



Jefferson City

# Post-Tribune

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JEFFERSON CITY, MISSOURI

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## Voters slam door on justice center

By RYAN SMITH  
News Tribune

By a 3-to-1 margin, Cole County voters overwhelmingly said no to a half-cent sales tax to fund a proposed \$36 million Justice Center.

The final unofficial results of Tuesday's county election were 9,752 votes (74.4 percent) against the tax and 3,348 (25.6 percent) in favor. Overall, 26 percent of registered Cole County voters cast ballots.

Both supporters and opponents of the proposal said they were surprised by the margin of defeat.

"I'm a little surprised. I was thinking that it would be a 60-40 vote," said former city councilman Clyde Angle, an outspoken opponent of the tax.

Former Presiding Judge Tony

Hiesberger, called the outcome "a wonderful testimony to the people's use of their right to vote.

"This has to do with common sense, and the people of this community are ready to step forward and help out on a cause when it merits their support, and this one just didn't merit their support," said Hiesberger.

Presiding Cole County Commissioner Bob Jones also seemed stunned by the result.

"I was surprised, I thought we made a good case," said Jones. "With that kind of response, I don't know where we'll go from here."

The proposal had called for a \$36 million facility, including a 150-bed jail, sheriff's department offices and six courtrooms, all to be built in the 400 block of East High and East

McCarty streets.

The center was expected to replace the jail built in 1936 and modern courtrooms to succeed those in the 1896 courthouse.

To fund the proposal, the county asked voters to approve a half-cent sales tax, using money generated by it to repay bonds that would be sold for the construction of the new facility and its operation.

In addition, the sales tax would have been reduced by 1/8-cent after construction debt was to be retired in about 25 years. The remaining 3/8 cents would continue to pay for operations and "other law enforcement costs."

Some critics however, say they didn't like the cost of the proposal — "I think most taxpayers really saw that the acquisition of the Baptist Building

block, at \$7.2 million, was a little excessive," said Angle — or a tax that didn't fully sunset.

Hiesberger also said the county made a mistake by leaving the public out of the process.

"I think, when you leave out the most important component at a round table, namely, the people who are going to pay the bill for this, you're asking for trouble," said Hiesberger. "Our elected officials, I hope, have learned a very good lesson from this."

Tuesday night didn't go well for Law Enforcement Center supporters, but did go well for election workers, who were happy with the county's new ballots and electronic counters.

"Last night went very smooth, we had no complaints at all," said County Clerk Marvin Register.

Annexation fails as split vote barely passes in city; target area's only 2 voters say no

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Lake voters reject center

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