By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

Following a closed session Tuesday night, the Chase County Community Hospital (CCCH) board of trustees approved an agreement for services with Gary Bieganski as interim Chief Executive Officer beginning Feb. 4.

Bieganski, who was president and CEO of McCook Community Hospital for 30 years, will receive $165,000 for six months as per the agreed contract.

CCCH board chairman Bob Mendenhall said he hopes the board will find a permanent CEO in six months, but it may take longer.

Bieganski and wife Donna Jean live in Chadron, where they built a house on her family's ranch after he retired from the McCook hospital in 2008.

He has since been an interim CEO at Grape Community Hospital in Hamburg, Iowa from April 2008 to January 2009; Brown County Hospital in Ainsworth from May 2010 to March 2011; and Weston County Health Services in Newcastle, Wyo., from August 2011 to August 2012.

Bieganski said that although "I discovered I love the ranch I also miss the people and providing health care." That's why, when a hospital calls asking for his help, he considers the request.

"When I finish a job people know I'm done and call," he laughed. "If the phone doesn't ring, I'm working at the ranch."

He also provides expertise on organizational restructure; project management; strategic planning; staff training and development; revenue enhancement; capital campaigns and infrastructure development.

He's familiar with the Chase County area, which was part of his decision to accept the interim CEO offer.

His goals while at CCCH include communication and "trying to work in an organized fashion so that people can do their job and I can hold them accountable.

"I want to work with the people that are here and be as great a help with them to be successful," he added.

"One of the first things I want to do is go over the data to see what our market share is, and the services people need here," he continued.

Also on Bieganski's checklist are the physical plant upgrade and possible building program, and making sure people understand the services CCCH provides.

Mendenhall said hiring Bieganski is a "great move." He said the appointment will bring unity, a "fluency in the way the hospital's run," and trust.

The hiring of Bieganski was precipitated by the dismissal of former administrator Lola Jones in late November.

During the hospital trustee meeting, Chase County Commissioner Don Weiss Jr. asked the board if it would approve the appointment of John Burke of Imperial as a trustee. Burke is a former trustee. There is currently a vacant seat on the board.

With the three trustees present approving, Weiss said the commissioners would vote on the issue at their Feb. 12 meeting.

The next hospital board meeting will be Feb. 28.