

**Office of the Select Board
Office of the Town Manager**



Town of Ayer | Ayer Town Hall | 1 Main Street | Ayer, MA 01432 | 978-772-8220 x100 | www.ayer.ma.us

**Official Resolution Requesting Emergency Declaration Regarding the
Proposed Closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center**

August 6, 2024

We, the duly elected Ayer Select Board, given the impending proposed closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center (NVMC) scheduled for August 31, 2024, officially implore that Governor Maura Healey of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts exert her leadership and official powers to prevent the closure of the NVMC, including but not limited to, declaring a State of Public Health Emergency to prevent the closure of the NVMC in addition to formally adhering to the 120-day closure process in accordance with Massachusetts State Law.

Whereas, the NVMC in Ayer, Massachusetts is a 46-bed community hospital opened in 1964 which has continuously provided primary critical healthcare including emergency health services to the 15 towns of the Nashoba Valley Region of: Ayer, Ashby, Bolton, Boxborough, Devens, Dunstable, Groton, Harvard, Lancaster, Littleton, Pepperell, Shirley, Stow, Townsend, and Westford with a combined population of approximately 114,390. Additionally, the Nashoba Valley Medical Center provides critical secondary emergency care to the other communities of North Central Massachusetts and Southern New Hampshire; and

Whereas, the NVMC receives approximately 16,000 Emergency Room visits annually and receives approximately 91,000 outpatient visits annually; and

Whereas, the NVMC is geographically positioned in a key location to provide central, direct health care and emergency services to rural communities which do not have access to public mass transportation for patients to travel beyond the region for health care and emergency health services including our most vulnerable populations of the elderly, disability community, and children; and

Whereas, currently the Town of Ayer's Emergency Response (Advanced Life Support) averages a 15 to 20 minute return to service when transporting to the NVMC which is only 2.4 miles from the Ayer Fire Station. The closest alternative hospitals to the Town of Ayer are as follows: Leominster Hospital: 11.5 miles; Emerson Hospital: 16.8 miles; Lowell General: 19.7 miles; and Southern N.H. (Nashua): 18.6 miles. If NVMC closes, Ayer Emergency Response is estimated to take critical services out of the response areas for up to an additional 1 to 1.5 hours (assuming no traffic and ideal weather conditions). Additionally, these increased response times will have a significant negative impact on emergency survival rates as well as increased, unfunded costs for emergency services for the Towns of the Nashoba Valley; and

Whereas, the NVMC is one of the largest employers of the Town of Ayer and the Nashoba Valley Region, employing approximately 500 jobs; the loss of jobs and negative impact to the local and regional economy will be devastating; and

Whereas, the NVMC to date has not received a viable bidder to assume the operations of the hospital and the Federal Bankruptcy Judge on July 31, 2024 ruled that Steward Medical (the current owner and operator of NVMC) to proceed with closing the hospital by August 31, 2024 in only 30 days as opposed to the 120 days per Massachusetts State Law; and

Whereas, the impending closure of the NVMC by August 31, 2024 will create a health care desert in the Nashoba Valley Region impacting over 100,000 residents of the Commonwealth; increase emergency response times to over an hour; cut off direct, local access to public health care to the regions' most vulnerable populations; create the loss of over 500 jobs; and shutter the entire emergency response service for the 15 Town of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center; a man-made public health emergency currently exists; and

Whereas, Governor Maura Healy has the power set forth in Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 17, Section 2A as follows:

Upon declaration by the governor that an emergency exists which is detrimental to the public health, the commissioner may, with the approval of the governor and the public health council, during such period of emergency, take such action and incur such liabilities as he may deem necessary to assure the maintenance of public health and the prevention of disease. The commissioner, with the approval of the public health council, may establish procedures to be followed during such emergency to insure the continuation of essential public health services and the enforcement of the same.

Now, Therefore, the Ayer Select Board respectfully requests that Governor Maura Healy take the following immediate actions within her powers as Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as follows:

1. Per MGL Chapter 17, Section 2A declare that a public health emergency exists with the impending closure of the NVMC and further instruct Dr. Robert Goldstein, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health to take such action to assure the maintenance of public health by keeping the NVMC open and operational.
2. That the Governor per her public statements on August 1, 2024 that Steward should adhere to the 120-day closure per Massachusetts State Law, do everything in her powers as Governor to ensure the 120-day closure period.
3. That the Governor work with Federal, State, and Local Leaders of the Nashoba Valley to develop a permanent transition plan with funding to ensure that the NVMC remains open and operational and ultimately transfers to a responsible operator.

We, the Ayer Select Board, hereby issue this Official Resolution on August 6, 2024 from the Ayer Town Hall, Ayer Massachusetts and officially transmit this Official Resolution to Governor Maura Healey, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Dr. Robert Goldstein, Commissioner of the Department of Public Health of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with official copies transmitted to Congresswoman Lauri Trahan; State Senator Jamie Eldridge; State Senator John Cronin; State Senator Edward Kennedy; State Representative Danillo Sena; State Representative Margaret Scarsdale; State Representative James Arciero; State Representative Michael Kushmerek; State Representative Natalie Higgins and official copies to the Select Boards of the 15 aforementioned Towns of the Nashoba Valley Region.

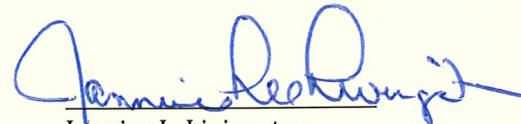
Signed, this 6th day of August 2024 by:



Shaun C. Copeland
Chair



Christopher E. Tavares
Vice Chair



Jannice L. Livingston
Clerk

THE AYER SELECT BOARD

