



## **Bexar County Commissioners Court**

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### **Proposed County Budget Focuses on Infrastructure with Cut in Tax Rate**

With a look towards the next Texas Legislative Session and continued challenges to local control, Bexar County Manager David Smith presented the proposed Bexar County Budget for FY 2018-19. With Commissioner Elizondo teleconferencing in remotely, Commissioners Court listened to the proposed budget of \$1.71 billion for all funds including \$576 million in operating appropriations and \$708 million in Capital projects including road maintenance and flood control and \$274 million for contingencies and reserves, most of which carry forward funding for multi-year capital projects.

"This proposed budget continues our sound financial management policies and provides for improvements across our County," County Judge Nelson Wolff said. "We are going to cut the tax rate while maintaining current operations."

County Manager David Smith recommended a further reduction in the tax rate from \$0.304097 to \$.301097, which equates to 4.7 percent growth rate in property tax revenue. At the proposed tax rate, the majority of new revenue is to be generated by new construction. Additionally, this tax rate supports the proposed budget, which plans for potential limits on the County's property tax revenue and its ability to finance Capital Improvement and Road projects.

"With my fellow Court members, we have lowered the tax rate for the last two years, saving taxpayers about \$14 million," stated Precinct 3 Commissioner Kevin Wolff. "With new construction expected to generate almost \$4 billion in additional value, we hope to be able to reduce the current tax rate even further while continuing to generate new revenue to fund capital improvements and road projects."

Sound financial planning has maintained Bexar County's Triple-A bond rating from all three major rating agencies once again this year. The County continues to maintain a Triple-A bond ratings from all three major ratings agencies which has resulted in an estimated savings of \$89.1 million in debt service payments for the County. One of the most significant factors is the healthy cash reserve balance Commissioners Court has approved over the last several budgets. This year's proposed General Fund balance is \$70.8 million which is above the level consistent with rating agency guidance.

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With infrastructure and capital projects being an important component, highlights of the proposed budget include road and bridge funding reallocation, capital improvement projects, flood control projects, jail population reduction and employee compensation and benefits.

Although the County's Flood Control Program is almost complete, a \$2.5 million expansion and upgrade of the County's High Water Life Saving Technology (HALT) Program is recommended. Additional sites will be added, traffic arms will be upgraded, new hardware installed and software will be upgraded.

"The County has invested \$500 million in our 10-year flood control program and that has already yielded an estimated economic impact of \$822 million and 4,700 jobs," stated Precinct 2 Commissioner Paul Elizondo. "But we aren't done yet. We are proposing a \$2.5 million upgrade to our existing HALT system. Keeping Bexar County residents safe during severe weather continues to be a priority for Commissioners Court."

The Proposed budget also includes funding to increase the Livable Wage from \$14.25 to \$15.00 per hour for all employees not already earning \$15. Funding in the amount of \$1.9 million is proposed for a 1 percent cost of living adjustment for all employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement or the Livable Wage.

"This upcoming year, we are increasing the livable wage to \$15 an hour, stated Commissioner Elizondo. "Our number one asset at the county is our employees and this proposal ensures we are taking care of them."

Public safety improvements and upgrades include two new Sheriff's Patrol Substations on the West and East sides of Bexar County. With the opening of these two new stations, there will be an expanded law enforcement presence, decreased emergency response times and savings in vehicle and fuel costs.

"The key to reducing crime is not only an increased law enforcement presence, but also engagement with the neighborhoods," stated Precinct 1 Commissioner Sergio "Chico" Rodriguez. "By locating these substations within the heart of our communities, we'll be able to work more closely to increase communication, identify contributing factors and develop innovative strategies."

Public hearings on the proposed tax rate will be included in the Sept. 4 and Sept. 7 meetings and work sessions, with the final budget being adopted on Sept. 11.

The proposed budget is online at [www.bexar.org](http://www.bexar.org).

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