

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JAIL TASK FORCE
SEPTEMBER 4, 2019**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Jail Task Force meeting on Wednesday, September 4, 2019, in the 3rd Floor Circuit Courtroom of the Courthouse, City of Houghton.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman, Tom Tikkanen at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Tikkanen.

Approval of Minutes:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen, seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the minutes from the July meeting as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote: Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Britz, seconded by Commissioner Koskela to approve the Agenda as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote: Ayes 5, Nays 0.

New Business:

1. Subcommittee presentations

a. Dodge Street Option – Jared Hyrkas, Chairperson

Jared Hyrkas explained the pros and cons for the Jail, Sheriff Department and District Court new construction option on Dodge Street. He stated this was the second most expensive option. The Committee had concerns on the number of beds and the design. Social media needs to be pursued. Consider doing possible polls with the public. Total cost was \$18-20 million. The subcommittee did not discuss the design of this new building.

b. New Jail & Courthouse – Evan McDonald, Chairperson

Evan McDonald explained the pros and cons for a new facility for a courthouse and jail. He discussed the problems the courthouse and jail have, and sufficient storage being a serious problem. Discussed complaints on the size of the conference room on the 5th floor. OEM does not have a command center to deal with emergencies. The Sheriff Department is in need of more space. This was the most expensive option.

Discussed a new courthouse and jail facility in or outside of the County seat, and how visitors of the courthouse have to sit in hallways to do paperwork, the hallways are like a maze

\$22-34 million were the 2 estimates the subcommittee looked at. Separate facilities will cause more operating expenses.

Judge Wisti asked if there is an average on the cost per home on any of the proposals. Eric Forsberg believed the cost would have been approximately \$18.00 per year per household. Virginia Dwyer asked what the County is capable of obtaining a bond over 30 million due to the Counties rating. Eric Forsberg stated the amount that can be borrowed is according to the SEV.

Horst Schmidt asked if the courthouse and jail have an upgraded electrical system. Eric Forsberg said no electrical upgrades have been done. UP Engineering did a 5 year plan. The only thing not completed is the insulation.

Horst Schmidt asked what records have been digitized in the County. Evan asked Jennifer to respond. Jennifer Kelly explained that all Register of Deed records are backed up and stored in Iowa. The Clerk's Office still has records in books that are not indexed and have not been digitized.

Evan stated the Committee felt the Dodge Street Option is the best option.

c. 2018 Jail Addition – Ray Smith, Chairperson

Ray Smith explained the Committee felt the 2018 Jail Addition proposal is not an option due to too many negatives. The jail would be built into a corner with no options. County and Jail staff was not in support of this option. Inmates need counseling and treatment. The subcommittee felt the need for juvenile inmate housing, and proper marketing and social network for any proposal going forward to the public and explain why to the public. The subcommittee felt the Dodge Street Option is the best option.

d. Camp Kitwen – Susan Boxer, Chairperson

Frank Taddeucci explained Cap Kitwen is the cheapest option, and it has public support. Pro-existing structure is there. Some felt the Camp was in good shape, some felt it was in bad shape. There is a fence, no escapees should be able to get out. Cons-the camp is not set up for visual observation of inmates, travel to court and appearances as it is away from the County seat, staffing concerns. The subcommittee felt uncomfortable with the cost studies they had. Needed more information to adequately make a recommendation.

Virginia Dwyer asked about the 2010 study on Camp Kitwen. She read a 1 page document to the Task Force. She asked if Camp Kitwen was collateral to the State of Michigan. Chairman Tikkanen stated it is for sale at \$75,000.00 as is. Judge Wisti questioned if water and sewer can be run to Camp Kitwen. Karin Cooper stated she believed it was in the cost estimate. Due to not having enough cost estimates, the subcommittee could not make a recommendation.

2. Next Steps

Chairman Tikkanen discussed needing more numbers for cost estimates, and choosing an option and then taking that option to the public. He said by default, the Dodge Street Option was the best option according to the subcommittee reports. The subcommittee wanted to see more operating costs before making any decisions.

John Donnelly stated the Jail could be down to 2 people at night. Within 1 mile, 8 officers can respond to the Jail from City of Houghton, City of Hancock, Michigan Tech University, and MSP. John explained a situation in the hallway with violence in District Court. He believes the Court and Jail need to be in the City of Houghton so law enforcement can assist very fast when needed.

Robert Drake commented that \$18-\$25 per year to support the community is reasonable. Emotional support is needed from the community for whatever is put before the public. Members of the Task Force stated the public needs to know what kind of money per year they would pay on taxes.

Commissioner Britz discussed the jail and the courthouse safety. He is concerned someone may get hurt.

Chairman Tikkanen asked if there is 1 option to go forward, or can the Task Force cut it down to 2. Eric Waara stated the subcommittees would like to see more costs before deciding.

Sheriff McLean stated it would be wise to go to 99 beds. He explained the differences in minimum to maximum security beds. There is approximately 20 female inmates, and the female inmate population is growing.

Buck Foltz stated the public wants to know numbers. He is concerned about parking and snow removal for the Dodge Street option. He said to not underestimate the growing number of female inmates.

Frank Taddeucci asked if there could be a comparison on all 4 options and provide the facts to the voters.

Eric Forsberg stated that the only increase in staff and costs is if the Task Force chose the Camp Kitwen option.

Sheriff McLean discussed the staff and inmates for a bigger facility.

The Task Force discussed the number of beds in each of the options and looking at a comparable for cost, staff, minimum beds, and to see what each option actually looks like. Virginia Dwyer asked what the Department of Corrections requires for the number of workers per inmates, and what the state requires for 100 beds.

Doug Hebner stated the work camp officer would be used in a new jail, 1 worker must be in the pod at all times. He stated the jail may need more staff in the future.

Guy St. Germain stated he recommended the Task Force look at the Dodge Street option.

Commissioner Janssen stated it may be an option to have 2 options for the voters.

Commissioner Anderson stated 3 committees have stated Dodge Street is the best option.

The majority of the Task Force showed hands in favor of going to 2 options.

The Board had the Task Force vote by a show of hands for the two (2) best options.

A-Dodge Street Option	30
B-New Jail & Courthouse	21
C-2018 Jail Addition	0
D-Camp Kitwen	3

The Board narrowed the subcommittees down to two (2) groups. The Dodge Street Chairman is Jared Hyrkas, and the New Jail and Courthouse Chairman is Evan McDonald. The 2 groups should meet if possible to continue discussions on their

Eric Waara and Jared Hyrkas stated the public needs to see the cost estimates and operating costs on Camp Kitwen. Eric Forsberg and Jared Hyrkas will get an updated cost estimate report on Camp Kitwen to the Jail Task Force as soon as possible.

Public Comments:

Virginia Dwyer asked to see what an estimate would be on a millage per house per year, and if the County can get a bond for a new courthouse and jail.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Janssen and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adjourn.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 5, Nays 0.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk