

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

Chase County commissioners approved a pair of resolutions at their Sept. 14th meeting to create a new hospital district and appoint the five members.

A petition effort put the formation of a hospital district on the May Primary ballot. The measure passed 634-569.

After the district formation was approved, commissioners and the hospital began researching the ramifications of the vote.

A public meeting was held to gather more information on the process.

Following the formation of the hospital district, the commissioners appointed the existing members of the Chase County Community Hospital board as the directors of the hospital district.

The first two members up for election in 2012 will be Vicky Heskett and Bill Bauerle, both of Imperial.

Members Bob Mendenhall, Sr., and John Burke, both of Imperial, along with Eddie Nichols of Wauneta, will stand for election in 2014.

Commissioner Chuck Vette said he wants to insure the viability of the hospital and feels the commissioners have fulfilled their obligations by creating the district and appointing board members.

The big question that remains is whether the ownership of the hospital must be transferred to the hospital district.

Hospital officials and board members fear the cost to complete such a transfer will be prohibitive.

Presently, the costs to make the transfer remain unknown. The hospital has spent more than \$20,000 researching the process.

One thing the hospital does know is that there will be an additional cost of \$100,000 for extended malpractice coverage.

Another issue that still remains unknown is whether the hospital can retain its Critical Access Hospital designation for Medicare and Medicaid. if a transfer occurs.

This enables the hospital to receive reimbursement for actual costs for Medicare and Medicaid patients instead of a prorated reimbursement.

Hospital officials say the loss of this funding would jeopardize the future of the hospital.