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Local 

## Harris Co. looking for ways to save money

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HOUSTON (KTRK) – At a time when everyone is looking for ways to save money, Harris County commissioners are doing the same. On Tuesday, they decided to put a big toll road project on hold, one of several projects that have been impacted.

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The planned expansion of Highway 290 and the addition of toll roads got nowhere at commissioners court. The simple answer - money; there's just not

enough.

"We don't think the present geometry will work, and we don't think we have the resources to afford it," said Art Storey with the Harris County Public Infrastructure.

The 290 expansion isn't the end of the road for the county money crunch. It's just the beginning.

On Tuesday, County Commissioner Jerry Eversole got prickly over the contract of paying for other jails to house Harris County's excess prisoners.

"Why does the sheriff get to choose is what my question is?" Eversole asked Dick Raycraft with the Harris Co. Budget Office.

"Because he's the sheriff," responded Raycraft.

"We're commissioners. Why don't we buy our own equipment?" asked Eversole.

"You do buy your own equipment," Raycraft answered.

"Before I became sheriff, the contract system was in place," said Harris County Sheriff Adrian Garcia. "This is a process that's continuing."

The county also didn't move forward with a planned joint inmate processing center, leaving the decision in the hands of future voters.

"It has to be put on the ballot for voters to approve the bond issue for," said Harris County Judge Ed Emmett. "I don't anticipate that being done this December."

But some things did get approved, including moving toward an independent forensic lab, installing air conditioning in the Juvenile Detention Center and repairing the elevators in the building in which the commissioners court is held. In the end, only about 10 percent of the building requests were approved, pointing out there's just not enough money to get most things done.

"If you can't afford it, you can't have it, because fiscal responsibility matters," said Storey.

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