

JAIL COMMITTEE MEETING
5th Floor-Conference Room
JULY 7, 2026 – 4:00 PM MINUTES

Call to Order:

Faith Morrison called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

Roll Call – this meeting’s convener Faith Morrison

Members:

Clerk Kelly called roll and the following were present in person: Tom Tikkanen, Gretchen Janssen, Sheriff Josh Saaranen, Faith Morrison, Justin LaCosse, Andrea Johnson and Jason Baker.

The following were by Microsoft Teams: Jennifer Kelly, Valorie Troesch.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Jason Baker requested adding discussion on retaining council for bond language.

A Motion was made by Valorie Troesch and seconded by Andrea Johnson to approve the agenda with the one (1) addition as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 8, Nays 0.

Approval of Meeting Minutes of June 29, 2026

A Motion was made by Tom Tikkanen and seconded by Gretchen Janssen to approve the June 29, 2026 minutes as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 8, Nays 0.

Public Comments

None.

New Business:

1. Directives from the County Board

Tom Tikkanen reported that there had been a good discussion of the jail project at the County Board work session, and he discussed having an advertisement/public meeting notice run in the Daily Mining Gazette for Industry Day.

Faith Morrison stated the committee was proceeding on track. She went over the Agenda for Industry Day. The Jail Committee will run the Industry Day meeting. Tom Tikkanen will be the Chairman and Morrison will be the facilitator. She discussed a list of deliverables for the contractors and what is high risk. She discussed what goes into the jail. She discussed the square footage numbers of 38,000 sf and how 16,500 sf doubles the size. A new #4-“Where are we are” was added to the agenda.

Alex Radke, IT, stated he had toured Franklin Township Hall with Clerk Kelly. He has some concern with people being able to hear. He will bring a screen to Franklin Township Hall for Industry Day for people to appear by Microsoft Teams.

Tom Tikkanen discussed #3 for the questions that may come from the contractors. He stated it will be tough for contractors to come up with concepts on short notice. There will be huge variables. From the public Derek Bradway said it's a heavy lift to get contractors' attention this time of year. He said the Committee may only get bookends on the building costs, meaning a range between \$20 million and \$40 million. Contractors may be concerned about giving away some advantage by speaking up.

Faith Morrison stated the Jail Committee will not be deciding anything at Industry Day, and this will be mentioned in the public notice in the Gazette. Contractors are not to put trade secrets into their ROMs.

Justin LaCosse discussed the spaces with square footage that are assigned to each department. He hopes to get the contractors' feedback. He has some concerns that they give numbers that can be compared to each other (apples to apples).

Faith Morrison stated the Committee needs to be specific in what we ask for. How should we design this event to get the most useful information out of the event?

Justin LaCosse discussed ideas for the best space and square footage numbers and ask the contractors to estimate.

Faith Morrison discussed that \$2 million in grant funding from the federal government, if awarded, could be used for Design Build or Design-Bid-Build. The layout needs to be figured out, which is a yearlong process. The County needs to have enough money to do this. Design-Bid uses less money according to the Moyle representative. The Committee is not asking for designs at Industry Day. The Commissioners need an appropriate cost number to go on the ballot. The building of the new Jail/Sheriff Department must be at the most economic cost.

Derek Bradway asked if Houghton County could get a USDA loan program like Delta County did. He stated it allowed the County to produce a drawing then go out for bid.

Jason Baker discussed having a company he's familiar with downstate called Dickinson-Wright assist Houghton County with getting Bond language. He offered to introduce them to Administrator Rheault and her office. He was not sure about USDA loans but stated this firm will know about public-private partnerships. The firm knows about everything with a bond and fee structure. They would provide information and know what should be done. He will put Administrator Rheault in touch with them.

Faith Morrison stated USDA loans should be looked into. There are some limits to eligibility based on population.

Tom Tikkanen stated Houghton County is larger than Delta County.

Faith Morrison stated we are less than 50,000 in population, so we qualify for some USDA programs.

