

JAIL COMMITTEE MEETING

5th Floor-Conference Room and on MS Teams

JULY 30, 2026 – 4:00 PM

MINUTES

Call to Order:

Faith Morrison called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

Roll Call :

Members:

Faith Morrison, called roll, and the following were present in person: Tom Tikkanen, Gretchen Janssen, Sheriff Josh Saaranen (joined after roll call), Faith Morrison, Valorie Troesch, Justin LaCosse, Todd LaRoux, Andrea Johnson, Mike Hamilton.

Eleven members of the public were present at roll call in addition to several on MS Teams.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Faith Morrison requested adding two items to the agenda: Item 2 *Term of Bond* and Item 3 *Language of Resolution* to the agenda. A Motion was made by Tom Tikkanen and seconded by Valorie Troesch to approve the agenda as amended.

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

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

A Motion was made by Valorie Troesch and seconded by Andrea Johnson to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2026 and July 15, 2026 meetings as presented.

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

Public Comments:

None.

New Business

1. Review ROMs submitted by Industry Day participants

Faith Morrison noted that three ROMs (rough order of magnitude) cost calculations had been received, from Granger (\$25-\$28 million), Miron (\$27.8 million), and Bradway Enterprises (\$23.5 million). Valorie Troesch said the estimates cover only hard costs not

soft costs. Faith Morrison said that Granger and Miron's numbers did include soft costs or what they called "Total Project Costs." Leander Somero from Bradway Enterprises clarified that their number did not include engineering costs, but if \$1.2 million is added their number would be comparable to the other two ROMs or a cost of \$24.7 million. Gretchen Janssen said the numbers seemed consistent. Derek Bradway said their estimate did include the courtroom. Faith Morrison said that the courtroom may cause additional concerns. Mike Hamilton said the numbers seemed comparable.

Tom Tikkanen asked Building Inspector Todd LaRue for his opinion. LaRue said that he was comfortable with the \$28 million number for a jail/sheriff's operations build as there is a need for contingencies in a building project. There can be cost overrides. LaRue said the \$28 million was a conservative number. Tikkanen noted that as building inspector he sees construction going on and has access to current building costs and that we can rely on LaRue.

Faith Morrison said that if bids on the build came in higher than what the County raised in the millage, the County would have to go back to the design and cut costs. Todd LaRue said there will be a base bid but that we need space for contingencies (wiggle room). Tikkanen asked what is the approximate amount for contingencies; LaRue said 5%. Morrison noted that these are rough estimates and contain some contingency planning.

Tom Tikkanen asked the contractors present what they thought. Derek Bradway said contingency is included in his ROM. Bradway noted that to cut costs the best is to cut square footage. Leander Somero said he used numbers from his database of past builds, and the numbers are accurate from that.

Tom Tikkanen said when he mentions shrinking the size of the jail he gets stern looks from the Sheriff. Sheriff Saaranen agreed that he is concerned that after the enormous effort of planning and building a new jail, he would not want to open a jail that is full on day one. Saaranen said the plans are for a greater than 60-bed facility, and he is comfortable with that. Justin LaCosse agreed that \$28 million was a good number.

Mike Hamilton moved, and Tom Tikkanen seconded a motion that the committee recommend to the County Board of Commissioners that they pursue a millage for \$28 million to build a new jail/sheriff's operations at the County's Sharon Avenue property. Motion carried 8-0.

2. Term of Bond (email from Commissioner Anderson)

Faith Morrison noted that the Committee had received an email from Commissioner Glenn Anderson with a table of bond amounts to help assess how long the bond timing should be for a jail millage. For a \$28 million loan the numbers from Adam Holstine from Raymond James are for a 1.51 mil bond if the term is 20 years and a 1.28 mil bond if the term is 30 years. In 2025 the failed millage was for a 1.6 mil, 30-year bond.

Tom Tikkanen noted that you generally go to the longer finance route for these big-ticket projects. The drop from the 2025 1.6mil to a 1.28 mil bond would be well received by the public he said. It would make the project more affordable.

Gretchen Janssen agreed. As a realtor, when the loan is longer you pay more in interest, but it is what you can afford.

Valorie Troesch said most people will look at it in terms of what they can afford every year, and that is lower with the 30-year bond.

Tom Tikkanen noted that many do not own their homes for the full term of their loans; they move on in ten years. They would prefer the longer bond

Gretchen Janssen said the committee will make its recommendation, but the board will revisit when they discuss what to approve.

Todd LaRue said we need to know what a home with taxable value of \$100,000 will pay, as an example to the public. Faith Morrison said we need to consult the equalization manager to calculate the median home value (half of the taxable values above the median, and the other half's taxable values below the median) and make this calculation for our discussions with the public. She said she remembers that value being about \$47,000. Tom Tikkanen reminded the committee that it is taxable value that is taxed not the state equalized value (SEV). Justin LaCosse said a \$100,000 taxable value would be charged \$126/year for the 30-year bond.

Justin LaCosse moved, and Gretchen Jansson seconded a motion to recommend to the County's Board of Commissioners that the 30-year length be selected for the jail millage. Motion carried 8-0.

