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Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, September 25, 2023

SEPTEMBER 26TH 2023 BY DEE LOFLIN

Stoddard County Commission Meeting - Monday, September 25, 2023

The Stoddard County Commission entertained more than 15 people in attendance for the morning meeting. The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance and a prayer.

Katelyn Lambert, Bootheel Regional Planning Commission w/ARPA Update

ARPA Request for Water District. \$15,168.02 for Water District #5

Motion to pay Water District #5 \$15,168.02 already approved thru the ARPA Funds made by Commissioner Carol Jarrell. Seconded by Commissioner C.D.Stewart. All three voted yes and the motion passed.

SS/SB 190 Bill Informational Discussion

Concerned Superintendents and Asst. Superintendents in Stoddard County attended the Commission meeting today. Cindy Crabb, Puxico School District, Gavin Miller, Dexter School District, Jason Karnes, Bloomfield School District, Brad Botsch, Bernie School District, Carrie Tripp, Richland School District, Shannon Garner, Advance School District, and Matt Asher, Bell City School District were on hand to discuss the new Senate Bill 190.

"I have a statement to make on behalf of the County Commission in regards to Senate Bill 190 and the role of how the Stoddard County Commission will play into the this bill. SS/SB 190 modifies provisions relating to the taxation of seniors," commented Presiding

Commissioner Greg Mathis. "It does exempt Social Security payments from Missouri Income Tax and Missouri is the 40th state to do so."

"It provides property tax relief to senior citizens if individual counties pass an authorizing ordinance or if a petition is submitted to the County Commission in support of such credit and is subsequently submitted to and approved by the voters," continued Mathis. "The legislation did not mandate that the tax credit 'shall be' forced upon each county, but allows each county to make their own determination as to whether the tax credit is implemented.

SB 190 was passed by the Legislature during the 2023 legislative session and recently signed Governor Parson signed the bill on July 6, 2023. The legislation modifies the law relating to the taxation of seniors. It has two main provisions, one related to property tax credits and one that deals with income taxes on retirement benefits.

"The law, as currently written, allows counties to provide a tax credit to seniors who are eligible for Social Security and who owns their home, use it as their primary residence and are required to make tax payments on that home," commented Mathis.

Under SB 190, qualifying seniors would be exempt from increase in the amount of property taxes they owe based on when they first became eligible for Social Security.

"We realize the financial burden increased property taxes can have on some senior citizens and we are not opposed to looking at options that could address this issue," stated Mathis. "However, it is important to also recognize that our school district relies on property taxes as a significant revenue source. Reductions in this important revenue source can lead to negative impacts on our students and teachers," continued Mathis.

"The amount of property tax credit shall be equal to the difference between the real property tax liability in the given year minus the real property tax liability on such homestead in the year in which the tax payer became eligible tax payer." Mathis said.

There are still many questions about the implementation of this legislation and the definition of some terms used in the new law, but here is what you need to know about its impact on each school district.

Mathis had several good questions regarding the new bill and asked Josh Speakman, Stoddard County Treasurer/Collector. Speakman was unable to answer some of the questions because the new law is not clear on many items.

According to the Missouri Tax Commission, the County Collector would be required to calculate the credit based on the tax liability for the homestead when a qualifying

individual first became eligible for Social Security benefits, which might have occurred a few or many years in the past.

Generally, under provisions of the Hancock Amendment, taxing jurisdictions (like school districts) can adjust their tax rate to make up for lost revenue. However, SB 190 does not provide the option for school districts to adjust their tax rates to recoup (e.g., recover) lost revenue, which will lead to an overall reduction in the amount of property tax revenue a school district will receive.

"Property tax funding provides a tremendous amount of the total operating revenue for our districts," commented Presiding Commissioner Greg Mathis. "If there is a major decrease in tax collections with no option for recoupment, we could be forced to ask our voters to approve a tax rate increase. This places the burden of additional taxes on our non-Social Security eligible residents.

