

**HOUGHTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 18, 2021**

The Houghton County Board of Commissioners held a Special meeting on Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 1:40 p.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton and public viewing by Zoom.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Albert Koskela at 3:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chairman Koskela.

Roll call:

The following Commissioners responded to roll call done by the County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

Tom Tikkanen (by telephone), District 1; Albert Koskela, District 2; Glenn Anderson, District 3; Gretchen Janssen, District 4; Roy Britz, District 5.

Agenda:

No Agenda was provided.

Commissioner Anderson discussed what size jail the County needs, and what is most important. He questioned the trends and averages of inmates in the jail. He said the current site viewed prior to the meeting could be used for the Sheriff Department, male & female work camp, and District Court. He said the Board needs to know the location, size, and estimated price in order to get ballot language on the August 2021 ballot. The last price known was \$1.1 million.

Karin Cooper said the previous proposal that was voted down for the courthouse addition was for 60 medium/max beds, and 50 work release beds, there were also isolation and holding cells for approximately 16,000 square feet.

Commissioner Anderson discussed the work camp, Sheriff Department and District Court be at the Sharon Avenue site, and that they need to determine a location and cost of a new jail. He mentioned the Mattson property, the property adjacent to the current courthouse, and the church property. He stated the Mattson property would have new construct cost, \$400,000 purchase price, and had questions on the fill needed on the site and the drainage concerns. The property adjacent to the courthouse has no cost, but no future for expansion and would short change the county in the future, and there would be issues for snow removal.

Commissioner Britz discussed moving forward with UP Engineering as previously voted on.

Karin Cooper discussed the lay out spaces in the blue print from the Sharon Avenue Church for the Sheriff Department, District Court, and the work camp (male & female).

They discussed a Committee meet with the Sheriff and Captain.

Commissioner Tikkanen asked Commissioner Janssen about her thoughts with no firm price on the church. She stated that John Paul Pietila stated it would be 1-2 years before the church begins building their new building. She would like to see a more solid idea on the cost of the church building. John Paul Pietila is looking into the cost with the church board. The County has nothing in writing with the church.

Commissioner Tikkanen said we needed to get a price from John Paul Pietila, and to have the Sheriff and Captain recommend what size of jail is needed and to discuss what needs to be done before a purchase agreement is made.

They discussed a new assessment from Karin Cooper and questioned if we will need to do millage requirements and the lot and improvements.

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk, confirmed the deadline is May 11, 2021 by 4:30 pm to her for the August election for ballot language.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the Board could do a purchase option with a fixed price and have various contingencies.

Commissioner Britz stated the church Board wants the new church built before they sell.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated he fears the fill areas due to the flooding on the Mattson property. The church property has room for future expansions.

Karin Cooper believes the District Court, Sheriff Department and male and female work camp departments can fit into the church. It would take approximately six (6) months to design, and is a two (2) year process from the date of election to the move in date.

There would have to be a firm date they will leave the church.

Karin Cooper stated it would take her 2-3 weeks for sketches, and she would work with the Sheriff, and have the sketches ready for the April 13th Board meeting, and have a construction estimate before May 11, 2021. She asked if today's site is better than what they have looked at before. Commissioner Britz said yes. He is pleased that there are utilities, the property is flat and level, and there is a building on the site. There would not need to be much demolition, and the building has a very open concept.

Commissioner Anderson recommended that Commissioners Britz and Koskela work with the Sheriff and Captain on the trends of the jail and inmate population.

Commissioner Britz feels the Board has exhausted the search for 5-6 acres in the City of Houghton.

Chairman Koskela questioned if the jail could be built with the church still being used.

Adjournment:

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

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

Albert Koskela, Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk