

McCall Star News, Thursday, Aug. 5, 2010 – Staff report

Hospital advisory vote passes by 86%

Merger of McCall, St. Luke's moves toward Oct. 1 target

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—Lee Rhodes*

Voters in the McCall Memorial Hospital District on Tuesday overwhelmingly endorsed the merger of the McCall hospital and St. Luke's Health System. The total vote in the nonbinding advisory ballot was 515 in favor and 87 against, an 86 percent majority.

Voters in McCall posted results of 421 in favor to 68 against, while Donnelly voters voted 94-19 in favor. Officials from both hospitals said the endorsement clears the way to complete the merger, possibly as soon as Oct. 1. "We are very pleased with this response from voters," said Dan Krahn, chairman of the McCall hospital board of trustees.

"Hospital leaders and trustees focused significant effort over the past year to educate residents on this issue and the value St. Luke's working in partnership with our local hospital could bring to our community," Krahn said.

On Sept. 2, trustees will review comments received from the community including surveys and results from Tuesday's advisory vote, and decide whether to join the two organizations. Their decision will be presented to St. Luke's Health System Board of Trustees at their meeting on Sept. 28. "We anticipate a smooth transition which will ultimately provide better care for patients and a more sustainable financial future for our hospital" said McCall hospital CEO Lee Rhodes.

After the merger, a new nonprofit corporation called St. Luke's McCall would control hospital assets, finances, and programs.

St. Luke's McCall would be governed by a local board of directors composed of area residents with one member being appointed by St. Luke's Health System.

The current hospital taxing district would remain in place and continue to contribute property taxes, which this year totaled about \$1.3 million.

"We are pleased the community supports joining St. Luke's and recognizes this is a proactive step in enhancing the future of health care in our community," Krahn said.

St. Luke's President and CEO David C. Pate also was pleased with Tuesday's vote outcome. "McCall Memorial Hospital is a wonderful hospital comprised of dedicated employees and volunteers who care deeply about their community and the people they serve," Pate said. "Together we will work to transform health care and thrive in the new health care reform environment as we work to attain the highest possible quality at the lowest cost with outstanding patient satisfaction and service," he said.