

WCMH is down \$12M

Windham Hospital lost \$12M last fiscal year

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WILLIMANTIC — Windham Community Memorial Hospital has ended its most recent fiscal year with a deficit of approximately \$12 million, almost double the deficit of the previous year.

The hospital has had deficits for several years in a row. The hospital's fiscal year closed on Sept. 30.

Hartford HealthCare Director of Service Line Communications Shawn Mawhiney said the hospital is looking at a deficit of approximately \$12 million.

He said there are no plans to reduce services or layoff employees at this time.

Windham Hospital's deficit for the previous fiscal year was approximately \$5.6 million.

Mawhiney said there are five key initiatives to enhance and improve access that are “under (**Windham Hospital, Page 4**)

(Continued from Page 1)

development right now,” but did not provide detail about those initiatives.

“We're just trying to grow in key areas and improve access for patient services,” he said.

An announcement about the hospital's plans to revitalize Windham Hospital is expected to be made today, though it was after press time late this morning.

He said those plans will aim to improve and enhance services at Windham Hospital, as well as “potentially address the financial situation.”

Mawhiney said he was not aware of any “major” cost-cutting initiatives at this time.

“We're always looking at ways to be more efficient,” he said. “That's a constant thing. That's not just Windham Hospital, but all hospitals are looking to do that.”

The deficit comes as Windham Hospital unions are in the midst of contract negotiations with hospital officials.

Contracts with the two hospital unions expired Sept. 30.

Members of those two unions will conduct an informational picketing session beginning at 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 19 at Windham Hospital.

Windham Hospital union officials weighed in on the deficit in a recent e-mailed statement.

“Our community hospital may not have had the highest operating margin in the state before Hartford HealthCare took over, but it was in the black,” said Windham Community Memorial Hospital Employees United, AFT Local 5099, President Heidi Kolle, a patient access services associate.

“Since then, their executives have allowed Windham to bleed money, all while rewarding themselves with millions in bonuses and incentives. Over the past year, they’ve made matters worse by decreasing services, which in turn, has decreased the number of patients we can serve.

“That’s not only driven down Windham’s operating margin, it’s left our community without access to the vital acute care they need and deserve.”

Leigh Johnson, president of AFT Local 5041, the nurses union, also weighed in on the news in the e-mailed statement.

“For Hartford HealthCare to claim a negative operating margin for Windham Hospital while (The William W.) Backus (Hospital) posted the highest in the entire state is more than a little misleading,” she said.

“Not only does the network own and operate both facilities, but they consider us both part of the same ‘Eastern Region.’ The reality is that we have a single network providing the resources needed for quality care in some communities while taking it away from others.

“ It makes us wonder if the network’s objective all along was to siphon away our services and patients to their other facilities, at the expense of Windham. Network executives should be more concerned about the repercussions of their scheme to slash vital services in Windham than which of their properties is making them the most profits.”

Mawhiney said in an e-mail that Backus had one of the best operating margins in the state “long before it affiliated with Hartford HealthCare.”

“Being part of Hartford HealthCare has helped Windham, not hurt it,” he wrote.