

Health Department: No need for 2 hospitals in Madison County

BY LUCY WEBER • LWEBER@MCHERALD.COM • FEBRUARY 4, 2010

State Department of Health staff members testified today that the Madison County hospital proposed by St. Dominic Health Services does not meet state standards for the required certificate of need.

During the first day of hearing scheduled to last through Feb. 17, Don Eicher, director of the department's policy and planning division, said a staff analysis shows the \$121 million project is not a relocation of 71 beds from the Jackson campus, as St. Dominic, contends but a new hospital.

"There is no need for a new hospital in that county," Eicher said.

Madison County has a 67-bed hospital in Canton operated by HMA, which is contesting St. Dominic's application for CON, used to control health care facility costs by establishing need on a population and geographic basis.

Under the formula used to calculate hospital beds allowed in a county, Madison County has an excess of 33.5 beds, Eicher said.

However, Ed Brunini, attorney for St. Dominic questioned the formula, especially in a county with a population of more than 100,000 and only one hospital.

"I'm suggesting the formula says the need for 33 beds in Madison County is based on the Census of a hospital so far below standards that it's an irrational result," Brunini said. "It is based on the census of a hospital that nobody goes to."

Madison County Medical Center, being relocated from Mississippi 16 to Nissan Parkway as Madison River Oaks, had an occupancy rate 21.8 in 2008.

St. Dominic wants to build its hospital on Parkway East just north of the Madison city limits.

The hearing was delayed briefly this morning when hearing officer Cassandra Walter said that some of the about 50 people in attendance would have to leave the packed hearing room because of a possible fire code violation. The hearing is being held in a conference room on the second floor.

Those in attendance were allowed to state their name and their support for either St. Dominic or HMA before leaving.

To comment on this story, call Lucy Weber at (601) 853-9820.