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HEALTH CARE IN NEPA

WORKFORCE 'CRISIS' REMAINS

Recruitment, fiscal challenges focus of Scranton hearing



Commonwealth Health Regional Hospital of Scranton and Moses Taylor Hospital Chief Medical Officer Patrick Conaboy, M.D., speaks during the state House Democratic Policy Committee hearing regarding access to health care at the University of Scranton on Wednesday. PHOTOS BY REBECCA PARTICKA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

By Jeff Horvath
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SCRANTON — The chief medical officer of Commonwealth Health's Scranton hospitals told a panel of state Democratic lawmakers Wednesday that recruitment "for every position" is the biggest challenge they currently face.

Patrick Conaboy, M.D., chief medical officer for Regional Hospital of Scranton and its nearby Moses Taylor Hospital campus, said as much during a state House Democratic Policy Committee hearing on the myriad financial, workforce and other challenges local hospitals and health care providers face. The hearing held at the University of Scranton followed the nonprofit Tenor Health Foundation's recent acquisition of Commonwealth Health and its hospitals in Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, a much-anticipated transaction that saved Regional and Moses Taylor from closing.

Many of the challenges Conaboy and others who offered testimony highlighted won't come as a surprise to those who followed or were involved in the yearslong local effort to save the Scranton facilities, the closures of which would have eliminated invaluable points of care for patients and exacerbated considerable capacity issues at Geisinger Community Medical Center in the city.



State Rep. Bridget Kosierowski speaks during the state House Democratic Policy Committee hearing regarding access to health care at the University of Scranton on Wednesday.

But while the Tenor deal keeps the Commonwealth hospitals open, their workforce challenges remain.

"The biggest challenge for the hospitals right now is ... recruitment, and understand that's not just recruitment of physicians, which is a huge problem for us, but it's recruitment for every position in the hospital, top to bottom," Conaboy said. "That's a challenge for a number of reasons. One, as I've already alluded

to, the cost of bringing on an employee has become very difficult for any hospital to manage.

"Even if I want somebody without advanced training who is coming in to do environmental services, etc., we are competing with Chewy, who will pay you \$20 an hour to drop a dog bone in a box," he continued. "When you get to the

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SCRANTON

Council questions tapping of Lake Scranton

Pennsylvania American Water addresses potential use of city's source of drinking water to cool data centers

By Jim Lockwood
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Data centers in Lackawanna County that would tap Lake Scranton, the city's source of drinking water, for cooling would have to pay for the infrastructure needed to pump and pipe water out of that reservoir, a Pennsylvania American Water official told Scranton City Council.

The water company, which owns and operates Lake Scranton, also would ensure the reservoir had the capacity to handle any data center requests for water service, said Jeremy Eden, PAW's senior director of operations in Northeast Pennsylvania, according to an Electric City Television simulcast and video of the council meeting posted on YouTube.

Council had water company representatives attend an informal council caucus meeting Tuesday night to provide updates and information on various water and waste-

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LACKAWANNA COUNTY

Construction plans for Wawa stores take shape in Dickson City and Moosic

By Frank Wilkes Lesnefsky
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A pair of would-be Wawas — one in Moosic and one in Dickson City — are benefiting from state grant funds as construction plans take shape.

Dickson City council tabled a vote Tuesday night on an agreement for a road-widening project to accommodate a Wawa on Main Street as Moosic prepares for Wawa to replace a former warehouse on Birney Avenue.

Although no Wawas have opened yet in Lackawanna County, the popular Delaware

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EL PASO, TEXAS

Pentagon-FAA dispute over lasers to thwart cartel drones led to airspace closure, AP sources say

By Seung Min Kim, Ben Finley, Mary Clare Jalonick, Morgan Lee and Josh Funk
ASSOCIATED PRESS

EL PASO, Texas — The sudden and surprising airspace closure over El Paso, Texas, on Wednesday — first announced as extending for 10 days but lasting only a few hours — stemmed from the Pentagon's plans to test a laser to shoot down drones used by Mexican

drug cartels, according to three people familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity to share sensitive details.

That caused friction with the Federal Aviation Administration, which wanted to ensure commercial air safety, and the two agencies sought to coordinate, according to two of the people.

Despite a meeting scheduled later this month to discuss the

issue, the Pentagon wanted to go ahead and test the laser, prompting the FAA to shutter the airspace over the city on the U.S.-Mexico border. It was not clear whether the laser was ultimately deployed.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said earlier that the airspace closed as the Defense Department and the FAA halted an incursion by Mexican cartel drones and that "the threat has been

neutralized." Drone incursions are not uncommon along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The restrictions were only in place for a couple of hours in the city of nearly 700,000 people, but it is unusual for an entire airport to shut down even for a short time. Stranded travelers with luggage lined up at airline ticket counters and car rental desks before the

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Passengers wait in line at the El Paso International Airport after all flights were grounded on Wednesday. KFOX VIA AP

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