

Public safety ballot question awaits voters

The Johnson County Board of County Commissioners has approved a question for the November 8th general election ballot asking voters to authorize a 1/4 cent public safety sales tax to fund construction of a new county courthouse and a coroner facility.

If passed by voters in November, the 10-year sales tax would go into effect April 1, 2017, and end on March 31, 2017.

The public safety sales tax would fund a new 28-courtroom courthouse across the street from the existing location on Santa Fe and Cherry Street in downtown Olathe, and a new coroner facility near the county's crime lab at 119th Street and Ridgeview in Olathe.

The new buildings would:

- Create safety and security improvements — separating inmates and offenders from victims, witnesses

Public safety services at Johnson County Courthouse include investigating, prosecuting elder abuse. See cover story on pages 10-11.

Courthouse tours

Beginning in July, tours and presentations of the existing courthouse will be offered, generally on the second Monday and fourth Tuesday of each month from 5-8 p.m..

The upcoming schedule includes:

- Monday, July 11, and Tuesday, July 26; and,
- Monday, August 8, and Tuesday, August 23.

Tour times will be at 5, 5:45, 6:30, and 7:15 p.m. Please RSVP at 913-715-3300. If special accommodations are required to attend a presentation/tour, please call 913-715-0725 at least 48 hours in advance.

and jurors in the courthouse halls.

- Replace the aging, overcrowded courthouse — with a more suitable building that would be accessible/ADA compliant.
- Plan for future growth — as the county adds 10,000 residents each year.
- Perform autopsies in an accredited county facility — instead of a pay-to-use facility in Kansas City, Kansas.

The estimated cost of a new courthouse is \$182 million. If the public safety sales tax does not pass, the county would renovate and add on to the existing courthouse costing an estimated \$216 million. While costing \$34 million more, the renovation project would not adequately solve all of the courthouse's current problems with safety and security, accessibility, and lack of space for future growth.

Sales tax revenue would also pay for a coroner facility estimated at a cost of \$19 million. Currently Johnson County does not have a coroner facility. Autopsies are performed in a non-accredited facility in Wyandotte County that does not have on-site toxicology or real-time data reporting. A new facility would provide real-time data reporting for epidemics and crime, resulting in opportunities for quicker county response to potential public health issues and emerging crime trends.

More information on the new courthouse and coroner facility is available at www.jocopublicsafety.org. **BT**



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