



**COMAL COUNTY, TEXAS
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County calls \$76 million bond election for new jail

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NEW BRAUNFELS — The Comal County Commissioners Court on Thursday called a Nov. 3 bond election, seeking approval for the issuance of \$76 million to build a new county jail.

Under the proposed project, the funds would pay for a new 589-bed jail on land adjacent to the current Walter Fellers Law Enforcement Center between West San Antonio Street and Interstate 35 and the renovation of the current center for the sheriff's office.

Issuing the bonds would require a roughly 1 cent increase of the county tax rate; owners of property valued at \$200,000 would see an increase in their annual tax bills of about \$20.

“Public safety is the most important service a county can provide,” said Comal County Sheriff Bob Holder, “and having a jail with enough space to house prisoners from across the county is a vital piece of that.”

The current 337-bed jail was built in 1985 and expanded in 1999. As Comal County growth has increased, the jail has become increasingly crowded; an architectural study in 2012 determined the jail then was “basically at full capacity,” leading the county to begin the process of acquiring land and consulting with architects to determine the cost of a new facility.

In the past year, the county periodically has transferred inmates to Guadalupe County because of insufficient space. The new facility would be designed to accommodate future years of growth and allow for expansion to about 900 beds.

Maintenance costs in recent years also have increased, now averaging over \$200,000 annually and including significant items such as plumbing replacement (\$565,000 in 2010), air conditioning repair (\$32,000 in 2011 and 2013) and the replacement of jail doors (\$250,000 in 2011-13) and the jail's kitchen floor (\$25,500 in 2015).

The jail processes nearly all those arrested within the Comal County limits, serving 10 entities –

including six municipalities, two state agencies and the U.S. Marshals Service.

“Because the jail serves all Comal County residents, we felt it was important that the residents vote on this project,” said County Judge Sherman Krause. “We encourage residents to participate in how their tax dollars are spent.”

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