years like that. I've had years where I've made investments that really caused me to take a hit that year. But they were things that would make us more successful in the future."

"That can be attributed to transaction-related one-time expenses," said Trip Pilgrim, senior vice president of acquisition and development for Tenet Healthcare Corp., in an interview after the session. "If you look at our operating results the company has been doing fine."

State Rep. Christopher Wright of Bristol said after the meeting that he is undecided about his view on Tenet's acquisition.

"It's a tough situation," Wright said. "On one hand I'm worried about what might happen if Tenet takes Bristol Hospital over. On the other I'm worried about what might happen if they don't."

Wright said the ability of small, community-based non-profit hospitals to continue to exist is dwindling. He also addressed some of the stories reported regarding Tenet's financial situation and its involvement in the whistle-blower lawsuit.

"Of course these things worry me," Wright said. "But there's risk in everything you do."

In the end, he said, he will probably support the proposal. State Rep. Whit Betts, also a member of the Public Health Committee, said he was impressed with the work Bristol Hospital officials have done in considering every aspect of the proposed sale.

"I feel that this partnership offers the peace of mind for a financially sustainable future," Betts said.

The financial benefits of this acquisition for Bristol Hospital is something that has been discussed at length.

"Tenet's size and longevity give it access to significant capital resources and Tenet has committed to make significant capital investments to improve Bristol Hospital," O'Brien said before the committee.

"The other thing here that I think a lot of people are overlooking is the benefits this would have for the city in tax dollars," Betts said after the session. "You're talking about millions of dollars annually."

The committee also asked hospital executives to explain their rationale for choosing Vanguard Health Systems originally and sticking with it after it was acquired by Tenet.

"A lot of it was the cultural fit," O'Brien said, adding that the hospital conducted an intense 45-day period of visits and tours of Tenet-owned hospitals. This also included numerous conversations with those within Tenet. It mostly boiled down to one question, she said."Do they adhere to the same ideals that we do?"

Gov. Malloy says 'progress is being made'

By MICHAEL SCHROEDER
STAFF WRITER

Gov. Dannel Malloy says "progress is being made" on legislation related to the long-awaited sale of Bristol Hospital to Tenet Healthcare, although there is much work to be done.

The governor responded to questions about the hospital negotiations during a telephone conference call with editors of state newspapers Wednesday. The focus of the call was on the billion-dollar United Technologies expansion agreement announced the previous day.

Malloy recommitted to evaluating privatization of nonprofit hospitals based on how such a move would impact patient care, hospital employees and contributors to the hospitals involved, adding that evaluation and legislation on a case-by-case basis would likely be necessary.

He said he would be open to privatization if necessary, but his preference was for the hospitals "to remain in the same hands as they are now."

Bristol Hospital — along with the hospitals of Eastern Connecticut Health Network in Manchester — have purchase agreements pending with Tenet, which purchased Vanguard Healthcare, the originators of the acquisition.

He also said that although the purchase has been delayed, Tenet has yet to complete requirements to move forward.

Malloy vetoed legislation last year to allow for-profit healthcare companies to manage nonprofit foundations tied to their hospitals, which the for-profit groups say is necessary to make such arrangements viable.

Gov. Dannel Malloy

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March 14: Diabetes and Heart Disease
Betsy Kubacka, R.N., R.D., CD-N, M.S.N.

March 21: Speak Up for Your Health Care
Deborah Ferretti, M.S., APRN, ACHPN

March 28: Atrial Fibrillation
Joshua Rock, M.D., cardiologist

April 4: Women & Heart Disease
Heather Swales, M.D., director, Women's Heart Wellness Center

April 11: Be Heart Smart: What You Need to Know
Justin Lundbye, M.D., chief of Cardiology

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