

**SHARON AVENUE& JAIL PROPERTY USE COMMITTEE
MEETING
OCTOBER 31, 2025**

The Sharon Avenue & Jail Property Use Committee held a Meeting on Friday, October 31, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. in the 5th Floor Conference Room of the Courthouse, City of Houghton with the public viewing in person.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Britz at 9:34 a.m.

Roll call:

The following Committee members responded to roll call done by Chief Deputy County Clerk, Renee Cunningham:

Roy Britz, Lisa Mattila, Barry Fink, Todd LaRoux, Jaikob Djerf, Alex-IT, Alex and Chelsea.

Also in attendance was Tom Bingham.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

A Motion was made by Lisa Mattila and seconded by Jaikob Djerf to approve the agenda as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 9, Nays 0.

Public Comments:

None.

New Business:

1. Discuss the Sharon Avenue property and the potential property uses.

Commissioner Britz stated a coup of group tours were done. The Committee discussed their thoughts after touring the property.

Lisa Mattila stated it needed a bulldozer and felt it is a waste to sink money into the building to get it ready for use.

Commissioner Britz stated the cost a few years ago was \$2.5 million to get the building to code.

Todd LaRoux stated to have areas for storage changes the building classification to get it up to code. The roof on the church side is 30 pound load bearing. The roof on the addition is up to current code. To move the boxes to store in the sanctuary needs more security, including more locks on the doors.

Lisa Mattila asked if the current storage facility that court document has are up to code.

Commissioner Britz thought an idea would be to move all of the stored documents to store in the old jail once the new jail and facility were up and running.

Jaikob Djerf feels the sanctuary is not a good space to use. Separate bond and millage is needed to renovate to get offices in the church.

Lisa Mattila stated it is cheaper to demolish the existing building.

Jaikob Djerf thinks the renovation of the property versus new construction of a similarly sized space would be close in price.

Alex, IT, stated there are only cameras set up. There is no ether net. The Leadership Committee decided to get the cameras installed.

Lisa Mattila had asked who decided to put the cameras in.

Jaikob Djerf asked if the church has been insured since day one. Administrator Rheault said yes they have had insurance.

Barry Fink stated she does not agree with Jennifer Kelly's memo to sell the property. She does not agree with putting a storage building across the street from the existing courthouse. She would like to keep the Sharon Avenue property for the jail.

Commissioner Britz stated that he, Commissioner Janssen and Karin Cooper drove around to all available properties a few years ago. There were issues at those properties. There was an open mine shaft. The Sears building has fill dumped in the property next to it.

Commissioner Britz stated that they negotiated with the church and used ARPA funds. They also worked with Portage Township and the City of Houghton.

Commissioner Britz stated he would vote no on selling the property. He also mentioned that Marquette County is having a hard time finding property to build a new courthouse.

Todd LaRoux stated whatever is done with the Sharon Avenue property it is a change of use. The County will have to bring it up to code. It would be a total renovation to both parts of the church.

Lisa Mattila recommended demolishing the church, cleaning up the property and start fresh.

Todd LaRoux will address the deficiency in the roof.

Todd LaRoux and Tom Bingham will check on the cost to demolish the church. County could demolish it. The County has open top containers and we have the Transfer Station. Todd thinks it would cost approximately \$150,000 to take down and haul away and maybe get the landfill to open on a Saturday and rent 2 excavators, and have the Transfer Station run trucks to the landfill.

Lisa Mattila asked if asbestos and lead testing would need to be done on the property before it would be taken down. Todd didn't think it would need to be done.

Commissioner Britz asked if anything would be salvageable. Todd felt some windows and siding. Furnaces are old. Garage is a safety issue. There is no fire safety devices.

Lisa Mattila asked if anyone did a walk through when the County considering buying it. Commissioner Britz stated the Commissioners did a walk through. Lisa called the church demo bait.

Todd LaRoux said you can't find 6 acres for the price it was purchased for anymore.

Lisa Mattila asked if we looked in any townships or other cities than Houghton to build a courthouse.

Josh Saaranen wants to keep the jail in Houghton along with the offices.

Commissioner Britz stated everything, including the jail has to be in one spot.

Jaikob Djerf asked if the County was coming up on the date to record/report the ARPA funds and how we used them.

Todd LaRoux asked if there were any ARPA funds still available to demolish the church. Administrator Rheault will look into seeing if there are any funds available.

Todd LaRoux asked John Paul Pietila if the church had internet and was told no. Commissioner Britz asked if we should shut down all of the utilities and save money. Tom Bingham said we would end up with mold if the building heat was turned off.

Alex, IT, told the Committee that a group fo kids are parking in the back parking lot behind the church. Church elders had asked the kids to stop parking in the lot. Tom Bingham said there are NO trespassing signs that he put up.

Barry Fink recommends demolishing the church and keeping the property.

Todd LaRoux stated that he felt Chairman Tikkanen and Commissioner Britz need to stand up to the people that oppose tearing the church down. The church has exceeded it's life in his opinion. The residential code BC 2021, the building is in need of renovation or demolition.

Administrator Rheault does not believe there are any ARPA funds left. She is having a hard time tracking what funds were used and for what. She suggested waiting until the next fiscal year to do anything. The Circuit Court renovations came up short. There is no left over money to use.

Tom Bingham stated the County has to make sure there is enough money to cover the demolition. He stated that Curt at the Transfer Station has not been talked to about the demolition of the church.

Lisa Mattila asked if the County can legally do the demolition or does the bid need to go out for bids. Administrator Rheault will check with Attorney Zappa. Commissioner Britz asked if the work to demolition falls under the workers job classifications to do the work.

Barry Fink asked if the County decides to demolish the church, can the utilities be shut off. Commissioner Britz stated the County must keep the heat on low and electricity on for security reasons.

A Motion was made by Lisa Mattila and seconded by Todd LaRoux to demolish the church on Sharon Avenue when the funds are available and to winterize the building with keeping the electricity on, keeping the heat on, and to turn the water off.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 9, Nays 0.

2. Set future meeting dates and times.

Commissioner Britz stated that the Committee should look at the existing jail and have a meeting. The Committee will meet after Administrator Rheault figures out the funds.

Public Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

A Motion was made by Lisa Mattila and seconded by Todd LaRoux to adjourn at 10:19 a.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 9, Nays 0.

Roy Britz, Vice-Chairman

Jennifer Kelly, County Clerk

APPROVED _____

JK