



PLATTE COUNTY COMMISSION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Platte County's inmate detention facility is overcrowded, outdated, and unsafe. For nearly ten years, various solutions to this problem have been proposed by consultants, architects, and citizen groups. Recently, the Platte County Commission offered a solution that requires voter approval of two separate questions that will appear on the August 6th ballot (see the link at the end for details about the ballot measures). The proposed plan calls for the current facility to be renovated and an expanded facility to be built adjacent to the existing facility.

Since sharing this plan with the public, some people have expressed concerns and have raised questions. Listed below are the two main issues that we've been hearing.

1. Should Platte County build a 25-year solution?

Our goal is to create a 25-year solution so that the question of inmate detention will be settled for a generation. The proposed size of the facility is consistent with the recommendations made by respected jail consultant Bill Garnos and also by The Committee for Public Safety, a group of respected citizens that were empaneled to study this issue.

2. Should Platte County pay for the expansion and operation of the detention center with a one-half cent sales tax?

The proposal pays for the expansion of the detention center and its operation with a sales tax. It does not raise property taxes. Some people have challenged points in the financial plan. The proposed sales tax and financial plan is strong enough to succeed if approved by the voters. Creating accurate financial projections more than 5 years into the future is always a challenge, but a long-term solution needs long-term projections.

For this project to be successful and not to have an adverse impact on the county's overall long-term financial condition, the sale tax revenues need to be sufficient to pay for debt service on the bonds (construction costs + interest) and the cost to operate the jail. If the sales tax is too low, property taxes will have to be increased to cover the shortfall. If revenue comes in more than expected, then we can pay the bonds down early, decide not to renew the county's current law enforcement sales tax when it expires in 2030, put the excess funds in a reserve account for the renovation projects that will be required at the end of the expanded facility's life span, etc.

There are many variables in the projections that can have a positive or negative affect on the financial strength of this project, including interest rates, sales tax growth rates, jail operational costs and their associated growth rates. Based on our estimates (which include a 3% growth rate in sales tax revenues and a 4.5% interest rate on the bonds), we will have excess revenues. However, if these assumptions prove to be too optimistic, the sales tax revenues will fall short of projections forcing the county to find another source of revenue (most likely increased property taxes) to support this project.

The proposal calls for a one-half cent sales tax because a three-eighths cent tax just won't generate enough revenue to cover the costs.

Throughout this process, we've been guided by the following key principles:

1. Adequate jail space is an essential tool for effective law enforcement and a key to public safety. Public safety is local government's absolute number one responsibility.
2. Any acceptable solution needs to be effective for a generation. No band aides and no kicking the can down the road.
3. Keep the taxes required to fund the project as low as possible. As fiscal conservatives, we try to keep spending and taxation to a minimum. But fiscal conservatism is more than that, it also means managing your assets in a way that doesn't cause financial problems in the future.

If you have any further questions, please visit the county's webpage dedicated to this topic at <https://www.co.platte.mo.us/Jail>.



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