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Comal venue tax eyed to fund parks

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NEW BRAUNFELS -- Comal County officials began looking into the idea of adopting a venue tax Thursday to pay for new parks in the county. The plan would increase the tax for hotel and car rentals and earmark the money for specific projects. Officials do not yet know how much money such a tax could raise and have not identified a list of projects it would fund. They also have not decided on how much they would add to the tax rate of rental cars or hotel rooms.

Any venue tax would need voter approval.

"I'm certainly supportive of exploring the feasibility, and of course the voters would either accept or reject it, based on the specific projects," Commissioner Jan Kennady said. "I hear a lot of people say they wish we could do more for the youth in our county. This could be their chance to make it happen."

Commissioner **Greg Parker** called the idea "a viable option for our parks."

The only member of the commissioners court to voice serious reservations was Jay Millikin.

"Anything that talks about an additional taxing entity, I'm wary of," he said. "We have a sufficient number of those around already."

County Judge Danny Scheel said he asked Assistant County Attorney Geoff Barr to look into the legal issues involved in adopting a venue tax after reading about Bexar County's venue tax, which was used to help pay for the SBC Center. Barr briefed the commissioners Thursday on various options for adopting a venue tax.

Scheel said that with more and more unfunded mandates from the state straining the county budget, it would help if a new source of revenue could be found to fund parks projects.

"I just think it is something we need to be thinking about," Scheel said. "We need to pursue youth projects and I don't know how much longer we can do that through the general fund."

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