

By EARL WATT

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By better than a 4 to 1 margin, voters overwhelmingly supported a bond proposal to enhance Southwest Medical Center with \$17 million in enhancements specifically geared for outpatient services and doctor recruitment and retention.

The final count was 1,119 for the proposal, 250 against.

A committee of local citizens worked to inform the community on the project, and co-chair Sandra Koochel was elated when she heard the margin of victory.

"I want to thank all our friends and neighbors who understood the future of Southwest Medical Center is so essential to the future of our community," she said. "Our hospital is a huge economic development tool for Liberal."

Koochel said an expanded hospital will be able to offer more services to more people.

"This hospital can attract new doctors as well as patients," she said. "The improved convenience and expanded emergency area will be beneficial for all patients. I am very grateful for citizens of this community for supporting this project."

A preliminary schedule will have ground breaking in the fall of 2010 with the completion slated

for 2012.