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Madison County residents rally for hospital

The Madison County Herald

About 50 Madison County residents rallied Tuesday in Canton's downtown square in support of HMA's Madison River Oaks location that will open in fall 2011, but the meeting ended with a call to action against St. Dominic's plans.

"The state's plan clearly states that Madison County can only support one hospital," said Linda Dunigan, a longtime nurse at the HMA facility currently known as Madison County Medical Center. "A proposal for a new hospital will surely threaten Madison River Oaks."

Dunigan, who chairs Friends of Madison River Oaks, as well as other speakers including MCMC CEO Davis Richards, stressed that Madison River Oaks is designed to serve the entire county as well as Yazoo, Holmes and Leake counties.

Madison plans to rally supporters of the planned St. Dominic hospital on Monday at 6 p.m. at the Madison Square Center for the Arts.

"We want everyone who supports this hospital to be there," said Steve Vassallo, the city's economic development adviser. "We want to show the hearing officer there is overwhelming support for the hospital here. "This has really turned into a campaign," he said. Speakers, including Madison Mayor Mary Hawkins and St. Dominic's officials, will address the need for the \$121 million hospital in the community.

Despite HMA's opposition, there are enough residents in Madison County to support the hospital at Canton and the one in Madison, said Paul Arrington, vice president of business development for St. Dominic.