

Easton backs county site for hospital

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EASTON —The Easton Town Council Monday approved a resolution supporting the Talbot County Council's proposed site for a new hospital on land adjacent to the Talbot County Community Center.

Officials from Shore Health System, which is part of the University of Maryland Medical System, have said construction of a new hospital is years away, but the planning process has begun.

In March, the Talbot County Council offered Shore Health System about 90 acres off of U.S. Route 50 next to the community center to use as the site of a future regional hospital. The site is adjacent to the town, and town council members have said annexation, which would allow a new hospital to more easily tie into Easton's water and sewer lines, is a possibility should Shore Health System accept the county's offer.

The town and county councils oppose the site in northern Talbot County at Routes 50 and 404 that also has been discussed.

Talbot Preservation Alliance has touted the county's proposed site in a series of presentations, including one last month before the town council.

TPA members said the site is about an equal distance from Trappe, St. Michaels, Preston and Denton and people from all of the surrounding communities could access it by multiple routes avoiding congestion on Route 50.

They also emphasized the economic impact, saying the site is near Easton's existing medical offices and businesses. The hospital will take well over \$200 million from the local economy with it if it leaves the Easton area, they said.

Resolution No. 5914, which formalizes what town council members have said multiple times during the last several months, reads as follows.

"Whereas, the University of Maryland Medical System ('UMMS') and Shore Health System, Inc. ('SHS') are engaged in a planning process to determine the location of a new regional medical center to serve Easton, Talbot County and surrounding counties. The Talbot County Council has offered a 90-acre site adjacent to the Talbot County Community Center, and associated public infrastructure, at no cost to UMMS/SHS. The Town of Easton will join in facilitating extension of governmental services to the property and to provide electric, natural gas, cable communications, water and sewer services to the property through the Easton Utilities Commission and has privately expressed its willingness to do so to both Talbot County and representatives of UMMS/SHS. The Town Council believes that a public affirmation of its position on this matter is appropriate.

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“The Town Council has also determined that a decision by UMMS/SHS not to locate the new medical center in Easton would have a devastating economic and quality of life impact on the Town of Easton and Talbot citizens who have generously supported the hospital throughout the one hundred years of its existence.

“ The Town Council also has determined that locating the new medical center at a site removed from the Town would require the wasteful and duplicative construction of water, sewer and power infrastructure facilities; complicate the provision of emergency management, fire and law enforcement services in an area that is presently undeveloped farmland; and would promote commercial and residential sprawl in violation of the principles of ‘Smart Growth’ as set forth in Maryland state law and policy.

“The site offered by the County adjacent to the Community Center is convenient to the population of the Mid-Shore area, is served by two State highways, provides ample space for the development over time of a medical facility, and is in close proximity to existing water, sewer, gas and electric facilities. It is an ideal location for a regional health facility.

“NOW, THEREFORE, THE TOWN OF EASTON HEREBY RESOLVES:

“Section 1. The Town Council fully supports the UMMS/SHS location of a new regional medical center at the site adjacent to the Talbot County Community Center and the Town shall continue to work in good faith with both State and County officials, UMMS/SHS and members of the public to accomplish this goal.

“Section 2. Section 3. This Resolution shall become effective upon passage by the Council and approval by the Mayor.”