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Jackson County Launches New Website to Inform Residents About Local Sales Tax Referendum

Voters will decide in November whether to approve a 1% local sales tax to help pay for the new law enforcement center and government center.

Jackson, Minn. – Jackson County has unveiled a new website – JacksonCountyCenters.org – designed to inform residents about the referendum seeking a 1% local sales tax to help finance the new \$41.2 million law enforcement center and government center that is currently under construction.

The county's Government Center East building was torn down to make way for a new facility that will house both county law enforcement and government services. After an extensive assessment of the aging government building and jail, the county determined that both facilities needed to be replaced.

"For years, we have known that our current jail is not designed or equipped to safely manage inmates," said Sheriff Shawn Haken. "A new law enforcement center and jail will be essential to comply with state standards, support our law enforcement personnel and protect and serve our community."

The county will use a combination of cash reserves and existing revenue from wind production and current property taxes to pay for a majority of the costs to build the new law enforcement and government center building, which is under construction next to the Jackson County Courthouse.

The county is proposing a local sales tax to complete the project's financing. If approved, the county would collect up to \$17.5 million over a 25-year period. Local sales taxes paid by nonresidents would contribute about \$5.5 million toward the project, according to a study by the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Community Vitality.

If the referendum fails, county property taxes will increase by approximately 5% to make sure there is adequate funding for the new building.

“We put forward the referendum because a local sales tax ensures that nonresidents contribute to the cost of this important community investment,” said Jackson County Commissioner Don Wachal. “Otherwise, the only alternative would be to raise property taxes. We thought it would be best for residents to decide which option they prefer.”

The county jail has been in violation of numerous state regulations since 2005 due to a wide range of problems such as cells that are too small, lack of medical space and outdated systems. The Minnesota Department of Corrections has warned the county that ongoing compliance violations at the jail could eventually lead to its closure.

Before its recent closure, the Government Center East building was more than 60 years old and faced major infrastructure problems that were too expensive to address through renovations. State and federal government services have expanded over the years, but the government center and Jackson County Courthouse lacked the space to provide services efficiently and effectively.

The new government center will consolidate the county assessor, auditor/treasurer and recorder’s office into a shared service division called Property & Public Services. This consolidation aims to enhance service delivery and efficiency. The center will offer expanded services such as veteran services, driver’s licensing, passport services and more.

“The new government center will provide adequate space and efficient design, ultimately streamlining services for residents,” Jackson County Commissioner Phil Nasby said. “This will improve efficiency and accessibility, while addressing the critical infrastructure issues of the old building.”

The proposed law enforcement center will serve as the headquarters for the Jackson County Sheriff’s Office, featuring modern security systems, 24 inmate beds, designated evidence and equipment areas, medical facilities and improved accommodations for officers. The facility will also support state agencies, including the Minnesota State Patrol and the Department of Natural Resources.

Residents are encouraged to visit the new website to learn more about the referendum, details about the project and the financing plan. The website will be updated regularly through Election Day with additional information as it becomes available.

“With construction already under way, we want to make sure our voters understand the choice they will make about the local sales tax proposal,” said County Administrator Ryan Krosch. “The

website provides a convenient way for residents to learn more about the project, the financing plan and how to vote.”

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