

Douglas County tax request to be removed from ballot

by Dee Riggs | June 4, 2013, 7:48 p.m.

WATERVILLE — A sales-tax increase will not be on the ballot in Douglas County in August.

“There are too many unanswered questions that don’t make us feel comfortable at this point in time,” said county commission Chairman Ken Stanton on Thursday.

Among those unanswered questions are the costs of adult and juvenile incarceration, he said. By the end of the year, he expects to have firmer figures in hand on those costs, which make up a large part of the criminal justice budget.

On May 8, commissioners voted to place the tax measure on the ballot in August. Stanton said that was done to meet a ballot deadline, but commissioners knew they had until early June to remove the measure from the ballot.

It would have added 0.2 percent onto the existing sales tax. Since a 0.1 percent sales tax is already in place and earmarked for law and justice, the additional tax would boost the sales tax for law and justice to 0.3 percent.

That 0.1 percent tax has been in effect for about 14 years.

Douglas County’s sales tax is currently at 8.1 percent. If approved, the additional tax would have gone into effect Jan. 1. It would have raised \$933,203 in 2013.

Stanton said he expects commissioners to vote Monday to remove the measure from the ballot. Commissioners also will not attend city council meetings in the county. Earlier, they had said they would present information about the sales-tax increase at those regularly scheduled meetings.

Stanton said earlier this week that the tax increase was needed to prop up a law and justice budget that has been eroded by increases in salaries and health-care costs. He said commissioners are still concerned about the law and justice budget “because we’ve dug into that budget pretty deeply, more than we traditionally do.”

Dee Riggs: 664-7147

Reach Dee Riggs at 509-664-7147 or deeriggs@wenatcheeworld.com.