

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

A petition recently circulated in Chase County to form a hospital district, thereby allowing voters to determine who is on the Chase County Community Hospital board, was submitted last week to the Chase County Commissioners.

County Clerk Debbie Clark is now in the process of determining how many of the 430 signatures are valid.

Clark said only signatures of those who live in the county and are landowners will be valid.

She said 223 valid signatures will be required to get the issue before the voters. That figure is 10% of the 2,234 resident freeholders in Chase County.

If enough signatures are verified, the Chase County Commissioners will be setting a hearing date to hear proposals for the exclusion of land from or the inclusion of additional land in a hospital district.

After the hearing, the commissioners will set the district boundaries. They will also set a date for the election.

If voters would approve the issue, Clark said, the commissioners will appoint the first hospital board. Two members will serve until after the next primary election, or for one year, while three will serve two years.

After that, members will be elected from the hospital district at large. Each board member will serve for four years.

Members are elected on a nonpartisan ticket.

Kinner originally thought that the petition would set up several hospital districts, with those living in the districts each electing their own board member. However, there will only be one district.

"I was happier when I thought that each district would elect a member," she said last week.

Kinner and other members of an "unorganized group" distributed petitions in August.

"It was with great pleasure that we turned that in at the commissioners meeting Sept. 8," she stated.

The group had organized the petition drive in an effort to have the public decide who serves on the hospital board. Historically, the commissioners have appointed them.

Kinner, a former CCCH board member, said other boards, such as the school and commissioners, are elected, so she thought the hospital board should be, as well.