

# **JAIL COMMITTEE**

## **MEETING-5<sup>th</sup> Floor-Conference Room**

**JUNE 1, 2026 – 4:00 PM**

### **MINUTES**

#### A. Call to Order

Faith Morrison called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Morrison agreed to be the temporary Chair for the meeting.

#### B. Roll Call

Faith Morrison stated the following were present: Tom Tikkanen, Gretchen Janssen, Justin LaCosse, Andrea Johnson, Faith Morrison, Todd LaRoux, Alex Radke, and Sheriff Josh Saaranen.

By Microsoft Teams: Ruth Gill, Jared Hyrkas, Krissy Sundstrom and Jennifer Kelly

#### C. Approval of Agenda/Additions

Faith Morrison asked if there were additions to the agenda. Tom Tikkanen asked the Committee to have discussion on the size of a new jail. Morrison stated it would go to the top of New Business.

A Motion was made by Tom Tikkanen and seconded by Gretchen Janssen to approve the agenda with the one (1) addition as presented.

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

#### D. Approval of Meeting minutes of May 14, 2026

A Motion was made by Andrea Johnson and seconded by Justin LaCosse to approve the May 14, 2026 minutes as presented.

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

#### E. Public Comments

Tom Tikkanen discussed the Committee choosing a new Chair for this Committee. Jared Hyrkas had volunteered to Chair the Committee previously. There were no immediate volunteers. Faith Morrison suggested that the Committee would figure out who the new Chair is by the end of this meeting.

#### F. Old Business

##### 1. Social Media efforts update

Justin LaCosse stated nothing has been done on the social media project since Lexi Tater's presentation at the last meeting. He stated doing more is worth pursuing. He will contact Tater.

Valorie Troesch asked if Marquette County had seen cost savings since having a Community Corrections program. Andrea Johnson said she had only heard anecdotes and did not know of any data.

Faith Morrison discussed the scenarios that have worked in the past as good social media material. Perhaps we could do postings on a cost comparison of doing something about the jail versus not doing anything. There was a discussion of the costs of operating with the insufficient jail.

Sheriff Saaranen stated jails that house outside inmates charge \$40-\$60 per day for housing.

Tom Tikkanen discussed the cost of travel for transporting inmates when the jail is overcapacity. The Sheriff stated it depends on the number of inmates. It could be \$40-80 per hour to use deputies for transporting an inmate. Two deputies are needed.

Justin LaCosse stated he will come up with a scenario on how expensive it is to run the jail in its current condition.

Faith Morrison suggested looking at the cost/services impact of running the jail without 2 deputies available if they are gone on a transport of an inmate. Common services that would not be available when deputies are out include accidents, car lock outs, dog pick-ups, criminal complaints, backup of law enforcement, and road patrol.

LaCosse noted that if the jail is closed by the state this would result in job eliminations – no corrections officers, no road patrol, all funds would go to pay to house our inmates.

## 2. County Website Feedback Form

Alex Radke stated the last entry was on March 5<sup>th</sup>. He noted that the link had fallen off the county's website. He will reinstate the link. (<https://www.houghtoncounty.net/news-view.php?target=376>).

Faith Morrison discussed the things posted on Facebook in the comments there.

Andrea Johnson stated she will monitor the Facebook page and the feedback form and share what she sees there with the committee.

## 3. Elevatus Architecture

Faith Morrison reviewed what the committee had heard from Elevatus last time and discussed the Elevatus brochures.

Sheriff Saaranen stated they sell a product, and the cost estimate is close to what we already received.

Faith Morrison stated there is no design to bring to the public at this time and have a floor plan for the public to see. She asked how the Committee feels about going to the public without a revised plan or using the old plan.

Tom Tikkanen said the county had already paid for the AbonmarchByce jail plan and the estimate given by Elevatus was basically the same. The discussion with Elevatus was time well spent.

Tom Tikkanen said the public needs to know about the crisis. He feels the public is not interested in pursuing the old plan. He questioned if this is the most effective plan. He feels there is the opinion out there to use local companies. Moyle has been in individual contact with the five commissioners and is providing a proposal of some sort late this week. The Board has received different legal opinions. The County must own the jail facility. The last plan was 37,000 square feet. The Sheriff stated the sizes of the shared support spaces in the jail varies according to capacity of the facility.

Todd LaRoux stated a schematic design would show the floor plan for the cells, conference room, etc. that is similar to what was just done for the Sharon Avenue property.

Faith Morrison stated that Abonmarche/Byce gave us a floor plan last year.

Tom Tikkanen stated the need to get the cost of a jail plan down.

Morrison stated that Abonmarche/Byce had priced the jail for 2026 and with inflation of construction costs the amount would go up each year. Given that the Elevatus ballpark 2026 price is about the same as AB's 2025 price, that means they are actually projecting a slightly smaller cost. Could we go to the public with the old plan but have guard rails to explain the changes that will lower the costs and that the public will understand. The plan must meet the MDOC codes. The plans need to specify the cost savings on the design. She stated that Mike Hamilton had suggest building a larger shell but leave part unfinished that could be filled in in the future if needed.

