By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

A total of 416 valid signatures were verified on the recent hospital board petition drive, allowing the request to dissolve the new Chase County Community Hospital district to appear in the May election.

The Chase County Clerk's office, upon request of the hospital district board, verified the signatures last week. About 300 signatures, or 10 percent of registered voters, were needed to put the issue on the ballot.

Eddie Nichols of Wauneta, chair of the hospital district board, said the petition results will be discussed at the board's Dec. 15 meeting. "We'll accept the signatures," he said, and "get someone to write the terminology for the ballot" to dissolve the hospital district.

The petition drive was begun this past summer by Sue Smith of Imperial. She said her effort was because "The majority of the people are not in favor of maintaining the hospital district."

The whole issue began when former Chase County Community Hospital board member Sue Kinner and Penny Teply of Imperial began a petition drive to have the hospital board elected by the public, rather than appointed by Chase County Commissioners.

That led to the election in which voters approved, by a 629-566 vote, the creation of a hospital district, with a new board elected by the public.

However, it was discovered that the new district would possibly compromise government payments for medical services, and also increase the hospital district board's power over property and taxes.

That's when Smith decided to ask the public to decide if the move was necessary.

There are currently two boards concerning the hospital. The Chase County Community Hospital board consists of Chair Bill Bauerle, John Burke, Bob Mendenhall Sr., Vicky Heskett and Eddie Nichols.

The Chase County Community Hospital District Board consists of Chair Eddie Nichols, Rand Levy, Bob Mendenhall Sr., Bill Bauerle and Vicky Heskett.