

LAW OFFICES  
**MICHAEL T. REAGAN**  
FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS BUILDING  
633 LA SALLE STREET  
SUITE 409  
OTTAWA, ILLINOIS 61350

TELEPHONE 815-434-1400  
FAX 815-434-2423

MICHAEL T. REAGAN

June 13, 2024

---

Ms. Debra Savage  
Chairwoman  
Illinois Health Facilities and Services Review Board  
525 W. Jefferson Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Springfield, IL 62761

Dear Ms. Savage:

Re: Project # 24-011 – OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center  
Project # 24-013 – OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center

Please accept this expression of my strong opposition to OSF's proposal to drastically reduce the scope and nature of medical services currently available at OSF St. Elizabeth Medical Center in Ottawa. I know that governmental decisions have to be firmly grounded upon concrete facts and evidence, and that the most powerful forms of persuasion are grounded upon such things. This Board has already been supplied with abundant factual detail documenting the lack of wisdom of OSF's proposal. As but one instance, the submission by Ms. Colleen Burns, MHSA, to the Federal Trade Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice robustly sets out the facts and tightly reasons against the health care propriety of OSF's plan. So, I will concentrate this discussion more on the larger community aspects of why OSF's proposal should be denied.

This Board's decisions, OSF's plans, and the actions of the City of Ottawa and its citizens all have to be forward-facing and made with recognition of the future of health care. My opposition, and the opposition of so many fellow citizens and local governments, is based upon those future realities. However, the future provision of health care in Ottawa must also be grounded upon the historical facts of the growth of this community and the robust hospital facility which OSF finds itself in possession of because of many decades of effort, and contributions of all kinds, from the people in this community and surrounding areas.

Generally speaking, OSF has done a successful job of administering the hospital in Ottawa. This is a community hospital in the truest sense of the word. Its long history is already well documented for you. The current strong status of the hospital has been created in part by the service, work, and contributions of thousands of people over many years. My father was president of the Board at a critical juncture in the life of the hospital, and my sister was also president at a later time. I served as attorney for the Board for a number of years, and my mother, an RN trained at Catholic

University, worked with many men and women to support the annual hospital auxiliary holiday bazaar. The significant funds generated by that bazaar were devoted towards large medical equipment items and other needs of the hospital. My mother-in-law volunteered in excess of 5,000 hours at the hospital's gift shop, the proceeds from which were used to meet the hospital's needs. Those actions are hardly unique. The community, the physicians and nurses, and the entire hospital staff has long pulled together to make the hospital the success that it is.

Decades ago, it was trendy in healthcare management circles to engage in what was then called "corporate reorganization," the purpose of which was to render the combination of hospitals, by sale or merger, to be accomplished smoothly by creating only a very small number of decisionmakers within the hospital management. To do that at the Community Hospital of Ottawa would have required eliminating the Board of the hospital as the decisionmakers. The community rose up and successfully opposed that effort. One expression then was that the hospital had to be prepared for "when the wolf was at the door." Now, however, the wolf is within the hospital and is attempting to assert sole control over the fate of the hospital without the slightest bit of community input.

OSF did not consult with any members of the City Council or anyone else in the community. Its plans were sprung upon the public essentially simultaneously with the filing of its 148-page-long "Application for Permit" with this Board. OSF's platitudinous vague public statement was only that "when the new hospital is built, it will be reimaged as levels and types of services offered are realigned throughout the I-80 corridor. Our intent across all our I-80 communities is to ensure current and future generations have access to care locally." It was only in subsequent days that it became known that the services provided by the hospital in Ottawa were to be gutted.

Among the numerous outrageous aspects of OSF's plan is that it requests your approval to remove essential services from a hospital which has been operating at a multimillion-dollar net profit for years and to transfer them to a hospital location which went completely dark in bankruptcy.

During the depths of the pandemic, and because of the complete closure of the Peru hospital, despite the yeoman and much appreciated efforts of the physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals in Ottawa, healthcare here was markedly thinly stretched. The general supposition was that that was because OSF was charitably attempting to also serve patients in the Peru area on a temporary basis. It was not known until March of 2024 that the current proposed massive reorganization, to the extreme detriment of Ottawa, was being secretly planned during that time.

OSF frequently incants its designs for the "I-80 Healthcare Corridor." That term has no practical meaning. It is a figment of the public relations department at OSF, intended to camouflage the reality of the destruction of successful healthcare in this area. If it has any meaning, it is only as a line item in OSF's business plan. A citizen who spoke at the Ottawa City Council public hearing spoke truth to power in saying that OSF's plan looks far more like "the I-39 healthcare corridor," rather than one based on I-80.

June 13, 2024

Page 3

If this deficient plan of OSF is permitted to proceed it is likely that patients here will pursue their own healthcare corridors: eastbound I-80 to a good hospital in Morris and then on up I-55 to the world-class facilities on that corridor, or up the Route 71 corridor to the western suburbs and the great offerings of, among other institutions, Northwestern Medicine in those areas.

This Board is respectfully but urgently asked to recognize that approval of OSF's current proposal would have profound adverse consequences, with impacts beyond even the direct provision of healthcare. Approval of OSF's plan would inescapably impede the continued growth and viability of this currently thriving city and its surrounding areas. The hospital which the community created has been part of its healthcare and general economic lifeblood for a very long time. OSF does not have the practical nor moral right to unilaterally and drastically reshape the provision of hospital services here.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael T. Reagan