



Bexar County Commissioners Court

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County budget shows positive signs of economic recovery

The \$1.6 billion budget adopted by Commissioners Court Tuesday includes an increase of \$17 million in property tax revenue, but holds the property tax rate at the same level as previous years. The additional revenues will allow for enhancements to employee compensation and benefits, a continued focus on flood control capital improvement projects, investment in public safety and improved service delivery to County residents.

“This was our first post-financial crash budget where we’ve seen a positive turn of events in the local economy,” County Manager David Smith said. “This budget addresses the core needs of the county and allows us to improve service delivery to a growing county population.”

The budget includes an increase of \$9 million to address public safety through training for investigations, court security management, prisoner control, emergency response and weapons certification. The creation of a Court Services Emergency Response Team also will allow deputies to be trained to respond to immediate threats within the Courthouse, Justice Center and Paul Elizondo Tower. The Sheriff’s Office also will implement a new records management system that will allow for storage, retrieval, retention, archiving and viewing of information pertaining to law enforcement operations.

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Uniformed employees covered by the collective bargaining agreement will receive a 3 percent pay increase and increases according to the agreement's step pay plan. Civilian employees will receive a 3 percent cost of living adjustment, up from the proposed 2 percent; and employees in the nonexempt pay table could see anywhere between a 3 percent and 11 percent increase in pay due to a market study of salaries.

"Our employees have been doing more with less since the financial crash," Commissioner Paul Elizondo said. "I'm glad that we could give them a pay increase this year, and for those who are among the lowest paid employees we were able to bring their salaries up to match the local market."

The budget provides start-up funding for a Mental Health Department that will develop, implement and coordinate policy and community wide strategies to address mental health concerns. The 3-person department will be tasked with identifying service delivery needs and gaps in the mental health service network. A particular focus will be placed on services for the indigent.

"We have done a commendable job with our specialty courts and overall treatment of the mentally ill who come into the justice system, but just as with most things, we can always do better," County Judge Nelson Wolff said. "This team will help assure that we are getting the best use out of the money we put into the mental healthcare of our residents."