Justin LaCosse discussed what happens if everything comes under budget. That may help the public.

Tom Tikkanen stated the Board is curtailing spending and trying to put \$100,000 to \$200,000 towards the jail per year into the budget. He stated when the budget data comes back, then the numbers can be estimated. At that time the Committee can do presentations to the public at community gatherings.

#### G. New Business

##### 1. Size of the Jail

Tom Tikkanen discussed keeping the same size as the 2025 plan and use any unused space for the future.

Faith Morrison discussed that the jail's current average daily population is at least 28 which is 51 with classification. Sheriff Saaranen said that anything smaller than 60 or 70 bed would not be reasonable. There have been jails that filled up. Morrison said a design with more than one pod would require more staff. The staffing costs are annual and expensive. Sheriff Saaranen said that bunkhouse space can be a security issue. He discussed the inmate population is near 40 now, but, the population of our County is growing. Hope not to be up to capacity before the paint is dry.

Faith Morrison discussed the previous use of the work camp. Sheriff stated right now there would only be 2 eligible for a work camp out of 27 current inmates. Morrison stated the number of inmates eligible for a work camp should be shown to the public. Sheriff commented on how electronic monitoring is done through the Courts; it is not up to the sheriff.

Andrea Johnson discussed the classifications for inmates coming into jail for detox, juveniles, mental health. If the new Community Corrections program starts, she stated there would be early identifying to get inmates help into the programs. This might reduce jail pressure.

Tom Tikkanen stated he feels the community wants a cheaper jail. However, the County must have an up-to-date facility including having substance abuse programs for inmates. Are there innovative approaches to getting this done.

Faith Morrison stated the public is concerned on how many mills will be on the ballot. She stated Houghton County is growing and that generates more funds for the same number of mills. Morrison asked if there is anything like the balloon payment loans that homeowners sometimes have for a jail loan.

Sheriff stated he prefers 60-70 beds and feels less will cause a problem.

Tom Tikkanen suggested having Equalization Director Jaikob Djerf come to a meeting to discuss the mills on a ballot. It is questioned if the County can increase the amount on the annual budget for the jail. To “lease to own” is a grey area. An advanced developer finds the financing and has success for similar projects. The County needs at least 60 beds for it to make sense, and less than 70 he is unsure. Wages are expensive to monitor the beds.

Sheriff stated there is no agreement with any county to house outside inmates. Faith Morrison stated the Board could go on the record whether the County would house other counties’ inmates or not.

Sheriff stated the date of the next annual inspection is unknown. The last inspection was in June 2025.

Tom Tikkanen stated revenue and expenses for the county are increasing. He discussed getting the mills down, and that everyone is trying to bring the costs down, there is not wasting funds, and that the public wants things done locally. All Commissioners met separately with a representative from Moyle. Moyle feels they have the ability to reduce the costs of constructing a new jail.

Commissioner Janssen stated the Board wants a path forward and a recommendation from the Jail Committee.

Sheriff stated classifications are the main thing.

Faith Morrison stated the community is prudent in building 70 beds.

Tom Tikkanen stated we are not able to increase beds without increasing staff.

Sheriff Saaranen stated the pod is expensive, and questioned if waited another year, would we have to ask for more millage.

Andrea Johnson stated the new programs will change and help with how many inmates are in jail. Every suggested program that they want to implement can help the voters understand how effective these programs are.

Faith Morrison stated the new programs may convince some folks to be yes voters because they support programs/treatments.

Tom Tikkanen questioned the rate of repeat offenders.

## 2. Next Steps

Faith Morrison stated proper classification/housing of inmates is mandatory and also needed is the ability to hold inmates such as mental health and DUI’s. We must have the space for them and it may be we need to be expresses it this way so there is adequate space for men, women, juveniles and not just a number of beds. The jail needs to be big enough. A 2-pod jail is beyond our staffing budget.

Tom Tikkanen stated everyone will have to see what the costs come back at.

The committee did not address who would chair the committee.

## 3. Goals for/before next meeting(s)

Faith Morrison led a discussion of what the committee's goals should be for/before the next meeting. The following statement was agreed to.

Features of a jail:

1. Meet the classification needs of the jail
2. Not increase the jail staffing levels
3. Highly unlikely to be too small too soon.
4. Buy-in to the community corrections model for appropriate inmate handling
5. Low cost and use of local construction firms as possible

4. Next meeting date and time.

June 9, 2026 at 4:00 pm in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room in the courthouse. This is just before the June Board of Commissioners meeting.

#### H. Public Comments

Ruth Gill (teams) asked if other quotes besides Moyle's would be sought. Tom Tikkanen said he was unsure what Moyle would be proposing. Justin LaCosse said open bidding would be required if building a jail. Tikkanen noted that any jail building plans have to be approved by the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC).

#### I. Adjournment

Moved by Gretchen Jassen, supported by Todd LaRoux and the committee voted unanimously to adjourned the meeting at 5:45pm.

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JENNIFER KELLY  
COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
JK