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New Theater Proposal Expected on Fall Ballot

(KNZA)--Hiawatha voters are expected to face a new sales tax proposal this fall for the construction of a city-owned movie theater.

A petition containing 261 signatures was submitted Thursday morning to the Brown County Clerk's office seeking to place a revised proposal on the November 4th general election ballot.

County Clerk Debbie Parker says her office will now verify the names to make sure they have enough signatures. Parker says 190 valid signatures are needed. If the petition is deemed valid, she says the Hiawatha City Commission would then have to vote to place the issue on the November ballot.

Hiawatha resident Matthew Haws, who spearheaded the petition drive, says the revised proposal calls for a .375 percent sales tax for ten years, which would generate about \$2.2 to \$2.4 million. The cost of a new three-screen theater has been estimated at around \$1.8 million. Haws said the extra funds generated by the sales tax would go into a capital account, to be used only towards future movie theater needs.

Hiawatha voters on April 1st defeated a proposed half-cent sales tax increase to fund the construction of a new theater by a more than 140-vote margin. It didn't contain a sunset provision. The proceeds would have also been used for recreational and economic development purposes.

Haws said he believes the number one reason the original proposal failed was due to voter's uneasiness about the never ending sales tax.

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