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INSIDE

WASHINGTON COUNTY JAIL BOND ISSUE

New facility would save county \$5.7 million

Vote is May 15

Editor's note: This is the third in a three-part series about the proposed \$24.5 million bond issue to build a new law enforcement and criminal justice center in Washington County.

BY LEEANNA ELLIS
editor@enterprise.pub.com

If approved, a bond issue to build a proposed law enforcement and criminal justice center could save Washington County \$5.7 million over 20 years, according to an analysis by the Washington County Board of Supervisors.

Voters will decide a \$24.5 million bond issue during the May 15

primary. The new justice center will replace the antiquated 15-bed jail and allow the county to discontinue transporting prisoners to facilities across the state. The total cost with interest will be \$33.3 million.

The levy would increase 0.057 cents per \$100 of taxable valuation. The owner of a house valued at \$100,000 would pay an additional \$57 per year.

If the bond issue is voted down, the cost over 20 years is an estimated \$39 million. The estimated levy would increase 0.065 cents per \$100 of taxable valuation — meaning the owner of a house valued at \$100,000 would pay an additional \$65 per year.

"If you're saying no, you're not saving money," Chairman Steve

Dethlefs said. "You're asking for a tax increase that over 20 years will be greater than the bond amount. At the end of that 20 years, you don't own anything."

In 2016-17, Washington County spent \$1.2 million to operate the jail — \$507,000 of that was used to transport and house an average of 21 inmates in other locations.

"It's kind of the true barometer. Expenses are real; prisoners are real," Dethlefs said.

The county used those numbers and the expected growth to calculate the estimated costs over a 20-year period.

"We know historically we've been growing about 11 percent average (over nine years)," Dethlefs said. "To be conservative, we selected six percent. It probably

will slow down."

In the first three months of 2018, the average inmate population is lower than the previous year.

"But when you just look at that small of a data set, you're just looking through the keyhole," he said. "You're not looking at a more robust data set that paints a better picture."

Those numbers could simply be an anomaly, Dethlefs said.

If the county continues to house inmates elsewhere, the costs will only continue to increase, Dethlefs said. If that happens, the county will exceed the constitutional and statutory levy limitations of 50 cents per \$100 of taxable valuation. That is not sustainable, he said.

"As a board, we're tasked with taking the longer view and steering the county away from unsustainable practices," Dethlefs said. "By all accounts, this looks to be an unsustainable process and we're searching for a solution. The bond creates a level cost over 20 years on housing infrastructure."

Dethlefs equated the county's situation to buying or renting a house.

"That's what we're doing. We're buying a house — the jail. Or are we going to continue to rent it?" he said. "Rent you have no control what is going to happen. They may not renew your lease,

SEE JAIL, 10A

CELEBRATING SIX GENERATIONS

Good Shepherd resident meets her great-great-granddaughter

BY LEEANNA ELLIS
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Lucille Newcomb talked sweetly to one-month old Isabella Wacha as she cradled her in her arms Thursday at Good Shepherd Lutheran Community in Blair.

It was the first meeting for the 97-year-old Good Shepherd resident and her great-great-granddaughter.

Six generations of Isabella's fam-

ily gathered to mark the event: her mother, Alexis Hicks; her grandfather, Jeremy Hicks; great-grandmother, Teresa Hicks; great-great-grandmother, Lynette Tyler; all of Bellevue; and Newcomb.

"We had five generations many years with (Newcomb's) mother," Tyler said. "This being six is really fantastic for us. It's quite a novelty."

While six generations is rare, the Guinness Book of World Records states the most generations alive in a single family is seven.

Teresa Hicks joked that their family doesn't need to research their family history with so many generations.

"You know that show on TV where they always go back and find their ancestors?" she asked. "I get to call mine."

Newcomb's family made sure to snap several photos of Isabella and Newcomb together. Tyler said it will be special to show Isabella those photos when she is older.



PHOTOS BY LEEANNA ELLIS | PILOT-TRIBUNE

Lucille Newcomb, 97, holds her great-great-granddaughter, Isabella Wacha, one month, Thursday at Good Shepherd Lutheran Community. It was the first time six generations of Newcomb's family were together.



Six generations of one family gathered Thursday at Good Shepherd Lutheran Community in Blair. Baby Isabella Wacha, one month, is the sixth generation of this family. Pictured, front, from left: Good Shepherd resident and great-great-grandmother Lucille Newcomb, 97, mother Alexis Hicks, and baby Isabella. Back: great-great grandmother Lynette Tyler, great-grandmother Teresa Hicks and grandfather Jeremy Hicks.

BHS to present 'You Can't Take It With You'



LEEANNA ELLIS | PILOT-TRIBUNE

Payton Murray, Mitchell Guynan and Nolan Dawson, back, rehearse a scene from "You Can't Take It With You." The play will be presented Thursday, Friday and Saturday in the Lela Neve Auditorium at Blair High School.

BY LEEANNA ELLIS
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Blair High School director Kelli Westphal was searching for a classic show for the drama department's spring production.

She found it in "You Can't Take It With You," a comedic play set in New York City in the 1930s shortly after the Great Depression. The show, which won the 1937 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, is one of the 10 most-produced school plays since rights became available in 1939. BHS will present the show at 7 p.m. Thursday,

Friday and Saturday in the Lela Neve Auditorium. Tickets will be sold at the door.

"What I love about it is there is a timeless message," Westphal said. "That whole message of what is your life about and are you really doing the things you love."

Westphal also saw the show as a challenge for her actors as it is a total ensemble piece.

"The actors quickly discovered that although maybe they had two lines in 10 pages, they were on stage the whole time,"

SEE PLAY, 10A

OBITUARY

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