

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
JAIL TASK FORCE
OCTOBER 2, 2019**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Jail Task Force meeting on Wednesday, October 2, 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 Britz to approve the minutes from the September meeting as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote: Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

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

The Motion carried by a voice vote: Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Old 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. Their group felt this option was not adequate, as there is not enough recreation space for juveniles in the jail, mental health space, and felt the Commissioners should look at having 110 beds with more barrack beds to save on cost. He discussed the female population, storage space, and the option of only putting a smaller amount of beds initially and then adding more cells in the future. He also discussed an option of turning the existing jail into the work camp, and turn the work camp into storage, or to sell, lease or rent that property. Their subcommittee recommended having the Office of Emergency Measurers in the current Sheriff's Department. They recommended getting a public relations group together to educate the people in the County. He discussed the name of the project, but had no recommendations. He discussed how the County could be forced to build and the tax payers to not have a choice if the State required a new facility be built. The group recommended reaching out to Michigan Tech University for marketing assistance. He questioned if the Circuit Court inmates could be seen in the District Court courtroom instead of being brought over to Circuit Court. The new jail would allow for female and male work release.

Virginia Dwyer asked if there is a plan for detox/holding and visitation with the new jail. Sheriff McLean stated there would 3 holding areas, and 2 detox areas.

There was discussion on Probate Court paying for someone to stay with a juvenile. The individual sits with the juvenile as they cannot be put in a cell.

b. New Jail & Courthouse – Evan McDonald, Chairperson

Evan McDonald stated the Task Force should share the findings of the Task Force with the public, and discussed the handout that he provided to the Board and the Task Force.

2. Discussion

Virginia Dwyer asked how much is the County owed in delinquent taxes. Eric Forsberg stated that the County does not owe anything in delinquent taxes as the taxes are paid through the Revolving Loan Fund.

Commissioner Janssen discussed the cost if the courthouse would be vacant.

Evan McDonald suggested the County reach out to other Counties who have recently built a new courthouse or jail to find out what they did to make it pass on the ballot.

Susan Boxer recommended the County do an RFP to see if there is any interest in anyone purchasing the Courthouse.

3. Recommendation to County Board

Chairman Tikkanen asked the Task Force if they have a recommendation for the Board of Commissioners.

The majority were for the Dodge Street option somewhere in the City of Houghton, but not on Dodge Street.

Eric Waara stated there are properties in the City of Houghton available.

Josh Saarinen suggested getting the word out to the public.

Guy St. Germain suggested calling the project the “New Jail”. The majority of the Task Force was in favor of this name.

The Task Force discussed forming a group and promoting it. No one offered to lead this group.

Public Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Commissioner Koskela and seconded by Commissioner Britz to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 4, Nays 0.

Tom Tikkanen, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk