

Council votes to approve new income tax for public safety

Written by George Browning
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At its regular meeting Monday, the Washington County Council voted to institute a Local Option Income Tax (LOIT) for public safety.

The increase means citizens of Washington County will have an increase in their income tax of 0.25 percent.

In order to institute the LOIT, the state requires counties who have the tax to also institute property tax relief.

The council also voted to approve that ordinance, which gives all property owners a 0.25 percent break on their property tax.

Council Attorney Mark Clark said the amount of relief and the amount of the increase should be pretty near even for most local taxpayers.

The money generated from the new tax can only be spent on public safety related items, but currently those type of bills are paid out of county general. The LOIT will free up money in the county's general fund to pay other things.

The tax is expected to generate around \$900,000 for Washington County with a portion being divided up among all the county's taxing entities.

An estimated \$600,000 will be the county's portion.

The tax is primarily to off-set the additional cost of operation and staffing the Washington County Detention Center after the renovation is complete.

Another area being looked at to help with the additional cost is housing prisoners from the Indiana Department of Corrections, but there is nothing written in stone saying the IDOC will even use the county's facility once it's completed.

The ordinances will now be sent to the state and will begin in 2014.

Both ordinances passed unanimously.

The Council's next meeting will be Aug. 22 at 8:30 a.m.