

County approves amended sales tax resolution

**(KNZA)--The Brown County Commission Friday unanimously approved an amended resolution changing the ballot language for the May 21 special election on the proposed sales tax initiative for health care services in the county.**

**The action was taken on the recommendation of the joint city/county hospital advisory committee, which met Thursday.**

**Hiawatha City Administrator Mike Nichols, who serves as chairman of the Committee, said the committee approved amending the ballot language to allow the sales tax proceeds from the proposed 10-year half-cent countywide retailers sales tax to not only go to the Hiawatha Community Hospital but another entity providing healthcare services in the city of Horton. With so much unknown now about the Horton facilities, it was felt the broader wording would be more fitting and provide revenue for the future of healthcare in south Brown County.**

**Nichols said the committee also voted to recommend that 80 percent of the sales tax proceeds go to the Hiawatha hospital and 20 percent to the city of Horton to provide health care services in their community.**

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

**In addition, Nichols said the committee voted to recommend that Sabetha Community Hospital's request for a portion of the sales tax proceeds be denied. He said the committee felt it was important to have all the sales tax revenues go toward healthcare facilities located within Brown County.**

**Before the amended resolution was approved, Commissioner Rich Lehmkuhl asked Hiawatha hospital CEO John Broberg several questions based on concerns he's heard from residents--including what he feels are the benefits of a 10 year versus 5 year sales tax.**

**Broberg said the biggest benefit is that it will allow the hospital to refinance its existing industrial revenue bonds, saving nearly \$640,000. In addition, he says it would allow the hospital to make capital improvements there has not been money for.**

**Lehmkuhl said he believes the hospital needs to be more transparent and accountable to the taxpayers. He asked for monthly reports and annual financial statements from the hospital as long as the sales tax is in place.**

**Hospital board member Jake Wisdom said they want to be good stewards of the**

**taxpayers dollars.**

**Broberg said the hospital plans to hold twenty-nine town hall meetings, beginning the week of April 8, to educate the public about the need for the sales tax.**

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