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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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OB Continues at a Transformed SMGH

Obstetric Services will continue at Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital (SMGH), the Board of Directors for Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA), agreed last night at the April monthly board meeting held in Strathroy.

The Board approved the continuation of OB services as it is reconfigured in the SMGH Transformation Plan - an ongoing initiative with the goal of eliminating the operating deficit. The SMGH staff, physicians and administration have worked together to deliver on this Plan - and in doing so, will save OB from closing. "It is a very impressive undertaking and this board is proud of everyone involved," Ineke Haan, Chair of the Board of Directors, says.

The Board heard that the Transformation Plan is having an effect on a number of areas: primarily it will eliminate the \$500,000 remaining budget deficit, and it saves Obstetric Services, without a reduction in patient care. An external review of finances, requested by the SouthWest Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and delivered in February, had recommended closing Obstetric Services, as a means of eliminating the deficit.

Closure of the obstetrics department was proposed by an external review as a way to eliminate the final \$500,000 of a projected \$2.2 million operating deficit for the current fiscal year. Instead, consolidating the fourth and second floors is expected to save this same amount.

Mike Mazza, MHA CEO reported to the Board, "The Transformation Plan reorganizes physical space in the hospital on the fourth floor and consolidate them with beds on the 2nd floor. We save money, we increase efficiencies and we continue to provide OB."

The Transformation team - which includes physicians, nurses, senior administration along with physical plant and financial staff has been meeting regularly last March. The team is exploring cost-savings in heat and lighting and staff configuration through this consolidation of floors, and is managing all of the ways that this consolidation will impact on the hospital staff and services.

For example, it is expected that the realignment will eliminate 10 staff positions. In a report from MHA human resources director Liz Grimster, the Board heard that the ten employees, mostly nursing staff, have accepted voluntary retirement packages.

While the consolidation plan will see the fourth floor vacated, it will not have an impact on patient services, according to Dr. Paul Ferner, SMGH chief of staff. He reported to the board that patient care will not be affected; services are not being eliminated, they are being amalgamated.

According to Mazza, this latest round of consolidation and increased efficiency would not have been possible without the success of previous reorganization efforts and congratulated all of the staff and physicians for their cost-cutting ideas and efforts in the past months. Until recently, the fourth floor had 25 beds, but that number was reduced to 15, then to 12. This decrease in patient beds was due to nursing home beds becoming available for patients sooner than in previous years. Many patients on the fourth floor had been there awaiting a nursing home bed, sometimes for many months in previous times.

These twelve beds comprise the Continuing Complex Chronic Care department, where two types of patients receive care: low level rehabilitation patients, recovering from strokes or major surgery, for example, and long term care patients, many of whom could be in nursing homes or at home with supportive care. In the consolidation plan, 10 of the 12 beds currently in use on the fourth floor will be moved to the second floor.

The second floor currently contains 19 beds, 15 of which are used for post-operative recovery and four for obstetrics. There are also two modern birthing rooms. In the Transformation, the 15 bed post-operative capacity will remain unchanged. Obstetrics-specific beds will be eliminated and mothers and babies will stay in the birthing rooms after delivery.

Work to implement the consolidation of the floors is already underway and is expected to be completed by beginning of July.