

Updated: Sabetha requests share of hospital tax

(KNZA)--Sabetha city and hospital officials meet with the Brown County Commission Monday to request a portion of the revenue generated from a proposed sales tax for health care services.

The Commission last week approved a resolution setting a special election for May 21 on a proposed 10-year half-cent countywide retailers sales tax, with the proceeds going to the Hiawatha Community Hospital to provide health care services in Brown County.

Sabetha City Commissioner Norm Schmitt, who also serves as vice-chair of the Sabetha Community Hospital Board of Trustees, spoke on behalf of the group.

He requested the Commission amend the resolution to allow the Sabetha Hospital to receive a share of the proceeds generated from the tax, as allowed by state statute.

A portion of Sabetha is located in Brown County, and Schmitt noted Sabetha is the third largest sales tax contributor in the county.

Schmitt said Sabetha was never included in the discussions about the sales tax.

The proposed sales tax is estimated to generate around \$700,000 annually.

Following discussion, Commission Chairman Keith Olsen asked for a motion to change the resolution to include the Sabetha hospital. However, the matter died due to the lack of a motion.

Commissioner Richard Lehmkuhl expressed concern about changing the resolution at this time, saying it would force them to start all over again and set the whole process back. He said if that were to happen, Brown County could lose another hospital.

Sabetha city and hospital officials plan to ask the Commission to reconsider the issue at their upcoming meeting Monday, March 25.

Nemaha County voters in April 2015 approved a 10-year half-cent countywide retailers sales tax for health services in their county, with the proceeds being divided between the Sabetha Hospital and Nemaha Valley Community Hospital in Seneca. Schmitt said Sabetha took a smaller percentage of the proceeds at that time because a portion of city's taxing district is in Brown County.

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