

New Richardson Co Jail Feasible, Costs a Concern

(KTNC)--The Richardson County Jail Advisory Committee is nearing the end of its preliminary work and appears to be leaning towards a recommendation that the county build a new jail.

Committee members will meet next with County Commissioners as they consider whether to recommend that the county build a new law enforcement center at the Armory Building on the west edge of Falls City.

The Jail Committee met November 7 with architects from Prochaska and Associates. Andy Snyder of Smith Hayes was also present to discuss financing options.

The committee is considering two options. One is to build a 24-bed jail at the Armory Building, and the second is to close the jail altogether and transport prisoners to other county jails.

If the jail were to close, Sheriff Randy Houser said the county could send a couple prisoners to Nemaha County but most prisoners would be sent to Cass County.

Jay Weingarten with Prochaska and Associates estimated the total cost to add a 24-bed jail to the Armory at approximately \$3.6 million. He estimated the cost to transport and house prisoners in another county at \$7.9 million over 20 years.

Snyder said financing a new jail based on the current budget would require a tax increase of approximately 2.5-cents per \$100 of taxable valuation. That's roughly \$25 per \$100,000.

In discussion, Jail Committee members said the project appears feasible, and the county will need to build a new jail eventually. They did wonder if there were ways to lower the cost, such as reducing the number of beds. Committee members suggested that while the cost appears okay now, it could be more difficult to pay if commodity prices continue to drop and the agriculture land market falls.

When asked whether they'd recommend the County Board proceed with the project, seven of the 10 committee members said yes and two said no, with one member absent. The Jail Committee will meet with the County Board at 6:30 Tuesday evening.