3. Language of Resolution, Millage (email from Faith Morrison)

Faith Morrison reviewed her 7/30/2026 email to the committee in which she referred to the 2025 millage and resolution language. In those documents, those who advised the County used very broad language, presumably to allow the County wiggle room in what they could do with the funds. Morrison said she thinks the Committee should advise the County Board to use tighter language to make the ballot language more of a contract with the voters. Words like "acquire" (no property is planned to be acquired), "existing county

buildings” (name any that will be renovated or say none will), “interest in land” (again, no land is planned to be acquired), “demolition” (no buildings are planned to be demolished, and “reimbursement of expenses,” should be eliminated. Also, the language of the millage should be plain and clear. Many voters will be closely considering the millage for the first time when they see their ballot. The ballot should speak clearly to them. Morrison also noted that in the Bradway Enterprises ROM in their section 11, they make a similar point and even have drafted a plain language ballot that could form the basis of the one the County Board votes on.

Tom Tikkanen asked could we get consensus on the committee that these millage funds would be for solely for jail/sheriff’s operations construction. Not for renovation of the church building—that would be on the County’s books and would be run through our annual budget in phases. Tikkanen said that when it comes to the current jail, the consensus is it would be reutilized for record storage and other purposes. As much as is reasonable if we can let the public know that it is not going to sit idle.

Morrison agreed that the County needs to make a clear promise to the voters.

Tom Tikkanen said we need to say what we mean and mean what we say.

Todd LaRue said that on the Sharon Avenue and Jail Re-use Committee, when they talked about the current jail, they always talked about the need for courthouse storage. The county is spending something like \$14, 000 for storage currently and that could be saved. Plus, it is close to the courthouse. In the 2018 flood we had records that were damaged, and those had to be restored at some expense.

Valorie Troesch said that, as an attorney, she can attest that often attorneys assert that the formal language they use is necessary, but it is not. She said she has fought her whole career for the use of more plain language in legal documents. Thank you, Derek Bradway, for writing the draft language that you supplied in your ROM.

Valorie Troesch said that she thought “public safety building” was not clear language and that we should continue to use “jail and sheriff’s office” as that is clearer. She agreed that the public needs to hear what they’re going to get from this.

Faith Morrison said she agreed but was concerned about safe circulation of inmates from the jail’s sally port to the courthouse. She said the courthouse needs sally port too. Tom Tikkanen said that with the courtroom in the new jail, there will be far fewer trips. Also, Judge Daavettila is in complete support of the small courtroom being built in the Sharon Avenue building. Todd LaRue said it is nearly impossible to modify the courthouse to achieve the secure circulation that Morrison described. Tikkanen also noted that the former church building on Sharon Avenue is to be the new home of the Building

Department, and that will reduce the traffic of the public to the courthouse, which will also help with the security problem when inmates are transported to the courtroom. The proposed Commissioners meeting room in the Sharon Avenue building will also reduce circulation of the public in the courthouse.

Derek Bradway said that in their ROM they did include the courtroom and squeezed down some of the spaces in the sheriff's operations to find the space and keep the costs the same. They only needed to shrink by 10% and would still be larger than they are now. Bradway said he toured the Dickenson County jail with their sheriff and was told that they do 90% of their court hearings remotely, so that also reduces the circulation problem.

Gretchen Jansen did a quick calculation of how much a homeowner with a house with \$100,000 in taxable value would be charged for the jail, and it came to about the same amount as a \$4.50 cup of coffee every other week. She thought that put the cost into perspective.

Gretchen Jansen moved, and Andrea Johnson seconded a motion to recommend to the County Board of Commissioners that they draft millage language based on the kind of plain language shown in the Bradway Enterprises ROM, section 11, including a prioritized list of what the public will get with a yes vote. Motion carried 8-0.

4. Directives from the County Board

There were none.

5. Next meeting date and time

There was a discussion to have a next meeting only on an "as needed" basis. Andrea Johnson suggested that perhaps the committee should meet after the Board votes on the millage to consider how to organize educational events to explain to the public the 2026 jail millage and all the steps that led up to it.

The committee discussed an education campaign. Valorie Troesch said that she knows of a friend who originally opposed the jail millage who came to support the jail after touring the current jail. She urged the Committee to get a video walk-through of the jail up on the web. A picture is worth 28 million words.

Faith Morrison said that the members of the press have been very helpful in getting out the word about the jail activities. She noted that absentee ballots for the November election will be going out September 26.

Tom Tikkanen noted that there are still a lot of traditionalists who will vote on November 3rd.

The next meeting of the Jail Committee will be August 10, 2026 at 4pm and tentatively in the 5th floor conference room.

Public Comments:

Faith Morrison thanked everyone for coming.

James Chizek from Lake Linden (on Teams) spoke about the Board increasing the daily charge to prisoners from the current \$15/day to a higher amount to help pay for the jail. He suggested raising it to something like the cost of a hotel room, \$200/day. He also said that the County should not go forward with the building plans until they have considered the trailer park idea previously suggested. That would be a lot less expensive.

Alex Radke noted that in the last year he has watched the jail discussions progress and as a taxpayer and employee of the county he wanted to congratulate the committees and the Board.

Derek Bradway said that some of the resistance in the last election was that the voters want the County to do its part rather than put the entire burden on the taxpayer. He did some realtor math and said home buyers put 20% down. Bradway suggested that the County should find 20% of the construction costs on its own to reduce the amount asked from the taxpayers through the bond. He said that would get the millage down to 1.01 mils or in round numbers \$100/year for the taxpayer with a home with \$100,000 taxable value. He agreed that even a \$5 increase in inmate charges would make a significant impact.

Adjournment:

Moved by Tom Tikkanen, supported by Gretchen Janssen the committee voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 5:28 pm.

FAITH MORRISON

JENNIFER KELLY COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED:_____