

—Slug:..... COMM-0850.bratt.BMH\_GMCBmeet  
—Contributor..... Kevin O'Connor  
—Contributor email..... kevinconnorvt@gmail.com  
—For section..... News  
—Format..... News - byline and dateline  
—Dateline..... Brattleboro  
—Article Number:..... 42964



**Notes from editor (not for publication):**



#### HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 State issues warning, but won't intervene in BMH budget  
2 saga

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3 Vermont health care regulators have given a nod to  
4 hospital's new management and its moves to control its projected  
5 shortfall

####END SUBHED####

6 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

7 Vermont health care regulators have issued a warning,  
8 but won't intervene, as new leaders at Brattleboro Memorial  
9 Hospital work to control a projected \$14.5 million annual budget  
10 shortfall.

11 “We want Brattleboro to thrive,” Owen Foster, chair of  
12 the state’s Green Mountain Care Board, said during a pair of  
13 review hearings that ended Jan. 21.

14 “The solution to make sure that happens is the  
15 management needs to identify the essential services for that  
16 community and it needs to come up with a plan to pay for them,”  
17 he said. “It is not on the board and it is not on ratepayers to do  
18 that.”

19 Regulators, having questioned the accuracy of the  
20 hospital’s past financial reports, had ordered the 500-employee,  
21 61-bed facility — the main health care provider for about 55,000  
22 people in southeastern Vermont — to recalculate its current  
23 budget or risk becoming the first to receive state intervention  
24 under a new law.

25 At the end of hearings Jan. 21, the state board declined  
26 to call for an independent observer to step in, noting that new  
27 acting co-CEOs and budget consultants are searching for savings  
28 and new long-term leaders.

29 Regulators stressed it wasn’t their role to bail out failing  
30 facilities and warned Vermont’s 13 other nonprofit hospitals not  
31 to follow Brattleboro’s recent example.

32 “We’re going to have solvency issues at our hospitals,”  
33 Foster said. “If a hospital submits inaccurate and incomplete data,  
34 I don’t know that we should be giving rate increases at all. It’s just  
35 a bad precedent to set.”

36 BMH has reported a string of annual losses since 2021  
37 and entered a state review hearing this past August with fears of  
38 another shortfall. But the institution nonetheless unveiled a  
39 proposed 2026 fiscal year budget at the summer hearing that  
40 estimated \$121 million in spending and a \$244,529 surplus as of  
41 next Sept. 30.

42 In response, the state expressed fears the hospital “has  
43 not accurately or completely answered many questions” and  
44 “may be at risk of a sudden solvency crisis,” regulators wrote in  
45 an Oct. 1 decision.

46           Shortly after, the hospital announced CEO Christopher  
47 Dougherty would be taking an unexplained leave of absence in  
48 October. He exited permanently without comment in November.  
49 A month later, CFO Laura Bruno departed in a similar manner.

50           The hospital — one of Brattleboro's three largest  
51 employers — is now headed by two acting co-CEOs: orthopaedic  
52 surgeon Elizabeth McLarney and primary care physician Tony  
53 Blofson.

54           "We acknowledge that it's very serious to have a \$14.5  
55 million deficit," Blofson said at the Jan. 21 hearing. "The goal is  
56 to keep the doors open for high-quality and local health care."

57           Past and present administrators have blamed the  
58 hospital's fiscal problems on everything from too many unpaid  
59 patient bills to their own staff's rising health insurance costs,  
60 spurring them to launch a hiring freeze and let go of several  
61 managers.

62           Interim financial leader David Sanville, a former  
63 executive at hospitals in Berlin, Randolph, and Windsor, used this  
64 month's hearings to outline an updated \$130 million annual  
65 budget and current and coming efforts to reduce expenses and  
66 raise revenue.

67           In response, regulators and reviewers have categorized  
68 Brattleboro's new numbers as "an accurate representation."

69           "I deeply appreciate your honesty and frankness," health  
70 care advocate Eric Schultheis told Sanville at the hearings. "It's  
71 quite refreshing."

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

72           This story was republished with permission from  
73 VTDigger, which offers its reporting at no cost to local news  
74 organizations through its Community News Sharing Project. To  
75 support this work, please visit [vtdigger.org/donate](https://vtdigger.org/donate).

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

####BEGIN MAXISSUE####

76 0

####END MAXISSUE####

LINKS:

####BEGIN LINKS####

77

####END LINKS####

VIDEO:

####BEGIN VIDEO####

78

####END VIDEO####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

####BEGIN LOGLINE####

79

####END LOGLINE####