

**JAIL COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING-5<sup>th</sup> Floor-Conference Room**  
**JANUARY 5, 2026 – 4:00 PM**  
**MINUTES**

A. Call to Order

Chairman Hyrkas called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present:

Jared Hyrkas, Tom Tikkanen, Faith Morrison, Justin LaCosse, Dan Holcomb, Sharon Foix, Mike Hamilton and Gretchen Janssen.

By Microsoft Teams:

Jennifer Kelly, Andrea Johnson and Valorie Troesch.

Absent: William Keith, Sheriff Josh Saaranen, Tom Bingham, Todd LaRoux, Susanna Peters.

Visitors: (2) unidentified, Ruth Gill, Krissy Sundstrum, Alex Radke

C. Approval of Agenda/Additions

A Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Gretchen Janssen to approve the agenda as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 8, Nays 0.

D. Approval of Meeting Minutes of December 8, 2025

A Motion was made by Dan Holcomb and seconded by Faith Morrison to approve the December 8, 2025, Minutes as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 8, Nays 0.

E. Public Comments

Andrea Johnson introduced herself by Teams that she is the new 97<sup>th</sup> District Court Drug Treatment Court Case Manager. She hopes to be involved with the committee; she suggests we might consider doing a community needs assessment.

## F. Old Business/Follow Up on Action Items

1. Reminder of our Objective: Develop a proposed plan for a new Jail/Sheriff's Office that the voters will support

Chairman Hyrkas discussed the objectives of the Committee.

2. Social Media efforts update and next steps
  - I. Renewed offer for anyone to attend meetings or join committee?

Chairman Hyrkas said one comment on the feedback form is that the same people are handling the jail initiative, and there should be new faces. . . People are welcome to join at any time and get involved.

Faith Morrison stated the history of the jail effort needs to be made available to the public and for the public to know that this is a new committee.

**ACTION: Need to make clear on our social medial that this is a new committee that started after the millage.**

**ACTION: Need to create a history of the jail effort**

### II. Public Information Officer

The Sheriff had requested at the last meeting that there be a public information officer.

Chairman Hyrkas stated the person would need to be as accessible as possible. Have an email set up for the person or the committee.

Faith Morrison stated that in the 2025 effort an email was supposed to be set up for input and comments and for there to be an acknowledgment of receipt. This never came to pass. It might be best to have to be a phone number for people to text or leave voicemails and we would need to establish who would monitor everything and bring the comments to the committee.

Chairman Hyrkas stated the Sheriff requested one (1) person be the PIO and to be the spokesperson for all the jail efforts. Alex Radke stated he could create an email for the group and make it sharable. County employees only can access the emails. There is a \$200 yearly fee. It is unclear who would do this work.

### 3. County Website Feedback Form-23 responses

- I. Certain ones to address with social media posting and/or more research?

Dan Holcomb asked about the 23 submissions to the online comment document. He suggested Alex Radke change the question to be if the person has any concerns or comments regarding a

new jail. Radke has changed work status from consultant to county employee and cannot modify the original questionnaire.

**ACTION: When able, Radke will make a new question “What are your main concerns with the proposed new jail?”**

Dan Holcomb discussed doing a 10-15 second PSA and we discussed asking Todd VanDyke to do it. It could cover the community providing feedback to the Committee and to encourage people to attend meetings. There was a suggestion by Holcomb to do a letter to the editor. Gretchen Janssen suggested TV6.

Faith Morrison stated that the League of Women Voters does press releases.

Justin LaCosse has drafted a comparison of locations and prepared it to be released on social media.. Chairman Hyrkas stated that in the proposed text it was not clear that the Sharon Avenue property is the best option. Everyone should review it and provide their comments on what swayed them to believe it's the best site, so we don't miss any of the reasons.

**ACTION: Committee members to review LaCosse's draft and suggest improvements.**

Alex Radke stated some voters did not know how bad of shape the jail is in, and that the County has purchased property to build a new one on. The people he's talked to did not know.

Tom Tikkanen stated people understand that they need to pay for a new jail. Property owners will be paying taxes. He discussed posting in the media to inform the voters that a jail is required to be funded by the County.

Jared Hyrkas will be developing the list of possible postings, and stated the voters want to know the cost of a new jail.

