Mayor gives more detail on civic center plans

By BOB PRUE
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High spirits prevailed at city hall Wednesday morning following the successful passage Tuesday of the revised sales tax ordinance. Mayor Dan Beckett, who led the drive, looked like he had a bonfire growing out of his ear.

In between congratulatory calls which he said were coming from throughout the state, he was able to fill in a few more details on what he expected to happen in the next few months.

The revised sales tax is expected to raise an additional $500,000 or more a year, which will help finance the proposed civic center facility.

He said that he already has received offers from private citizens who want to contribute money for the civic center construction.

He has had several calls from booking agencies who wish to schedule entertainment along the civic center. In fact, one agency already has put in its bid to book the opening date of the center.

Beckett said he will meet with Lowell Shumate, chairman of the council, either Friday or Monday to go over details of putting the new system of city sales tax into effect. Provided these administrative details can be worked out, the new system will go into effect on May 1.

As far as a time schedule on the facility, Beckett said the council will be consulting with architects on the design and plans and an overall cost estimate will be available by next month.

"Uncertain decisions will have to be made, and we certainly will be making them with the citizens' care. But we will be moving about as quickly as possible," he said. He expressed the hope that construction of the civic center could be underway by next year.

"The response of the voters certainly gives us the council confidence to act," he said. "The people have expressed their confidence and faith in the council's decision making ability."

He said that he plans to ring new week to begin negotiations with the civic center corporation which will build the facility and lease it back to the city.

The state legislature passed a bill earlier this year which allows the city to borrow against its long-term debt to help finance the civic center.

The state law, however, does not go into effect until July.