

## Board OKs St. Mary expansion

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The emergency room expansion approved by the supervisors Monday night should be completed by the end of 2011.

The Middletown supervisors at their Monday night meeting unanimously approved a 20,000-square-foot expansion to the emergency room at St. Mary Medical Center.

Supervisors Tom Gallagher, Robert McMonagle, George Leonhauser, Patrick Mallon and Drew Kreiling voted 5-0 to grant both preliminary and final land development approval for the project.

The approval is contingent on St. Mary officials conducting a traffic study on how the expansion will affect traffic in and out of the hospital, and then implementing whatever traffic improvements the township engineer and traffic engineer feel are appropriate, based on the study.

Work on the expansion should start sometime this year and be finished by the end of 2011, said St. Mary Senior Vice President of Operations Mark Nessel. Also, part of the project is moving the hospital's helipad from its current location to a spot on top of the one-story expansion, said Karen McManuels, the engineer working on the expansion for St. Mary.

Nessel said a previous expansion done about five years ago left the emergency room at about 40,000 square feet and equipped to handle about 51,000 visits a year. St. Mary is getting 65,000 emergency room visits a year, he said.

"We need to expand just to accommodate what we have now and make operations flow smoother and more efficiently," Nessel said.

The hospital also will need approval from the Federal Aviation Administration to move the helipad, he added.

Nessel said the expansion will make it more likely St. Mary will not have to divert emergency room patients to other hospitals during the busiest times.

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