Scott County will host a regional meeting for elected officials and anyone interested on October 11, 2023 in Sikeston at the Minor Convention Center. It starts at 9 a.m. and they do break for lunch and go until 3 p.m.

SS/SB 190 Property Tax Credit

This act authorizes a county to grant a property tax credit to eligible taxpayers residing in such county, provided such county has adopted an ordinance authorizing such credit, or a petition in support of such credit is delivered to the governing body of the county and is subsequently submitted to and approved by the voters, as described in the act.

Eligible taxpayers are defined as residents who 1) are eligible for Social Security retirement benefits; 2) are the owner of record of or have a legal or equitable interest in a homestead; and 3) are liable for the payment of real property taxes on such homestead.

The amount of the property tax credit shall be equal to the difference between the real property tax liability on the homestead in a given year minus the real property tax liability on such homestead in the year in which the taxpayer became an eligible taxpayer.

A credit granted pursuant to this act shall be applied when calculating the eligible taxpayer's property tax liability for the tax year. The amount of the credit shall be noted on the statement of tax due sent to the eligible taxpayer by the county collector.

The amount of property tax credits authorized by a county pursuant to this act shall be considered tax revenue actually received by the county for the purposes of calculating property tax levies.

In the coming months, the Stoddard County Commission will be monitoring this issue to see if the state legislative re-visits the approved legislation that was subsequently signed into law in order to correct concerns that have been raised," stated Presiding Commission Greg Mathis. "Also to see if any lawsuits will be filed regarding the approved law."

Josh Speakman, Stoddard County Collector/Treasurer

There are a lot of open ended issues/questions out there," stated Speakman. "The Missouri Associations of Counties has formed a task force to address concerns of their membership."

"Reasons I have reservations, it doesn't address new construction on a home is just one and the law doesn't define the residential vs the areas surrounding the home," continued Speakman. "There will be a major financial impact on the schools in Stoddard County."

"Just to implement this with the software change is going to cost the county \$25,000 plus a person to come in investigate all the parameters of the tax credit," continued Speakman. "We will need a uniform procedure for eligible recipient to provide the necessary documentation to verify eligibility and that will cost the County dollars."

"I don't want to see it go to the ballot yet due to the verbiage of the bill," Speakman said of the SB 190 Bill. "It needs to be hashed out in one more session of congress. It will be very challenging to implement this bill."

Aaron Mathis, representing the Dexter School Board asked if there was a way to determine how many homesteads in Stoddard County that are 62 years of age or above. Speakman said that it would be quite difficult to figure that out.

Mathis opened the floor to the superintendents, etc in attendance.

Anytime you can get a tax break that is great and we do respect our seniors, but we do have to take care of our schools and the budgets going down the road," Brad Botsch, Superintendent of Bernie Public Schools. "I agree with what Mrs. Tripp said, that we are "pitting" our children against our seniors."

Gavin Miller, Asst. Superintendent of Dexter Public Schools, "As we move forward in education we are having to adjust to many budgetary cuts, funds are going away and we are required to hire more people. The Tyson closure is going to affect our schools as well, especially at Dexter. I would love to see seniors have tax breaks, I have in-laws that would qualify, but again I agree with others here we have to maintain our budgets,"

"At that point the Stoddard County Commission will move forward to hear from all affected parties and then make a decision as to whether we as a Commission draft an ordinance to be voted on by the people and approved or do nothing and allow the question to be placed on the ballot via a petition by concerned constituents. Implantation would not go into effect until the 2024 tax cycle," stated Mathis.

Motion to accept the minutes from September 18, 2023 made by Commissioner Stewart. Seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to accept the closed session minutes from September 18, 2023 made by Commissioner Jarrell. Seconded by Commissioner Stewart. All three voted yes and motion passed.

Motion to move into closed session at 11:00 a.m. made by Commissioner Stewart. Seconded by Commissioner Jarrell. All three voted yes and motion passed.

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