TOPIC FOR TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2019:

Will there be a place for emergency flight helicopters to transport patients to the new regional medical center?

Both of the existing MVHS hospital campuses – St. Luke’s and St. Elizabeth – have helistops (also called helipads) that accommodate helicopters bringing patients to MVHS or, when necessary, transferring patients to a different health system or facility. The helistop at St. Luke’s is on the ground, and the one at St. Elizabeth is on the roof of the parking garage. Each year, between the two campuses, about 40 patients are transported in a helicopter – on average, about three patients a month.

The new medical center plans include a ground-level helistop that is right next to the Emergency Department. This location ensures that access and care for patients being brought to or transported from MVHS is immediate and safe. Here are a few facts about hospital helistops:

- Hospitals throughout the country have both rooftop and ground-level helistops. The location is based on the hospital design and environment. For the new MVHS Regional Medical Center, both options were evaluated by the MVHS Trauma Department and local air transport providers and a decision was made to place it on the ground since a rooftop helistop would have been inferior for patient transport and more costly.

- All helistops are regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which has very specific requirements for the planning and building of all helistops, with an entire section of regulations just for hospital helistops. The helistop for the new medical center meets all of these and Department of Transportation specifications.

- The placement, design and plan for the helistop at the regional medical center was also reviewed, and approved, as part of the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) process.

- We are all familiar with the sound of these medical helicopters. We stop and look up, and know that someone is on their way to life-saving treatment. Given that flights only occur a few times a month, the noise of the helicopter transport can easily be tolerated knowing that a life may be saved or changed that day.