**ACTION: give the public a way to contact the committee directly. Make the discussion more accessible. Develop possible postings for social media.**

Faith Morrison stated that a pie chart of county finances would help the public know how big a part of the county's efforts are for police and a jail. In Hancock it is something like 80% of the budget.

Faith Morrison read out loud the 23 responses to the survey. They include comments on

- Have you seriously looked at renovating the current facility?
- Lack of transparency on how church was bought?
- Voters have said no multiple times – give it up (4)
- Why did you purchase the church before approval to move the jail there?
- Public supports Canal View – don't sell it (3)
- Where is the money coming from without community approval?
- Who is responsible for letting current jail decay?
- Why a broken down church property chosen over many other suitable choices

- What will you do differently this time to get the voters to pass this?
- What happens if the state closes our jail?
- Get rid of anyone previously involved in this issue and start over
- What is the liability to the county of our current jail?

Tom Tikkanen stated he feels the county-held properties issues (Canal View, Marina, Transfer Station, Airport) need to be resolved and for the Board to confirm the new jail location as soon as possible so we can move on. He feels this is a distraction and that the Board needs to set a deadline. The committee's work shows that the County took seriously the issues investigated by that committee.

Faith Morrison asked if this Committee could make a recommendation to the Board on location. Tom Tikkanen said it shouldn't be necessary yet since he and Gretchen Janssen are participating and can bring the information to the board.

Valorie Troesch suggested the County-Held Properties Committee bring a final report to the Board, and to set a date. Tom Tikkanen and Gretchen Janssen could ask the board to act on this.

**ACTION: Tikkanen and Janssen will raise the issue with the County Board of setting a reporting date for the County-Held Properties Committee.**

4. Federal funding opportunity-Did Dan Holcomb submit a letter of interest to Bergman's Office?

Dan Holcomb stated the letter needs to be specific and to the point. The average request is between \$250,000 and \$2 million. The higher the ask, the lower the chances. What would we ask for in this price range?

Mike Hamilton stated there needs to be a design of the building, water line, and sewer infrastructure. A blueprint needs to be done. That could be the request. Also, the waterline or sewer line could be installed, which would be another request.

Dan Holcomb stated that there needs to be a cost number associated with each request in order to get things moving forward.

Chairman Hyrkas said that both of these requests would be at least \$1M, maybe \$2M.

Mike Hamilton noted that we need a location to be able to ask for site-preparation funds.

Gretchen Janssen said it would be important to know if there would be future strings attached to this money.

Tom Tikkanen said we are a ticking time bomb. It is going to be a calamity that the state is going to have to work with the county on, in the case that the jail closes.

**ACTION: Dan Holcomb will work on a draft of a letter to Bergman's Office and will email it to everyone.**

## 5. Jail Needs Subcommittee

As the Sheriff could not attend today, Faith Morrison reported for the Jail Needs Subcommittee.

Morrison stated the subcommittee has met twice and is meeting a third time next week. The committee has chosen to meet often to make more progress. The 3 biggest concerns were design, location and cost.

Morrison reported that there needs to be a commitment to the Sharon Avenue location to make progress. There is unanimous support for that location on the subcommittee because:

1. The County already owns the property,
2. it is close to the courthouse for the transporting of inmates to Court,
3. the lot is in good condition for building, and
4. the lot is large enough for decades of county needs.

The subcommittee has been discussing what services do the people of Houghton County need that the jail and its staff provide. What will a new jail provide that the current jail, fixed up, cannot provide now? The committee arrived at the conclusion that we need to be able to explain to ourselves and the public what goes on in the jail and the difficulties posed by the current too small, poorly laid out, cramped facility.

Morrison discussed Jail Captain Travis Desselier's three scenarios of how different types of arrests play out in the current jail facility and how they would play out in a new, safer facility. He is doing one more scenario.

Morrison reported that the subcommittee is following up on member Justin LaCosse's idea of applying systems engineering to the processes that go on in the jail and tying that to the sizes of spaces needed to do those things.

Justin LaCosse discussed his idea. LaCosse stated what do we need them to be able to do at the jail. What are the safety port requirements and safety issues. We need to develop a systems approach to show which spaces are used for what.

