



## **Bexar County Commissioners Court**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Proposed budget sees first significant sign of recovery since recession**

Bexar County's \$1.685 billion budget for the next fiscal year shows signs of the first notable increase of property tax revenue since the financial crash in 2008, County Manager David Smith told Commissioners Court Tuesday. The proposed fiscal year 2013-14 budget keeps the tax rate at 32.68 cents per \$100 valuation, resulting in a savings of \$75 million for taxpayers.

The \$26.5 million increase in the general fund, which is dependent on property tax revenue, will help bring some of the County's lowest paid employees up to a market rate, add program changes and lessen the impact of growing healthcare costs on employees.

"Before 2008, Commissioners Court set a policy to evaluate the pay scales of county employees every three years, rotating through the non-exempt, exempt and union pay scales each year to bring them all to market rate," Smith said. "The last rotation stopped with the non-exempt employee table when we froze everything because of the financial crisis."

Employee benefits and compensation account for \$13 million of the proposed increase in the fiscal year 2013-14 budget, due in part to adjusting the non-exempt employees' salaries. Those employees, on average, will see a 6.3 percent increase in pay. Non-exempt employees who already have a market rate salary or are above the market rate salary will get a 2 percent cost of living adjustment.

The proposal includes a 2 percent cost of living adjustment for all other civilian employees. The proposed budget also includes an increase of \$2.2 million for projected increases in healthcare costs, rather than passing the increase onto employees, Smith said.

"I am happy to see we're able to begin our market adjustments for our pay tables again," Commissioner Paul Elizondo said, explaining it has been a policy of the court to establish fair market salaries to attract and retain talented employees.

“But health care costs are out of control, and we need to develop a strategy to prevent that from impacting employees,” Elizondo added. “We want to keep all these good employees and we need to make sure their benefits are such that it’s worth it for them.”

The public safety budget includes an additional \$9 million for the next fiscal year, including \$2.9 million for the second year of the Collective Bargaining Contract with the Deputy Sheriffs. The proposal for a new Court Services Emergency Response Team would use \$235,361 to train and equip existing uniformed positions assigned to court security to act as a sort of SWAT team for the courthouse complex and other county facilities. An additional \$5.7 million would cover a new records management system and safety equipment for the Sheriff’s Office.

Commissioners Court will adopt the budget and tax rate at its Sept. 10 meeting. In the meantime, they will have budget work sessions on Aug. 29, Sept. 4 and Sept. 9. The first two budget work sessions also will serve as the first and second public hearings on the proposed tax rate as required by law. The fiscal year begins on Oct. 1.