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## Installment-purchase plan up for a first vote Monday

By Jenny Hartley-Senior Reporter

County Council will vote Monday night on the first of three readings to use an installment-purchase financing plan to build a new courthouse.

An installment-purchase plan involves the sale of bonds, which are then paid back by taxes.

Before fire damaged the historic Lancaster County Courthouse on Aug. 4, county officials were moving forward with a bond referendum to build a new courthouse. While the 180-year-old existing courthouse has great historic value, officials had already declared it inadequate in space and security for holding court.

With an installment-purchase plan, the bonds sold to pay for the new courthouse would be paid back in property taxes or a new sales tax.

The referendum will be held Nov. 4 during the general election. The ballot question will ask voters if they want an extra 1 percent sales tax to pay for construction of the courthouse.

The extra sales tax would be collected for seven years or possibly a shorter time, until the bonds to build the courthouse are paid off, officials say.

A "no" vote would mean, by default, that the bonds would be paid back over 20 years in property taxes.

Money to build a new courthouse would be available more quickly through an installment-purchase plan, officials say. But it would also mean a higher interest rate on funds, totaling an extra \$1.5 million to build.

County officials hope to have the plans for a new building and a contractor chosen by Thanksgiving.

The Lancaster County School District used an installment-purchase plan a few years ago to build the new Indian Land High School and pay for renovations at other county schools.

Council's meetings usually begin at 6 p.m., but Monday's meeting will begin at 6:30 p.m. It will be held in council chambers on the second floor of the County Administration Building, 101 N. Main St. For details, call 285-1565.

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