

6-28-17 County Judge's Article

NEW VOTING EQUIPMENT ORDERED

At this week's meeting, the Commissioner's Court made the decision to purchase new voting equipment for the county to replace the old voting machines and tabulating equipment that had been in use for some ten or twelve years now.

At budget planning time last year, our county clerk Barbara Vansa had already recommended that this equipment be replaced but we postponed the decision back then due to our uncertain financial situation at the time. Even though we would still rather not add yet another big ticket item such as this to our county budget load (some \$400,000), we feel that postponing the changeover any longer is too risky from a reliability standpoint. Barbara tells us that the Secretary-of-State's office is also telling them that they are going to decertify the type of equipment that we currently are using within the next two years as well which means that a changeover is going to be required in the near future by the state. Like us, many other counties are proceeding with the change already.

Unfortunately the cities and school districts in the county that use the county's tabulating equipment will be forced to replace their voting machines as well.

In order to fit this large expenditure into our budget, our intention is to borrow the necessary funds on an eight year tax exempt contractual obligation note with a large balloon payment in the eighth year. The annual payments will be approximately \$19,000 per year with a \$350,000 payment in the eighth year which is the first year after our last \$650,000+ bond payment on the Law Enforcement Center.

Voting equipment technology has improved dramatically over the dozen or so years since our current equipment was produced. Touch screen technology has advanced to the point where it is reliable for use in voting equipment, and as a result the new machines will weigh only about 20 pounds each (vs. 40+lbs. on the old machines) making their transport and setup much easier for our election workers. Signin will now all be paperless, voters with a driver's license will be able to simply scan in. There are a number of other improvements that will speed up the voting process.

At any rate, we are proceeding with the change; as usual, there is no help financially from Austin or Washington, we conduct their elections and we pay for them with our local property tax dollars.