

August 18, 2009

Pawnee County voters overwhelmingly approved a 1% increase in the county-wide sales tax. The question received nearly 87 percent approval with 1,282 voting in favor, and 199 opposed. The Pawnee County Clerk's office reported nearly 40 percent of the registered voters cast ballots in the election. The money raised will go entirely toward health care in Pawnee County.

Hospital Timeline copy, from articles in the The Tiller and Toiler, Great Bend Tribune, and Task Force records.

February 26, 2010

The Board of County Commissioners of Pawnee County, Kansas, the Pawnee County Community Health Organization, and Hays Medical Center announce an agreement has been reached regarding the transfer of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital and the hospital's Critical Care Access License certification to HaysMed Partners-Pawnee County, Inc. effective March 1, 2010. HaysMed Partners-Pawnee County, Inc. will be managing the hospital for the benefit of the citizens of Larned, Pawnee County and the surrounding communities by means of an Affiliation Agreement entered into with Pawnee County.

This transaction will ensure the citizens of Larned, Pawnee County and the surrounding communities will have local access to quality healthcare for many years to come.

Closure of St. Joseph Hospital discussed at town hall meeting

(re-printed from July 3, 2009 Tiller & Toiler)

By MARK ZWINK

Catholic Health Initiatives (CHI) currently holds all the high cards. Local Larned and Pawnee County leaders are trying to obtain the right cards to keep St. Joseph Memorial Hospital open.

It was announced June 10 by Central Kansas Medical Center that St. Joseph Memorial Hospital in Larned would close its doors September 30, 2009. CHI owns St. Joseph Hospital and CKMC.

CHI informed Larned officials a week later that they also had no intentions of selling or leasing the hospital back to the community. The CHI cooperation also said they would not give the hospital's license back to the city, either.

"It has been a hectic two-weeks," noted Larned Mayor Robert Pivonka during a Town Hall meeting Monday night in a jam-packed Larned Community Center.

The meeting was to appraise residents about

the status of the proposed closing of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital.

"The alternatives right now are very slim," added Pivonka.

The mayor was joined on center stage by Harry Zielke, a member of the Community Health

Organization, Billy Ward, the new Pawnee County Economic Development Director, Larned City Manager Don Gaeddert and Dr. David Sanger.

The gentlemen discussed ways that they, along with residents, could influence others into allowing the

local hospital to remain open.

"...Residents need to do a letter-writing campaign to all of your representatives in Topeka, Washington and to former Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius (who is now the Secretary of Health and

Human Services in President Obama's administration)," Pivonka said during the town-hall meeting.

"All the people I've talked to are very sympathetic toward or situation."

Also making the hospital closure even dicier is the Critical Access License that St. Joseph is allowed to work under. The license, which the hospital operates under, is due to city-county's population. Pivonka pointed out, "When the hospital closes on Sept. 30 the Critical License dies with it."

Gaeddert passed along some rather startling statistics. He said that the St. Joseph Hospital Emergency Room, in 2007-08, had 2,500 patients. Of those 400 were critical patients. "...If you delay ER treatment, having the ambulance transport them to a hospital in Great Bend or Kinsley, then the patients costs go up," Gaeddert said.

The Larned City Manager also noted that health treatment costs bring in around \$30 to \$40 million to the local community.

If the hospital's ER were to close it would be a "budget-buster," Gaeddert said. "We would have to hire two more EMTs.

...The police department officer's would be on overtime because of having to transport people to other hospitals. ...It is an unacceptable situation."

Larned's City Manager pointed out that, "People don't realize how much the (Larned) Police Department uses the hospital's ER for DUI's, a child in need of care and victims of crime. If you send these officers to Great Bend or Kinsley, that will increase overtime, plus other officers would be needed to be called in to patrol the streets."

It was noted toward the end of the main group's presentation that a task-force of eight different groups has been formed to work on the fight to keep the local hospital operating.

After the statements and views were made by the five gentlemen, questions from an estimated concerned audience of over 600 people were answered.

Questions were raised as to the course of legal action that Larned-Pawnee County could take to gain control of the proposed closed hospital; to possible eminent domain; to see **MEETING page 9**



Over 500 hundred concerned Pawnee County citizens attended the town hall meeting Monday evening, June 29, 2009, to discuss the impending closure of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital. The meeting was sponsored by the Pawnee County Community Health Organization. Mayor Robert Pivonka addressed the crowd about the hospital's closure. He was joined on stage by Dr. David Sanger, Harry Zielke of the Community Health Organization, Larned City Manager Don Gaeddert, and Billy Ward, the Director of the Pawnee County Economic Development Commission, who each addressed the crowd as well.

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