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Proposing a monumental change at Sharon Hospital

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Sharon Hospital has undergone many changes over the years, but especially during those years since converting to a for-profit entity in 2002. Through new ownerships, new administrations, new staffing, the only for-profit hospital in Connecticut has tried to maintain stability for its wide community over three states. Some financial challenges it has shared with its nonprofit colleagues, as, for instance, a costly state provider tax and changing Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement policies whittled away at its revenues.

Now, it faces another monumental change, one that is unique and should be welcomed by all it serves. The hospital is proposing to once again be a nonprofit, and become a part of HealthQuest, a Hudson Valley-based network of hospitals and health care providers (see the coverage by Cynthia Hochswender this week.) HealthQuest is based out of Lagrangeville, N.Y., and includes Vassar Brothers, Putnam and Northern Dutchess hospitals, among other entities. Doesn't this connection seem more direct than the wider-ranging ownerships that were based in Nashville, Tenn., and served populations in states that had for-profit hospitals as much more common models of health care delivery?

As Hochswender describes, it will take many months and a lot of work on regulatory compliance before this proposal can come to fruition. But the current administration, with Chief Executive Officer Peter Cordeau at the head, is poised to lead the hospital into a new era, one that will create a cohesive healthcare support system in close proximity to those who live in this rural area.

The owners since 2002 have ensured that Sharon Hospital would survive, and for that, they should only be thanked. But this new step would bring local strength and renew the hospital's community partnership and connection, and that is very good news.

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