

- Special to the Daily Leader

On March 2, voters in Seward County will have the opportunity to go to the polls to consider a general obligation bond issue to finance expansion and renovation of the Southwest Medical Center in Liberal.

The goal of the medical center is that every voter in Seward County has adequate information to make an informed decision on the project and bond financing. The start of making that goal a reality was with an organizational meeting of volunteers for an informational campaign. A group of Seward County residents and SWMC staff together with consultants met last Thursday to organize a bond campaign committee.

The committee plans to form a speakers bureau to develop and share information with area groups, an informational central sub-committee to develop and distribute information to voters, a community relations sub-committee to create awareness of the project and election, and a target sub-committee to identify and encourage voters to vote on Election Day or by advance ballot.

Chair and co-chair of the committee are Dr. Steve Cauble, OD, and Sandra Koochel.



The committee plans to meet regularly to discuss voter concerns and develop information in

January and plan the bulk of their informational efforts in the month of February prior to the March 2 Election Day. Voter registration books for this special election will close on Monday, Feb. 15. Anyone not registered is encouraged to contact the Seward County Clerk's Office.

The election by Seward County requests the authority to issue \$17 million in general obligation bonds to finance the proposed improvements to the 45-year old healthcare facility in Liberal. The general obligation bonds offer the lowest possible financing cost for the proposed improvements. The bonds would be paid by hospital revenues and not from property taxes.

Southwest Medical Center, a county-owned facility, has never requested or received tax support. A previous general obligation bond issue for improvements to the hospital issued in 1991 has been paid by hospital revenues. The county's financial advisor has estimated that the payments on this proposed bond issue will be similar or less than those of the Series 1991 bond.

Anyone interested in joining the informational campaign committee is encouraged to contact either one of the committee chairs mentioned above or can contact SWMC CEO Norm Lambert at 629-6291.