



# Hays County News

## August 17, 2020

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Hays County Commissioners Court Approves Putting Bond on Ballot

**Hays County Courthouse, San Marcos, TX** – Hays County Commissioners Court approved calling for a bond election on the November 2020 ballot. The bond amount of \$75 million would provide funding for the creation of new parks, protection of open spaces and preservation of natural areas within Hays County.

The proposed measure would also protect and conserve the county’s unique natural landscapes, provide flood mitigation and storm water management, protect water quality and improve endangered species habitats.

“This may seem like an unlikely time for a bond election, but Hays taxpayers and voters deserve to have their say on this important decision.” said Hays County Judge Ruben Becerra. “We have great projects and opportunities in front of us right now and will likely have historic voter turnout in November. So yes, let the people speak.”

As part of the deliberations, the Court members reviewed recommendations from the Hays County Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission (POSAC). This 10-member citizen commission was comprised of two appointments from each member of the Commissioners Court. From March through July, the POSAC worked diligently to meet the Charter set forth by the Court and using the 2012 Hays County Parks, Open Spaces, and Natural Areas Master Plan (Master Plan) as its guiding document.

A privately funded scientific poll conducted among Hays County voters in June revealed strong support (71-77%) for general obligation bonds to be sold, particularly when they county’s property tax rate would not be affected.

The POSAC called for project submissions in the following categories:

1. Urban Parks
2. Open spaces and natural areas
3. Connectivity

Between May and mid-July, 18 projects were submitted by municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and land trusts working with landowners. Several Hays County projects were also submitted. POSAC subcommittees evaluated and scored each project, ultimately recommending 16 projects for some level of funding to the Commissioner’s Court on July 28. POSAC’s recommendation report and presentation to the Court are available on the POSAC web page.

Two public meetings, held August 4 and 6 via Zoom webinar technology, informed Hays County residents of the POSAC Charter, its work and the potential for a new parks and open space bond in November. Attendees also provided feedback to the POSAC.

At a regular meeting on August 11, Commissioners Court members discussed the POSAC recommendations and heard from the County's financial advisor. A review and analysis by that advisor determined that although the Covid-19 crisis has caused economic uncertainty and volatility in many parts of the country, Hays County government has been blessed with ongoing financial stability and solid expectations of continued growth.

"I understand many in our community are facing challenging times," said Commissioner Lon Shell. "My support for these [parks and natural spaces] efforts comes with a commitment that if this measure is approved by the voters, bonds would not be sold until we are comfortable with current and projected economic conditions."

He added that the current opportunities for increased conservation and recreation resulting from the work of POSAC are important to the future of Hays County.

"Our economic well-being depends on protecting and conserving our natural resources and continually improving our quality of life," he said.

Information about the 2020 Parks and Open Space Advisory Commission can be found on the Hays County website:

<https://hayscountytexas.com/departments/hays-county-parks-recreation/parks-open-space-advisory-commission-posac/>.

The POSAC Facebook page is at: <https://www.facebook.com/HaysCountyPOSAC/>

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