

Hopkins County Tax increase likely on the way for property owners

Written by Kerry Craig
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Jail construction is reason for higher rate

After the Hopkins County Commissioners Court adopts its budget for fiscal year 2015, which starts Oct. 1, property owners in the county can expect to see a slightly higher tax bill.

The tax increase of about a nickel for each \$100 in property value can be attributed to the \$16 million bond proposal passed by voters last November to fund construction of a new county jail.

County Judge Robert Newsom said the budget proposal for the next financial year will call for a total of \$18,834,591 in revenue and \$14,244,504 in expenditures, leaving an estimated \$4.5 million in fund balance.

“Our net tax revenue is a little over \$10 million and there are additional revenue that comes in through fines and court costs and all the things that come through county government. That's the revenue,” the judge said. “We will spend just about that much on salaries, benefits, fire and police protection, county roads — all of the things we do for the county. Eventually, this budget is going to balance, and that's what we are working toward right now.”

The proposed tax rate for the county for the coming year will be 61.2 cents, an increase of about five cents.

“The tax rate from last year, which was 56.8 cents per \$100 property value is what we have had for a number of years,” Newsom said. “The rate is going to go up because we are building the new jail, which is something that we really need.

“It is a necessary thing,” he said. “The voters voted it in but it is going to cost a little bit more in the tax rate just because of the jail.”

While the county's budget for the next year is, at this time, a work in progress, the county judge said he is very optimistic.

“There are some good things happening in Hopkins County that are going to not only make the budget balance, but we're going to come out ahead next year, I believe,” he said. “We've got some new businesses that are coming in, we've got some businesses that are restarting, and I am optimistic that will work and will work better, actually, than we anticipate.”

County commissioners must finalize the proposed budget in September. It will go into effect Oct. 1.