

New Hospital District to appear on May Primary Election Ballot By Lee De Bevoise

Following unanimous votes from the Saline County Commissioners, the proposed Warren Memorial Hospital (WMH) District will now be put before the voters at the May Primary Elections.

Last Thursday, (WMH) Board Member and Friend Mayor Jim Vossler, Board and City Council Member Dan Drake, City Councilman Harlan Schrock, Friend City Attorney Mike Mullally, WMH CEO John Wilson, Board Members Wayne Milton, Dennis Peters, and Ron Corbett attended the special meeting of the Saline County Board of Commissioners - Hearing on Petitions for Creation of Warren Memorial Hospital District - to address the Commissioners about the proposed new Hospital District for WMH. In all, there were approximately 20 people in attendance. Additionally, the Commissioners had received four letters regarding the proposed boundaries.

During the meeting, proposals for both the exclusion and inclusion of land were presented. As Vossler noted in his opening statement, "We wanted to follow the existing School District... but where can you draw the line [boundary] and be fair to everyone?"

A common concern that was voiced by those concerned landowners was the lack of information, since the notices, etc. were only published in The Sentinel. Another common theme was to have all of Saline County included in the proposed District.

"Were all possibilities explored before forming a district?" asked Melvin Vavra.

Karen Sysel inquired if a study had been made of who actually uses the Emergency Room and the Hospital. "How long will this [tax levy] last," she asked. Sysel explained after the meeting that she owns land that would be included in the District no matter how the final boundaries were determined.

One of the letters that was received by the Commissioners was from the Seward County Election Commissioner. The cause of objecting was that it would expand the number of "splits". Splits are when special ballots need to be created for one or more people in a precinct. These ballots are different from those that the balance of the voters in that precinct receive. Vossler added, "we met with the Seward County Board of Commissioners and they were happy with it [the boundaries]."

After much discussion and proposed motions that were withdrawn, County Commissioner Janet Henning made a motion that the proposed Hospital District, Resolution 08-15, be the same as listed in the Petition; with Turkey Creek Sections 29, 30, 31, and 32 included; and the following sections excluded: Atlanta - 1, 2, 3, and 4, and North Fork -3,4,5, and 6. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Doug Drake.

An Amendment Motion was made by County Commissioner Marvin Kohout that would exclude, only in Monroe, sections 3, 10, 15, 22,27, and 34. Commissioner Henning seconded this motion.

Both the initial Motion for Resolution 08-15 and the Amendment passed

unanimously. The Resolution will appear on the May Primary Elections Ballot.

To provide the necessary funding, the proposed Hospital District is needed. "Friend deserves a healthy thriving community to pass on to future generations. A vote in favor of the hospital district will contribute towards allowing WMH to continue their mission of service," explained Wilson in an earlier interview.

If approved by the voters, the Hospital District would levy an additional tax. That tax would be \$35 per year on a \$100,000 property or home.

Additionally, voter approval of this Resolution would then require that the Saline County Commissioners appoint an Interim Hospital Board consisting of five members. Two will be appointed for a 2-year term and three will be appointed for a 4-year term. According to statute law, the election for the seats on this Board is to be held following that year's Primary Election, with the next being May 2010 since Primary Elections are held every two years. Those appointed to a 4-year terms will serve until after the 2012 Primary Elections.

Please contact either a Hospital Board Member or a member of the Friend City Council with any questions.

NOTE: Minutes for the meeting mentioned in this article appear on Page 5.