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County bond talk continues

Commissioners mull details of May 12 election

By Brad Rollins
Staff Reporter

San Marcos — By BRAD ROLLINS

Staff Reporter

The Hays Commissioners Court put off calling a \$190 million-plus road and parks bond election after getting hung up on details during an all-day session on Tuesday.

The court will meet again Friday to try again to hammer out an agreement on how to package the proposals even as the list of projects they want to include grows.

As a last resort, commissioners scheduled another session for Monday, March 12, the last day they can call a May 12 election under state law.

"We're still not there. I hope we can resolve the issues Friday and, once we get the ballot language written, go for a final legal review," County Judge Elizabeth Sumter said. "We scheduled a meeting next week just in case all else fails."

Debate on Tuesday differed widely from a week earlier when the court appeared to agree to put forward a single package to voters built around an agreement from the Texas Department of Transportation. The accord calls for the county to reimburse most of the \$155.8 million pricetag for widening Ranch Road 12 and Farm-to-Market Road 1626 and building a three-mile segment of the San Marcos loop. No votes were taken but members also seemed inclined toward adding additional money for safety improvements to Farm-to-Market Road 1826 and, possibly, buy right-of-way for the rest of the loop's route around the city's east side.

Coupled with a separate package for \$15 million to \$30 million in money for parks and open space, the bottom line would range somewhere between \$190 million and \$200 million.

After hearing from more than a dozen residents who supported the parks bonds, road bonds or both, commissioners settled on \$30 million to preserve undeveloped land.

Pct. 4 Commissioner Karen Ford suggested separating the FM 1826 project and adding it with another TxDOT partnership for similar improvements to Texas 21. That would amount to a total of three proposals on the May ballot.

Then others suggested that additional money be added for improvements to county roads such as Dacy Lane, Fisher Store Road and County Road 266, the old Bastrop Highway.

The court will resume the discussion at 9 a.m. Friday.

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