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By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader The current 1-cent sales tax expires in September 2011. The renewal of the tax is scheduled for a vote in November, and Liberal's Focus on the Future committee is urging all voters to support the tax.

The committee met for a third time Tuesday regarding projects the community would like to see the money raised from the tax used for. Committee member Jack Taylor began with an overview of the tax, emphasizing it was designed to pay for items which could not be funded through the city's general budget.

"In the last 16 years, we have been collecting the 1-cent sales tax," he said. "We've collected about \$50 million."

Taylor said of that total, about 35 to 40 percent of that money, or \$18 million, came from outside of Liberal.

"On top of that, we've been able to leverage that by getting grants and government funds from places like KDOT and other governmental entities," he said. "We've gained about \$12 million that way."

After a short film showing some of the projects accomplished through the 1-cent sales tax, Taylor asked for suggestions from the group. These ideas were in addition to those collected in previous meetings.

Coronado Museum Executive Director JoAnne Mansell recommended a heritage center, which she said could help locals, and those from other communities, learn more about area history and help the economy.

"We could bring public art shows here," she said. "We could bring Smithsonians here. People from outside our community travel here and spend dollars here."

Mansell talked about a family coming to Liberal from as far away as Connecticut, emphasizing the impact the Coronado has on tourism dollars.

"The first place they came was Dorothy's House. Now, they have a child who wants to be a Dorothy and other children who are interested in the tour," she said. "We had 761 school children just in the last six weeks."

While she was unsure about the exact impact the museum has, Mansell said it has a definite impact on the local economy and the school system.

"They have numerous school projects where children learn about High Plains history," she said. "They learn about Seward County's history. They learn about Liberal's history. We can offer our community a huge wave of not only art projects but exhibits. We would like to see that develop."

We don't have anything like that. This would serve a multitude of purposes.”

The Focus on the Future committee is scheduled to have two more meetings – one on June 17 and another on July 1 – both at 6 p.m. at Rock Island Depot.

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