



Kingman County Commission

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Kingman County sets special election

The Kingman County Commission has called an Oct. 29 special election to ask voter approval for a new, one-quarter cent retailers' sales tax and extension of an existing three-quarter cent retailers' sales tax, with proceeds from both used to help fund construction of a new county Law Enforcement Center and Kingman County Jail.

The county received approval from the Kansas Legislature in 2010 to levy up to one cent in countywide sales tax with proceeds pledged to fund "the costs of constructing and furnishing a law enforcement center and jail facility and the costs of roadway and bridge improvements." The tax could be levied for no more than 20 years. There was no countywide sales tax in effect at that time.

In August 2010, Kingman County voters approved a three-quarter cent countywide sales tax with proceeds going to road and bridge projects. That tax expires in 2020.

The Oct. 29 special election will ask voters to approve the remaining one-quarter cent sales tax available to the county, with the new tax going into effect July 1, 2014 and continuing for 20 years. Voters also will be asked - in the same question - to extend the three-quarter cent sales tax for an additional 20 years, starting in 2021, with all proceeds going to the Law Enforcement Center project.

Typically, proceeds from such sales taxes are shared between the county and the city but the law approved by the legislature allows the county to keep all the revenue. The new one-quarter cent sales tax is expected to raise \$223,000 annually. Revenue from the three-quarter cent sales tax is expected to be \$670,000 annually.

The county has hired BG Architects, Manhattan, in association with HOK Architects, to design the new Law Enforcement Center, which would be built six blocks east of the county courthouse at an estimated cost of \$11.8 million. The new facility will include a 32-bed jail, offices for the Kingman County Sheriff and Kingman Police departments, an emergency operations center, the county's 911 call center, and records and evidence storage. The building will be built to FEMA standards.

The building now being used as the LEC and jail is located in a flood plain and does not meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards. The facility was built in 1959 and was designed for the sheriff's office and a staff of five people. Today it is home to more than 25 employees working in the sheriff's office, the police department, a 13-bed jail and the county's 911 call center.

A National Institute of Corrections assessment in 2009 declared the current building "dysfunctional" and recommended a new facility be constructed. In 2011, a citizen committee reviewed the existing facility and also recommended that a new LEC be built, calling it a "necessity."

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