

**SHARON AVENUE& JAIL PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE
MEETING
JANUARY 29, 2026**

The Sharon Avenue & Jail Property Use Committee held a meeting on Thursday, January 29, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person and by Microsoft Teams.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Commissioner Britz at 10:01 a.m.

Roll call:

The following Committee members responded to roll call done by County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

Roy Britz, Barry Fink, Todd LaRoux, Tom Bingham, Jaikob Djerf, Jennifer Kelly.

Absent: Lisa Mattila and Chelsea Rheault and Alex, Finance Manager.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Todd LaRoux asked that #3 be added for discussion to utilize the Sharon Avenue property for offices and storage.

Barry Fink asked that #2 b be added to discuss the Committees previous vote on the demolition of the Sharon Avenue property.

A Motion was made by Barry Fink and seconded by Todd LaRoux to approve the agenda with the two (2) additions as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

Public Comments:

None.

New Business:

1. Set date(s) and time(s) for the Committee to tour the current jail.

Commissioner Britz stated he or Sheriff Saaranen can give tours to the committee members. Members are to contact him or the Sheriff to arrange the tour.

2. Discuss the Sharon Avenue property and current jail potential property use.

Commissioner Britz stated that the roof needs to be replaced on the current jail. It was done in 2015. The County lost a lawsuit and the HVAC system was put in. Now there are 44 holes in the roof. If a new jail is built, the current building could be used for offices in the front of the building and storage in the back. The building is solid, but a new roof would have to be done. The building has a generator.

Jaikob Djerf asked if the county can determine the operational costs to keep the building as offices and do the renovation.

Faith Morrison stated the current jail needs to build a sally port and secure circulation to the courtroom for the inmates on the courthouse.

Commissioner Britz stated the county is in violation of how inmates are transported from the jail to the courthouse now. Inmates should not be brought through the courthouse using a public entrance.

Faith Morrison stated to be ADA compliant, there needs to be an elevator for only inmates. It needs to be secure.

Faith Morrison stated the numbers are in the plan to bring it up to MDOC code, but then everything wrong in the building would have to be fixed.

b. Discuss previous vote on the demolition of the Sharon Avenue Property.

Barry Fink stated she feels a fact sheet needs to be done with a video to explain the committees vote better. The video could be done with Todd LaRoux showing what the reasoning was for the committee to decide to demolish the Sharon Avenue property.

Commissioner Britz stated he feels it is time to come up with a new solution.

3. Discuss to utilize the Sharon Avenue Property for offices and storage.

Todd LaRoux stated the committee needs to look at every avenue and numbers. He stated an engineer will need to look at doing firewalls and put up studs at the Sharon Avenue property. He stated that the voters want to see numbers on construction.

Jaikob Djerf asked who or what committee is recommending what for the new jail at the Sharon Avenue Property.

Faith Morrison stated the Jail Committee only voted on saying that the Sharon Avenue Property is the best option for a jail since it is owned by Houghton County.

Todd LaRoux stated the County is paying for utilities at the Sharon Avenue property.

Motion was made by Todd LaRoux and seconded by Tom Bingham to recommend to the Board of Commissioners to get a RFP to get an engineer to do a design and get a cost estimate to see if the Sharon Avenue property can be used for offices and storage.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 7, Nays 0.

Faith Morrison stated the costs are in the plans.

Jaikob Djerf asked what offices would go to the Sharon Avenue property. Commissioner Britz stated the non-essential offices would. The courts would not.

Todd LaRoux suggested looking into the square footage needed to renovate the Sharon Avenue property and compare it to the cost of a new building.

Faith Morrison stated the voters want to look at a Master Plan for what will be done between now and 20-50 years.

Jaikob Djerf discussed the estimated costs for moving the courts. Todd LaRoux stated in September 2023, the costs were estimated at \$2.5 million.

Faith Morrison stated a decision needs to be made whether the current building on Sharon Avenue stays or goes.

Jaikob Djerf stated he would like to hear from Administrator Rheault on what is budgeted.

A Motion was made by Tom Bingham and seconded by Barry Fink to rescind the committees previous vote to demolish the Sharon Avenue property.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 7, Nays 0.

Jaikob Djerf asked why this was not discussed at the Commissioners meetings. Commissioner Britz stated the Commissioners were up to speed.

Todd LaRoux stated the committee needs to see a demolition cost in the RFP.

4. Set future meeting dates and times.

The next meeting will be on March 5, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Public Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Barry Fink and seconded by Todd LaRoux to adjourn at 11:22 a.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 7, Nays 0.

Roy Britz, Vice-Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED_____

JK