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Employee Shortages Continue to Negatively Impact Schneider Hospital, CEO Says, With Nursing Staff Critical in All Units

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The Schneider Regional Medical Center.

Schneider Regional Medical Center CEO Tina Comissiong said during a Wednesday board meeting that the hospital continues to be negatively impacted by employee shortages.

In her report, the CEO noted that SRMC was facing staffing challenges including a shortage of certified registered nurse anesthetists which was affecting the anesthesia department.

Ms. Comissiong said staffing, especially nursing staffing, remained critical in all units. The medical center currently has 67 of a necessary 179 full-time registered nurses (RNs) and four part-

time RNs. Staffing was currently being supplemented with an additional 24 travel nurses employed through contract with Pafford Medical Services, and other agency staffing. Overtime with existing staff was also helping to meet the shortfall.

The CEO said that though staffing in the hospital's lab had improved in some ways, the facility was still supplementing at a high cost with Pafford and other agency staffing to complete lab employment. A new staffing agency, Pro Touch Staff and Healthcare, had been engaged for assistance with permanent and direct hires of medical technologists to support clinical lab services.

To try to fill vacant positions, the hospital recently took part in a recruiting event at the University of the Virgin Islands, where 35 potential applicants were engaged. A small number of persons had been chosen to fill a range of open posts.

Meanwhile, Ms. Comissiong said SRMC hoped to recover costs for supplemental staffing. She said a project worksheet had been submitted to the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the reimbursement of costs associated with acquiring agency and other temporary staff related to the Covid-19 pandemic between March 2020 and June 2022.

Moving onto repairs and upgrades, Ms. Comissiong said a contract for roofing repairs had been executed and that once the funds are released by the Public Finance Authority to issue the mobilization payment, work would take about 6 weeks to complete. Construction to be performed include patching some of the most critical areas of the roof to stop leaks on the fifth floor, as well as leaks coming into the third floor.

"SRMC has plans to use a portion of the remaining PFA funds to make necessary facilities upgrades, including refurbishing the men's locker room in the operating room, outfitting the emergency department with the purchase of new furniture and outfitting the medical unit with special attention to the patient bathrooms on those units," Ms. Comissiong said. She noted that the facility was in the process of obtaining quotes for each enhancement.

SRMC also plans to use a portion of the remaining PFA funds to purchase necessary medical equipment including 100 IV pumps and a backup Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) system to get a new X-ray machine online. The pumps are quoted at \$225,000 and the UPS system at \$125,000.

According to Ms. Comissiong, a lab project the hospital had undertaken was now complete with the redesign of the registration room. In terms of the IT server room upgrade, that project was 75 percent complete. The CEO said a significant percentage of the work for both of those projects had been completed internally.

The Cardiac Angio Lab, radiology, and the dialysis unit were also in need of refurbishment. A quote of \$1.9 million had been received for upgrades needed for the Cardiac Angio Lab. The SRMC Foundation was evaluating advancing the initiative as a capital campaign project.

A new ultra sound machine was also needed to increase volume in radiology, and new dialysis machines would soon be necessary as several machines were nearing their end of life: 8 years of operation or 20,000 hours. Plans for these replacements were in progress.

Ms. Comissiong said that overall the hospital continued to make improvements to ensure that the facility remains safe to provide patient care."

Other presentations that formed a portion of the meeting's open session included the chairman's report, financial statements/report review, the medical credentials committee report, the QAPI Committee report, and other board matters.

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