

County Considers Tax Hike For Relief

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At least two county supervisors support raising disaster relief funds through an increase in the sales tax if county voters want it.

Supervisors Dan Forbus and Wayne Moore this morning said they favor such a procedure if county voters would approve it — possibly in the June primary election.

It is estimated there is well over \$100 million in damage to roads and homes from the floods and mudslides during the Jan. 4 storm.

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Supervisors were told this morning that damage to public roads, buildings and parks is estimated at \$22.5 million with

county government costs at \$5.6 million.

The damage estimate for private roads, with more than 100 of them closed, could be as high as the county road cost alone at \$12.5 million, Acting County Administrator George Newell said.

Faced with such staggering estimates, Newell and board members agreed the county's financial resources are exhausted and either the federal or state government has to pay the county's share of costs.

So far, the Federal Emergency Management Agency states it will not release federal funds (\$3,000 per household to clear private roads) unless the county or homeowner "matches" the monies with \$1,000 per household.

Newell said the county can't pay the \$1,000 share and that he knows private
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citizens owning the homes in most cases can't pay the cost.

Supervisor Gary Patton said, "As I understand it, the federal offer is an illusory one (that) unless the county pays \$1,000, the federal government will give nothing."

Supervisors' Chairman Robley Levy said, "The federal government is leading the people into another disasterous situation; I think the federal government has turned its back on the people in a time of disaster."

Patton complained the Reagan administration is willing to "spend billions for shovels for people to pile dirt on themselves when nuclear war comes," but little money for American disaster victims.

Moore became angry at the attack on the Republican administration and Forbus became impatient with the entire political argument and called an end to it.

Forbus said the county is going to have to come up with a clear picture of its public and private costs of repair and then look at means to pay the costs.

He indicated he favored the sales tax idea over other types of taxes.

At the suggestion of a public tax, Patton complained, "This is the flip side of the private property rights argument: they're always saying 'the county doesn't have the right to tell us how to build,' but now when a road slips out, they're saying the county should repair it."

Forbus pushed on, saying, the sales tax would bring in funds, that along with state and federal funds, could "put the county back into some kind of semblance of the way it was."

The board took no action on the sales tax suggestion.

In order to save what money it could for the remainder of the year, the board agreed to Newell's recommendation that there be a hiring freeze on most vacated county positions until budget hearings in June.