

Itasca County Letter

Dear House Property and Local Tax Division,

Good evening and thank you for allowing this opportunity for input regarding the discussion around Local Option Sales Tax.

Itasca County has an impending sunset date imposed by the D.O.C. on our County jail. As the County Board weighs options on what to build and where, something that is very clear through numerous town-hall meetings and through a County-wide survey, is the overwhelming local voter support for a Local Option Sales Tax to fund the new correctional facility. As we attempt to try and predict what our economic picture will be in Itasca County after the COVID-19 response the importance of offering the voters a chance to decide on the funding mechanism this November becomes even more imperative.

Our survey results and interaction with Itasca County residents enforce the understanding that those who live here are financially stressed. A declining tax base, school referendum, and increase in Hospital taxation district levy has already strained tax payers significantly. There is overwhelming support from our constituents for a Local Option Sales Tax to fund this new facility. With the closing and/or temporary lay-off in many of the mining companies as well as planned shut downs in our paper and equipment manufacturers, we are hard pressed to assume our property tax base can absorb the cost a new correctional facility.

As only 30% of inmates are from the Grand Rapids area and nearly 30% of inmates come from out the Itasca County boundaries, a new correctional facility lends regional significance to the location.

As Itasca County followed the current Statute approved by Legislature and met all the requirements within said Statute, we ask that you approve our Local Options Sales Tax request and allow our voters to decide on the funding instrument. We have heard their voice loud and clear on this issue. I believe it is in times like this that we must recognize when we are called upon to assist and support those we serve.

Again, we greatly appreciate this opportunity to represent our community for approval of our request.

Respectfully,

Ben DeNucci, Itasca County Board Chair