

Chase County Hospital District petition drive extended

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 19 October 2011 19:46 -

By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

The petition drive to dissolve the Chase County Hospital District has been extended. Signatures will be accepted through Oct. 21.

Coordinator Sue Smith said the drive was extended “because there is no actual deadline, and because it’s an opportunity for people to sign.”

Smith said the drive has generated the required signatures and adequate extras, in case some are found invalid.

The petitions will be submitted to the Chase County Clerk’s office for verification of signatures. If there are enough, about 300 or 10 percent of the registered voters in the county, the measure will be placed on the May 2012 primary ballot.

Voters approved the creation of the hospital district during the May 2010 primary.

That approval created a new political subdivision known as the Chase County Hospital District.

The district is a completely separate entity from Chase County Community Hospital and currently has no governance over the hospital.

Smith said she decided to circulate the petition for several reasons. The hospital district is a political subdivision with broad powers to establish, maintain, lease or operate one or more

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hospitals within or outside the district or both.

“That district has powers that the present board doesn’t, and it doesn’t mean the district in 20 years couldn’t sell the hospital.”

Smith also said that when the issue was on the ballot in 2010, much of the information relating to the potential effects of a hospital district on healthcare in Chase County wasn’t presented to the public.

The hospital district is a completely separate political subdivision from the hospital, governed by an elected board. That board would have the power to obtain property, exercise the right of eminent domain to acquire personal property and levy taxes for a health care system.

Smith said over 400 people have already signed the petition. She said, “I am amazed by the number of people who don’t know of the issue.”

By continuing to circulate the petition, Smith hopes that more people learn about the effects of a hospital district.

Registered voters who would like to sign the petition may contact Elna Johnson in Imperial or Tony Cribelli in Wauneta.