

Administrators about to close up integration of hospitals

By CHRIS CHAPMAN
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OLEAN, N.Y. — “We are on the home stretch,” Olean General Hospital President and Chief Executive Officer Timothy J. Finan said.

“We are in the last 100 yards of this marathon and are anxiously awaiting the start date. We are ready for it.”

Administrators at Olean General Hospital and Bradford (Pa.) Regional Medical Center are just about to close in on an integration that will bring the two facilities together under one figurative roof. Final details are expected to be completed along with full integration under the umbrella of parent company Upper Allegheny Health Systems by Oct. 31, Finan said.

Since October 2008, when Finan and other hospital officials declared their

intent to merge the two facilities, several behind-the-scenes actions have been moving forward to complete the process.

“The application to establish the is moving rapidly through the New York and Pennsylvania regulatory approval processes,” he said. “In Pennsylvania, the process is pretty much complete. In New York state, we have one final meeting on Sept. 11 with the Public Health Commission.”

Once that meeting is over, Finan expects to have approval for the integration, pending filing of the certificates of incorporation.

The hospitals will remain two sepa-



FINAN

rate entities, but will coexist under the banner of Upper Allegheny Health Systems, Finan said.

However, there will be no noticeable impact to patients.

“It will be pretty much business as usual for the patients,” Finan said. “Hopefully, in time, they will see programs and services that aren’t provided now.”

The affiliation will have a positive effect that will benefit patients, he said.

“One of the expected results is that each hospital will be stronger, and better able to recruit doctors as well as deliver services,” Finan said.

The two hospitals, though under the same system, will be able to operate as individual entities through the establishment of mirror boards, Finan said.

“The members of the Olean General

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board will be the same as the members of the Upper Allegheny board, and the members of the Bradford board will be the same as the members of the Upper Allegheny board," he said. "Ergo, the boards will be the same."

For the larger system to be able to operate the two hospitals as closely as possible and still allow them to remain individual, several areas of governance, authorities and responsibilities had to be ceded to Upper Allegheny, Finan said.

The parent company will have the authority to appoint a chief executive officer, approve board members, approve operating budgets, and direct business and marketing plans for the facilities, just to name a few things, Finan said.

In addition, consolidation of the finance department, information technologies, human resources and hospital quality will be handled by Upper Allegheny, Finan said.

"The reason for the integration is to ensure both communities have vibrant, strong community hospitals for years to come," Finan said. "First, we can provide quality care to those we can serve. Secondarily, we can remain responsible employers. Many people in the Olean-Bradford area depend on the hospitals for good jobs.

"It is not the intention to have one hospital dominate over the other," he continued. "That's just not going to happen."

As news of the integration has come out, Finan said he has been contacted by other facilities, looking for plans and rationale.

"The integration has generated a lot of interest," he said. "We have had a lot of requests from other hospitals to explain what the rationale was and what's going on. We have kind of shared our thinking. Right now, we are starting with two hospitals. We hope, in time, there will be three or four, but for right now the focus is on Bradford and Olean."

As the date gets closer, and the plan to integrate the two health-care facilities under one company gets closer to becoming a reality, Finan said it has been a long, but rewarding, process.

"I am very, very excited about the potential that Upper Allegheny holds for the two member hospitals and the whole community," he said.