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# Blair voters to decide on half-cent sales tax increase



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Posted Friday, February 16, 2024 3:49 pm

**By Kevin Bumgarner - editor@enterprisepub.com**

The Blair City Council unanimously approved a resolution at Tuesday night's meeting that will add a question to the May 14 statewide primary election ballot asking whether residents are willing to pay an extra half penny in local sales tax.

The money, which could add as much as \$1 million a year to city sales tax revenue, would be used for infrastructure projects related to economic development efforts.

The city of Blair currently collects 1.5 cents in sales tax revenue on local purchases, which is on top of the state's 5.5 cent sales tax that is also applied to local purchases.

City Administrator Phil Green said that if approved by voters there are a variety of ways the additional money could be used, but infrastructure for housing and road maintenance and repairs are two of Blair's biggest needs at the moment.

"There are numerous large, challenging projects facing the city of Blair right now," Green told council members. He specifically referenced the need for housing infrastructure and the South Bypass project, which is taking money the city normally would be using for other transportation projects. Plans also are in the works for preliminary engineering and design work on a North Bypass.

"There's no way we can keep our streets maintained, finish up the South Bypass and especially get ready for the North Bypass without this additional money," Green told The Enterprise following the meeting.

The South Bypass is scheduled to open by late July or early August, and design work on the North Bypass could take up to six years to complete, Green told The Enterprise.

In other business Tuesday night, the council:

- Approved closing roads along the route of the Gateway to the West parade, scheduled for June 8. The parade will start at 16th Street and Butler, go north on 16th Street to South Street, turn east on South Street to 15th Street, go north on 15th Street to Washington Street, go west on Washington Street to 18th Street, at 18th Street go south to South Street before going east on South Street to 17th Street before ending at 17th Street and Butler. Those streets will be closed from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.
- The council also voted to allow the closing of Lincoln Street between 17th and 18th streets, and 17th Street from Washington to Colfax between June 6 and June 9 for Merriam's Carnival, the car show and craft show that also will be part of the Gateway to the West celebration.

- The council also gave preliminary approval to hire three new police officers, subject to the candidates passing an array of tests. If all three come on board, that will bring the number of Blair police officers to 18.

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Blair's Housing Advisory Committee gets started (/stories/blairs-housing-advisory-committee-gets-started,59902)

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**Blair’s freshman class meeting goals for college readiness (/stories/blairs-freshman-class-meeting-goals-for-college-readiness,59957)**

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**Blood drive hosted at high school (/stories/blood-drive-hosted-at-high-school,59898)**

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# ORIGAMI OPPORTUNITIES

DeSoto offers projects based on refugee's birds

Volunteers at the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge understand their own origami birds at the visitor center this past Saturday.

With Visitor Services Specialist Alyssa LaBodtke leading the activity, staff and volunteers learned to craft the origami birds based off the water birds that can be spotted at both the DeSoto and River Chase NWAs.

Participants were able to take their projects home after a hands-on experience of creating and learning an origami bird, a hobby that can be enjoyed at any age.

Volunteer Services Specialist Alyssa LaBodtke led the activity, helping those in attendance to craft their own works of origami.

Early Miller makes a fold as her mother, Sara Miller, watches on. Katherine Knappe adds an artistic touch to her origami owl.

A crane completed by Le Ann on the table as an example.

**Blair STEM students design and build automated, moving mechanical devices.** The Science Technology Engineering and Math class is an elective offered to juniors and seniors.

## Blair's freshman class meeting goals for college readiness

Sophomores not doing quite as well in reading, math

and science, and do not compare the performance of Blair high schoolers against a statewide or national average.

In total, 80 percent of the 175 member freshmen class in reading at grade level, and 60 percent of those students are performing at a level that has them on track to be 2025 Principal Tommy Chang's first-year seniors, based on results with the Washington County Pilot Program.

Eighty-five percent of attendees are performing at grade level in math, and 63 percent of those

SEI BATA, 15

## Pioneer student named World Language Distinguished Scholar

Green Miller said he hopes to use professional-grade skills in the future, and his recent achievement will help achieve his goals.

Miller, a senior at Fort Calhoun High School and former Speech student, was one of 40 students recognized as a 2023 Blair Distinguished World Language Scholar.

The recipient of a Fort Calhoun student received this honor was 2023 Distinguished Scholar Award recipient and Blair student for the Department of Education (ODE), "The World

SEI MILLER, 3

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