



[/BUSINESS/LOCAL-BUSINESS](#)[/NEWS/LOCAL-NEWS](#)

# Citizens board members consider hospital expansion

By ALAYNA ALVAREZ - AALVAREZ@VICAD.COM

Aug 19, 2015

0



From patient admissions to nurse recruitment, trends are looking up for Citizens Medical Center, giving the hospital board confidence to consider a major expansion.

In July, the hospital received 643 admissions - the highest monthly figure this year.

To help with the steady rise in admissions as well as combat a severe nursing shortage, the hospital recently hired 21 registered nurses who will start work during the next two months.

The new hires bring an average of 13 years of experience and will come from Florida, Pennsylvania and Texas.

"These nurses will bring a different perspective. They've been other places, and they know how people do things," said Dr. Jeff Ackerman, the hospital's interim chief executive officer.

"Our goal is to open the surgical ICU with two beds as soon as they get trained," he said.

Ackerman updated board members on plans to expand Citizens' facilities. He said the emergency room currently does not have enough beds for patients.

"We have a facility that is outdated, too crowded and is not the best in terms of doing everything we need to do and having the safest environment," Ackerman said.

He also said there will be three new freestanding emergency rooms in Victoria along with DeTar Hospital Navarro's new ER expansion.

On the other hand, he said, only 20 percent of Citizens' patients come from the north side of town.

Ackerman said a higher percentage of Citizens' patients are uninsured compared to the number DeTar Hospital System encounters.

"We have a unique challenge, that we have all these people we have to take care of, and we're in cramped quarters," Ackerman said.

Hospital board member Dr. Tanya Seiler said the hospital also needs to consider the amount of business lost when patients wait for hours and leave without being treated.

Kevin Cullen, the hospital's attorney, said, "We really shouldn't have a patient waiting in our ER for eight hours, and if that

NEWSLETTERS

[See All Lists](#)

- ☐ News Updates with e-edition link  
Our daily email with major news stories and a link to our latest e-edition.
- ☐ Deals & Promotions  
This is an email list to receive occasional emails containing special offers, deals and promotions (like contests).
- ☐ Discover361 Events  
Do you want to know what's happening in the Crossroads region? This service sends you a weekly newsletter that will give you ideas for things to do!
- ☐ The Grid  
Our weekly Saturday email that takes you to The Grid, a recap of all the latest from Friday night football.

Enter email address

[Sign up](#)[Manage your lists](#)



means we lose some money to solve that problem, then maybe we just need to lose some money."

Board Chairman Donald Day said Citizens will be competing with state-of-the-art facilities with private patient rooms.

"Do we want to keep the curtains, or do we want to move forward?" he asked.

Board members at the meeting strongly endorsed the need for renovating and expanding the emergency room and intensive care unit.

They agreed to call a special meeting after seeking the guidance of local financial advisors and county commissioners.

Later in the meeting, the board approved an agreement with Victoria County to renovate offices at the Dr. Pattie Dodson Public Health Center. The county would save about \$100,000 by using the hospital's construction crew for the small project, which is estimated to take a couple of weeks, said Commissioner Gary Burns.

For the first time, physicians were given the option to take a satisfaction survey about working at Citizens Medical Center and how they think the hospital can improve. The survey was conducted in July and had 37 respondents.

Seiler said DeTar Healthcare System physicians are offered a survey every year.

Ackerman said he was pleased with the results because they indicated physicians noticed a positive change in the way the hospital is being run.

"We've made a dramatic turnaround," Ackerman said.

However, Ackerman said, there is still work to be done.

Citizens will contract with Craneware, a company that specializes in health care charges and Medicare reimbursements, to ensure the hospital is billing appropriately.

Citizens plans to compare its procedure prices to those of other hospitals in the state and local facilities.

"This is to get a better handle on pricing, since it hasn't been done in a while," Ackerman said.

Carolyn Zafereo, the chief accounting officer, discovered the hospital was under-billing, which affected the amount the hospital received in Medicare reimbursements.

Ackerman proposed adding a policy that would require board approval on expenses and contracts exceeding \$500,000, which was not in place under the previous administration.

This new policy would improve transparency and give the board more oversight of large purchases, Ackerman said.

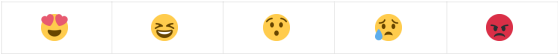
He also announced the HealthPlex CrossFit Center is expected to be complete by Sept. 30.

Day updated the board about the hospital's search for a new CEO. The search committee received 101 applicants and plans to narrow the field to eight candidates to interview via Skype on Sept. 2 and 3.

Committee members said they hope to bring in finalists for on-site interviews to meet hospital staff and the community in early October.



Day said he plans to draft a contract by mid-October if the board chooses a candidate.



Tags

Citizens\_medical\_centerJeff\_ackermanVictoria\_county\_hospitalNurse\_recruitmentCitizens\_healthplex

Thank you for Reading!

Please log in, or sign up for a new account and purchase a subscription to read or post comments.

Sign Up

Log In

To subscribe, [click here](#). Already a subscriber? [Click here](#).

