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Voters approve sales tax

By Jenny Hartley - Senior Reporter

Lancaster County voters said yes to a new sales tax that will help pay for construction of a new courthouse.

According to unofficial results, 16,299 voters voted "yes" for the tax, while 11,386 voted against it. The tax will add 1 cent to Lancaster County's 7 percent sales tax.

The county is expected to begin collecting the tax in May 2009. It will be collected for no longer than seven years to pay off bonds used to build the courthouse. Officials estimate that a new courthouse and parking garage will cost \$33 million.

"I think it's great," said County Council Chairman Rudy Carter on Tuesday night. "People have voiced their opinion. Now we can proceed with building the courthouse."

A no vote would have meant that county property owners would have paid an extra 15 mills in taxes each year. That would total about \$100 on a \$100,000 home, Carter said.

"It would have been a tragedy – 15 mills a year for 20 years," he said.

Kathy Sistare, who is expected to take a seat on County Council in January for District 7, was also pleased Tuesday night with the referendum results.

"I think it is fair and equitable to everybody," she said. "I can't imagine it not passing."

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