Faith Morrison stated we need to determine how big of a facility is needed. We are a growing County but want peace and order with people held to account for any crimes they commit.

Tom Tikkanen stated there must be consideration for workers. Deputies are at risk.

Faith Morrison discussed the deficiencies at the jail, and how that affects the staff. She asked if there is a written report from the consultants Abonmarche/Byce?

**ACTION: Tom Tikkanen will investigate the consultant's written narrative beyond the Power point.**

Faith Morrison also noted that Valorie Troesch had made a suggestion at the Needs Committee meeting that the committee was following up on.

Valorie Troesch spoke about her idea. It was to have short videos that demonstrate Desselier's scenarios that show the space-related operational problems at the current jail. Have non-inmate actors due to privacy issues. A video can be done in the jail without showing the inmates.

Tom Tikkanen said that these are exciting and ambitious ideas.

Faith Morrison invited the committee members to the next Jail Needs subcommittee meeting, which is Monday January 12 at 2pm in this same room.

#### New Business

##### 1. County-Held Assets-see other committee December 9<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes

Dan Holcomb suggested waiting on the report as discussed earlier in the meeting. Tom Tikkanen is to get a proposed reporting deadline on the Board's agenda. Tom Tikkanen stated there are unresolved issues with the county-held properties, such as the Marina's grants. The DNR has said money would have to be paid back. Canal View's board voted to have the nursing home appraised; to be paid by Canal View. Their board will select the firm to do the appraisal in January.

**ACTION: County board to be encouraged to request a report from the County-Held properties committee (Tikkanen, Janssen).**

##### 2. Developing a plan of the new jail-steps to get there

Chairman Hyrkas discussed having a deadline for requesting funds from the voters for a new jail. He will have steps for a plan at the next meeting and will share it with the other committees. Then timelines can be done. Investigate pros/cons of state mandated jail.

Jennifer Kelly said the CCISD did file with the Clerk's office for the May election, a renewal only. When the deadline passes for filing for millages she will update the committee (February 10). The Village of Lake Linden is putting renewal of a schools millage as well.

Chairman Hyrkas said the ISD is doing a CTE (Career and Technical Education) renewal only, not the development millage that they asked for last fall. The millage is ten years old.

**ACTION: Hyrkas will put some thought into the timing of a millage and next steps and email the group.**

Will discuss next month.

3. Goals for/before next meeting(s)

See action items noted above.

4. Next meeting date and time.

**The Committee agreed to meet next on Monday, February 2, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. in the same location (5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room in the Courthouse).**

G. Public Comments

A gentleman who wasn't willing to share his name asked if anyone has looked at the Baraga prison. A facility with 192 beds is not being used. He stated the Sharon Avenue property was not approved by the voters. Chairman Hyrkas offered to provide his contact information if the gentleman was willing to provide more information or a contact person with the Prison that could discuss it.

Faith Morrison stated state law requires the Sheriff's principal office be in the City of Houghton, the county seat. The Sheriff has stated that he wants the Jail to be on the same property as the Sheriff's Offices.

Krissy Sundstrom discussed using social media to promote the committee's activity and noted there is no county social media account. The recycling group has effective social media. She suggested flyers and videos. She endorsed Valorie Troesch's video ideas discussed in this meeting.

Chairman Hyrkas noted that we had discussed it previously, but the county said they do not have a budget or staff for these issues. It would be great if someone would volunteer. Maybe the jail committee can somehow create a shared account and share the workload it would have.

Sundstrom suggested getting some young people who might be willing to become influencers for the jail issue.

Sundstrom asked why the current jail hasn't been updated.

Chairman Tikkanen stated improvements have been made to keep it operating. But if we pass the threshold of making major improvements we basically have to build a new jail.

Ruth Gill asked if the County could get a waiver to have the jail outside of the County seat. Chairman Hyrkas offered to ask the Prosecutor.

Gretchen Janssen said that you can move the county seat.

Tom Tikkanen agreed but noted that the question becomes where do you put it? You have to be efficient and travelling back and forth with inmates is an issue.

J. Adjournment

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Mike Hamilton to adjourn the meeting at 5:51p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 12, Nays 0.

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JARED HYRKAS

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JENNIFER KELLY  
COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
JK