

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Morgan Memorial Wins in Court
Intervenor's Objections Overruled

Madison, GA --Hospital leaders received great news on Friday when Judge Allison Burleson released her judgement in the Authority's recent bond validation request. Just one week after receiving final documents in the case, Burleson ruled in the hospital's favor.

"Countless hours have been invested in this project over the course of several years with extreme attention to detail," said Ken Lewis, M.D., emeritus member of the Hospital Authority. "The opposition was given the chance to be heard, the court has ruled, and now I hope and pray that we can all come together and move forward with providing for the future healthcare needs of the citizens of our county."

John Anton, represented in court by local attorney Stephen Morris, was the only individual filing as an Intervenor in opposition to the hospital's request. He did not debate the need for a new hospital or its economic feasibility but, instead he raised concerns about the Intergovernmental Agreement between the Hospital Authority and the County.

In response to Anton's objections Burleson's final ruling states that:

"The Court overrules Intervenor Anton's objection that the Intergovernmental Agreement was not validly approved because it was approved by a legally binding vote of the Board of Commissioners of Morgan County;"

"The Court overrules Intervenor Anton's objection that the Intergovernmental Agreement is unconstitutional because the Intergovernmental Contracts Clause expressly permits it;" and

"The Court overrules any and all other objections as they are without merit."

Hospital CEO, Ralph Castillo, shared "Judge Burleson's ruling clearly states that neither the construction notes nor the USDA notes will directly, indirectly or contingently obligate the State or any of its political subdivisions to levy or pledge any form of taxation for the payment of the certificates. Furthermore she concludes that the project and its funding mechanisms are sound, feasible, and reasonable."

MMH received approval on a \$35 million USDA loan to construct a replacement hospital facility in December 2016 and secured a historically low interest rate of 2.375 percent. The approval was thought to be one of the final hurdles for the project following a year of milestones that included donation of land, a successful fundraising campaign and the signing of a collaboration

agreement with Piedmont Athens Regional, which will bring additional physicians to Morgan County once the new hospital is complete. Anton's intervention was an unexpected delay.

"While it is very unfortunate that opposition caused a delay in the project, we are pleased with the outcome and are grateful that Judge Burleson issued a ruling in such a timely manner," said Terry Evans, Hospital Authority Chair. "It is our hope that Mr. Anton will respect Judge Burleson's decision and not prolong litigation."

According to Chief of Staff and Hospital Authority Member Dan Zant, M.D., an appeal of the court's order would cause delays that come with a heavy price, putting local healthcare and local lives at risk.

"Simply stated, you cannot put a monetary value on human life," said Zant. "If we do not build a new hospital, which we have proven is needed and feasible, we are sending the message that the lives of our local citizens are not worth the expense of a new facility."

Evans said the county's support of the hospital through its annual \$1 million subsidy would still be needed regardless of whether a new hospital is constructed. Those funds would support operations in its current location or, in the event of MMH's closure, fund ambulance transportation to other hospitals.

"That money will either go to trying to maintain an aging, outdated hospital that opened its doors when Eisenhower was president, or it will be invested in a new facility that will serve us for generations to come. Obviously, the return on the investment is far greater with a new facility," he says. "You can't put a price on people's lives and that's ultimately what is at stake here."

In 2016, patients visited MMH more than 14,500 times. Of those visits, nearly 8,000 were through the facility's emergency room and over 1,800 were children. The facility is certified as a Level IV Trauma Center, Remote Treatment Stroke Center, and is accredited by The Joint Commission.

Independent analysis shows MMH currently generates a local economic impact of \$10.5 million annually. Once complete, this impact will grow to an estimated \$14.3 million annually and reach \$17 million annually in 10 years.

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