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Bloomfield Chamber Welcomes Guest Speaker Carl Hefner

JULY 25TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Bloomfield, Missouri - Stoddard County Sheriff Carl Hefner spoke to a small crowd of interested voters Friday, July 13, 2018 at the Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce monthly meeting held at Elderland Restaurant.

His main topic of discussion was the two propositions on the ballot for the August primary. Proposition 1 and Proposition 2 both need to pass according to Sheriff Carl Hefner.

"Shall the County of Stoddard impose a county wide sales tax at the rate of one half (1/2) of one (1) percent for a period of seven (7) years from the date on which such tax is first imposed for the purpose of the renovation of the existing jail, construction, equipment, and design cost of a jail addition. Collections for this Proposition are not to begin until the the one half (1/2) of one (1) percent sales tax of Proposition 1 is approved."

This means on August 7, 2018 Proposition 1 must pass first before Proposition 2 can also be enacted. Both are needed for the survival of the Stoddard County Sheriff's Department.

Let's look at the past and see how the Sheriff's department has gotten to this point. First the jail was original constructed in 1983 to hold about 8 inmates. Then in 1991 the jail underwent an addition offering 4 more cells, two showers, dispatch area, laundry room and sheriff's office along with a booking area that is now an inmate property storage area. By the end of construction in 1991 the jail was designed to hold 28 inmates.

Since that time the jail has grown to over capacity, but not much renovation has been done. The average daily inmate population in 1998 was 34 making the jail capacity at 121%. During the 2016/2017 years the average daily jail population was 76 meaning jail was at 271% capacity.

The jail is now housing 4 people per 2-man cell and the day room is being used to house inmates for sleeping, etc. The kitchen is smaller than most apartments and they use residential washer and dryer constantly purchasing more than one a year to replace each as they run them almost 24 hours a day. Their food storage is outside and cold food storage is in refrigerators in the hallway. Safety of the officers is impaired because of the space and inmates having to go outside to get items to prepare three meals per day. There is always plumbing issues which need to be upgraded.

One of the most serious problems is not being able to segregate inmates. Which means if you are arrested for a minor violation you will be housed with violent sex offenders. There is simply no ability to segregate inmates. There is not even a holding area while they process new inmates.

Another serious issue is that the corrections officers do not have visual supervision of inmates at all times. Over crowding leads to jail assaults and increased costs in medical and manpower etc to transport to the hospital as well as the potential for officers to be injured due to increased assaults on staff. Also if there were a fire or emergency the hallways are filled with storage, refrigerators, and other clutter because of lack of proper storage.

The third most important safety issue for corrections officers is the fact that the cell doors don't latch properly. They are using an antiquated key system and many parts on the cell doors are not available or have to be specially made. Another cost and safety issue for our deputies.

The new addition to the jail will include a full basement, a separate booking area with line of sight to padded cells and holding cells, an full kitchen and food prep area, industrial laundry area, cold and dry storage and four isolation/observation cells and a holding area for booking. Most importantly it will include a secure "sally port" for transportation of inmates. This is extremely necessary not only for the safety of the officers, but to the public as well.

The main level of construction will house a control center for the entire jail where all doors will be operated from a "pod" system. This new construction will also house approximately 120 inmates which should then last for years.

The preliminary cost of the entire project is estimated to be a little over 9 million dollars. The proposed funding would come from the passage of this sale tax to fund the jail until the bond is paid back which should be 7 years. This tax will end in 7 years.

If you have any questions or would like Sheriff Carl Hefner to speak at your organization about Proposition 1 and 2 please contact him at 573.568.4654

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