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Dallas County to Hire Law Firm to Collect Outstanding Bonds

By Lita Beck | Wednesday, Jul 6, 2011 | Updated 10:24 PM CDT



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Dallas County will seek the collection of an estimated \$35 million in outstanding bail bond forfeitures.

Dallas County will seek the collection of an estimated \$35 million in outstanding bail bond forfeitures, the district attorney said Wednesday.

In a statement, District Attorney Craig Watkins said he will hire a law firm to collect the outstanding bonds. The firm will keep 25 percent of the amount it collects.

NBC DFW **learned last week that the county was owed \$35 million in uncollected bonds.**

Dallas County Commissioner Mike Cantrell said he asked the county auditor for forfeiture information because he was surprised by the total value of bonds currently posted in the county -- \$281 million.

"I don't know if it's an area that has been scrubbed and looked at and procedures put in place to really know if you go after it," he said.

But Watkins said it was "absolutely incorrect" that his office did not have policies and procedures in place to deal with bond forfeitures.

County Judge Clay Jenkins said in a statement Wednesday that the county needs to determine how to best collect any outstanding bonds.

"There is a lot of conflicting information out there," he said. "I wish there was a \$35 million... pot of gold for the taxpayer, but the truth is that the actual amount of legally collectible bond money will be a fraction of that."

Watkins said outstanding bonds date back to years before he took office in 2007.

He said his office hired someone last year to go after forfeiture judgments in current civil cases. But it will take more than one person to go after judgments that were never collected, he said.

"Therefore, we will have to bring in someone from the outside to manage the collection of these funds, as our civil attorneys are already busy representing the county on a host of other civil matters," he said.

Jenkins said the Commissioners Court would have to approve a contract for an outside law firm to collect the bonds.

NBC DFW's Ken Kalthoff contributed to this report.

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