

Final tally: Hospital sales tax defeated by 2-vote margin

(KNZA)--The final tally is in—the proposed 10-year, half-cent countywide retailers' sales tax for the Hiawatha Community Hospital has been defeated by a two-vote margin.

That's the outcome following a canvass of votes Monday by the Brown County Commission.

Meeting as a board of canvassers, the Commission approved counting 30 of the 40 provisional ballots cast during the November 5 election based on state statute.

That resulted in a final tally of 1,285 votes against the sales tax to 1,283 in favor.

A provisional ballot is used at a polling place to record a vote when there is some question regarding a voter's eligibility.

The sales tax would have generated an estimated \$750,000 annually, with the proceeds going for equipment and facility repairs.

It was the second time the hospital had sought tax support. During a special election in May, a similar sales tax proposal was defeated by a 29-vote margin.

Hiawatha Community Hospital CEO John Broberg issued the following statement Monday following the vote outcome:

While the outcome of the vote was not what we hoped for, it is important for the communities we serve to understand that the outcome does not change our mission or our vision. Hiawatha Community Hospital is here to serve this region the best we can in whatever capacity we can, now and in the future. We want to be a uniting force in this region. As we have shared throughout this campaign, our operations continue to improve.

We are focusing on fundraising as we are currently doing our annual appeal for donations through the Foundation. For the first time, the Foundation is also hosting a New Year's Eve event to raise additional funds.

What is plan B? Right now, it is asking our team to focus on what we do best - provide compassionate care and focus on recruitment and retention of physicians, midlevels and staff.

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