

—Slug:.....COMM-0860.bratt.BMH_strike_averted
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—For section..... News
—Format..... News - byline and dateline
—Dateline..... Brattleboro
—Article Number:..... 43448



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 BMH, nurses reach tentative agreement to avert strike

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2 Hospital still faces threats of a walkout by support staffers
3 as it tries to balance a \$14.5 million budget deficit

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4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Brattleboro Memorial Hospital and a union representing
6 its nurses have reached a tentative agreement to avoid a strike
7 amid a projected \$14.5 million annual budget shortfall.

8 But southeastern Vermont's main health care provider
9 still faces threats of a walkout by support staffers unhappy with
10 their own stalled contract talks.

11 The 160-member Brattleboro Federation of Nurses (BFN)
12 voted last month for a potential strike after objecting to proposed
13 curbs on salaries and benefits. The union said it would give the
14 hospital until April 3 to return with a “stronger” offer to replace a
15 contract that expired Sept. 30, 2025.

16 Then, just minutes before the start of the weekend, both
17 sides announced a potential resolution, with release of specifics
18 awaiting ratification by the nurses.

19 “This tentative agreement reflects the strength and unity
20 of BFN nurses,” Tracy Ouellette, federation president, said in a
21 statement, “and protects the standards that have supported safe,
22 high-quality patient care in our community for decades.”

23 The prospect of a new contract hasn’t fully curbed the
24 fear of a strike at the 500-worker facility, which is one of
25 Brattleboro’s three largest employers.

26 A second union — Brattleboro Healthcare United,
27 representing 280 support staffers — recently authorized its own
28 walkout “if necessary” amid its own negotiations.

29 Talks last week “did not go well,” said Hailey Escobar, a
30 spokesperson for AFT Vermont, which represents the support
31 staffers as well as 11,000 health care and higher education
32 workers statewide.

33 “The team was pretty outraged at the end of the session,”
34 Escobar said, “and is now in conversation about a potential 10-
35 day strike notice.”

36 The two sides are set to meet again next week.

37 The hospital and its workers began contract talks last
38 year, only to pause in the fall when state regulators questioned
39 the accuracy of the hospital’s current \$130 million operating
40 budget — a move that led to the discovery of the \$14.5 million
41 deficit and the exits of the hospital’s chief executive and financial
42 officers.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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VIDEO:

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LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

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