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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

After the Cleveland Clinic Hospital announced the closing of Huron Hospital in 90 days, that caught East Cleveland off guard, they have now worked out a deal.

The Cleveland Clinic and city of East Cleveland have reached an agreement regarding the future of Huron Hospital that still calls for its closure, but offers a financial benefit for the city.

During a news conference at Huron Hospital, East Cleveland Mayor Gary Norton and Cleveland Clinic CEO and President Toby Cosgrove, M.D., said the two entities agreed that the clinic will give the city of East Cleveland $10 million over a five-year period to cover the loss of income tax resulting from the hospital's closure. The Cleveland Clinic will also tear down the building and give the land to the city.

Meanwhile, the city of Cleveland announced that it is taking the matter to federal court, and filed a lawsuit. In a phone interview with Law Director Robert J. Triozzi and EMS Commissioner Edward Eckhart they shared about how important the hospital is to the City of Cleveland.

"The loss of Huron Hospital's trauma center will create a gap in the service that we provide to our community because in life and death situations, every minute counts. That is why it is important that we have a trauma center on the east side of Cleveland. Negotiations failed to keep the trauma center open and therefore, we are taking the matter to federal court," said Mayor Frank G. Jackson.

Triozzi stated “we have an obligation to the people to provide the best service possible.” Eckhart explained how critical it is to carry patients further and out of the service area. “When you have a patient looking you in your eye saying, please don’t let me die, 12 to 15 minutes means a lot,” Eckhart said.

EMS Commissioner Eckhart noted, “The result of the loss of trauma service at Huron and the resulting closure of Huron has resulted in increased EMS response times to all 911 calls, to every neighborhood in the City of Cleveland; it’s resulted in fire first responder units being tied up in excess of 30 to 45 minutes throughout the city while they are waiting for EMS ambulances to arrive to transport patients.”

In the law suit the City of Cleveland talks about the concern of the trauma services in Northeast Ohio, especially those areas of the cities of Cleveland and East Cleveland. It also states that the parties’ discussions, representatives of the Cleveland Clinic Foundation have repeatedly assured Plaintiffs and the general public that trauma services would continue at Huron Hospital until the logistics of how to minimize any impact from the closure of the trauma unit were first worked out.

The Cleveland Clinic issued a statement after learning about the city of Cleveland's lawsuit:

"We are disappointed to learn that the City of Cleveland filed a lawsuit related to emergency/trauma services at Huron Hospital. Given the dramatic decline in patient volume, the hospital is unable to maintain a safe trauma program for patients long-term. With the formation of the Northern Ohio Trauma System (NOTS), we are committed to providing the highest level of trauma care for all citizens of Northeast Ohio that mirrors the best programs across the United States.

The day we announced that Huron Hospital was closing, we immediately reached out to the Mayors of Cleveland and East Cleveland to engage in conversations about this issue. We are pleased to have reached an agreement with the City of East Cleveland that will benefit its community and not include litigation.

"Unfortunately, the City of Cleveland has chosen to litigate rather than have dialogue that may have led to a more productive outcome."

Earlier this year, when the Clinic announced plans to close Huron Hospital, it was met with opposition from the city leaders in East Cleveland and Cleveland. Opponents to closing the hospital said that increasing travel time for trauma patients in the area could be a matter of life and death.

Even though the new Huron Community Clinic is expected to provide state-of-the-art outpatient care (including primary coverage, care for women and children, and services focusing on mental health), the community will still lose a hospital and its 155 years of history.