Gretchen Janssen stated they passed a millage for their Jail.

Faith Morrison stated it could be different lengths of a bond with a USDA loan.

Faith Morrison stated we would use the answers we get from Industry Day and use them wisely. The Committee discussed how to get the most information out of the event.

Jason Baker discussed the different bond choices and how the firm would help determine what is the best fit in their opinion.

Todd LaRoux discussed the Delta County Jail and asked if we could get drawings from them.

Sheriff Saaranen stated Delta County's Jail has 156 beds. They have approximately 1,500 less of a population than Houghton County. He discussed multi-level jails. The case study that was done for Delta is available online. The Delta County Jail plan is more specific than ours.

Derek Bradway suggested the Sheriff use a floor plan of the Delta County Jail and during Industry Day take a marker and crossing things out and then have the contractors take a look at it. He stated contractors are visual people. He asked if they had a District Court area in the Delta jail, as it is important in Houghton County. They do not according to Sheriff Saaranen.

Sheriff Saaranen discussed that minimum movement is the best thing for security.

Faith Morrison suggested following up with Delta County about their experience moving prisoners from jail to the courts as that will be faced by Houghton County.

Sheriff Saaranen stated Delta County also has an operating millage for field services and that it is a very common thing in Michigan, but it can be problematic if the millage does not get renewed. One county downstate did not renew their millage and now rely solely on the Michigan State Police for road patrol.

Faith Morrison noted that our County budgets include operating costs for our jail/sheriff department.

Faith Morrison discussed moving Design Build higher in the Industry Day agenda, and she will find the Delta County rendering. Sheriff Saaranen will forward it to Faith Morrison. She suggested discussing the \$32 million cost with the contractors and find out if Houghton County is eligible for a USDA loan.

Tom Tikkanen stated this is a chance to engage and create this in an inviting way to the contractors and have them participate and get feedback from them on how they can reduce cost for Houghton County taxpayers.

Derek Bradway asked what the contractors can bring to the table, savings to the taxpayers.

Faith Morrison stated it might show up in the Design Build, according to Moyle.

Gretchen Janssen stated the Committee nor the Board have discussed who the contactor(s) will be or if they will be local or away from Houghton County.

Tom Tikkanen stated he hopes we appeal locally.

Derek Bradway said local firms know how to build less expensively up here.

Faith Morrison asked why it seems to be that Michigan Tech uses downstate firms?

Bradway said they have their own decision-making process. They have occasionally used local firms.

Faith Morrison discussed the Industry Day agenda and stated #4 will be left in the agenda. She will swap #3 & 4, have a break, and then #5.

Jason Baker stated he feels everyone agrees a jail is necessary and encourages the Sheriff to have a conversation with the contractors.

2. Next meeting date and time

The next meeting will be on July 20, 2026 at 4:00 pm to discuss what the Board needs from the Jail Committee. (Note: this future meeting was later moved to July 30, 2026 at 4pm.

Public Comments

Faith Morrison suggested having a 25 second public service announcement (PSA) on the radio. Sheriff Saaranen can record the PSA.

Faith Morrison stated the website for Industry Day is coming together and all of the links and documents are now available.

Sheriff Saaranen and Administrator Rheault are to get together tomorrow and follow up on USDA financing options. Jason Baker will set up a call and follow up with Paige Sutter, Tom Tikkanen, Gretchen Janssen and Faith Morrison to see what Dickinson-Wright has to say about finance options for Houghton County.

Tom Tikkanen asked Derek Bradway to share his email with the Clerk.

Tom Tikkanen said he found the history of the jail efforts that is posted quite useful.

Andrea Johnson suggested having a posterboard at Industry Day. Sheriff Saaranen stated he has renderings already available and will bring them to Industry Day.

Adjournment

Moved by Tom Tikkanen, supported by Gretchen Janssen and the committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:25 pm.

TOM TIKKANEN

JENNIFER KELLY COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED:_____ J