

JAIL COMMITTEE
MEETING-5th Floor-Conference Room
FEBRUARY 2, 2026 – 4:00 PM
MINUTES

A. Call to Order

Chairman Hyrkas called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Present:

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

By Microsoft Teams:

Jennifer Kelly, Mike Hamilton, and Valorie Troesch.

Visitors: Andrea Johnson (Treatment Court)

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 January 5, 2026

A Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Dan Holcomb to approve the January 5, 2026, minutes as presented.

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

E. Public Comments

Andrea Johnson stated she toured the current jail and feels we need a new jail. She also feels we need prevention programs. She would like to help with the committee.

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 reminded everyone of the objective for the committee.

2. Social Media efforts update and next steps

- i. Create a committee social media account

Chairman Hyrkas discussed creating Facebook and Instagram accounts for Houghton County Jail Committee where the committee members would be moderators and could

respond to readers' questions and comments. If comments get out-of-hand we could close it down.

Faith Morrison stated the League of Women Voters posts on Facebook and creates events for jail meetings so that people may participate. Facebook moderates accounts in terms of abusive postings. Instagram is harder to do because of how it works. Need someone to set up a Facebook account.

Commissioner Janssen stated that the account needs to state its purpose and what kind of posting is acceptable.

Chairman Hyrkas stated he has someone to set up the account and will let everyone know when it is done. Dan Holcomb said if that falls through, he has someone in mind that could do it too. Chairman Hyrkas said he would draft the blurb that Commissioner Janssen mentioned and let everyone know when the account is set up.

Faith Morrison stated that the County is looking into setting up a YouTube page. Morrison created a video based on one of Travis Desselier's scenarios and will fix it and post it soon. This could be posted on YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram.

Justin LaCosse discussed the AI podcast he had created. There is one (1) based on the history of the jail, walk thru scenarios, and people can view it. LaCosse will forward his email.

Faith Morrison will send the link to her video to everyone to get feedback. She discussed a press release she is working on based on the history of the attempts to address the jail issues and the purchase of the Sharon Avenue property.

ii. Public Information Officer

Chairman Hyrkas stated the Sheriff was not present to discuss having a Public Information Officer. Faith Morrison stated this came up at the subcommittee meeting. Having a Public Information Officer would make things go more smoothly, but it is not a volunteer position.

Chairman Hyrkas stated the person could do one post a month.

iii. History of the jail effort

Commissioner Tikkanen stated he hopes some of the committees will be done soon (County-Held Properties and Sharon Avenue and Jail-Use) and will be asked to provide reports to the Board of Commissioners.

3. County Website Feedback Form – 23 responses

i. Updated link and question live?

Commissioner Tikkanen will ask Alex Radke to redo what is on the County website.

Faith Morrison recommended taking the old version off the webpage if VC3 retains control over it.

4. Federal funding opportunity – Dan Holcomb submitted a letter of interest

Dan Holcomb stated he has not sent the letter. He is waiting for them to send him the updated form. He will do the form in March and share it with the committee.

Faith Morrison stated if the federal funding is approved in 2027, it will still be ok if the millage passes as the money will be used for engineering costs. Once the specs are done,

then bids can be done. Could cost less money. The jail plans must be approved by the MDOC.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed uses of the Sharon Avenue property and wants to provide a safe facility. He is happy that Andrea Johnson from Treatment Court is at this meeting. A new jail will have program areas.

5. Jail needs subcommittee report

Faith Morrison discussed the Jail-Needs subcommittee meeting and Justin LaCosse's AI podcast. She stated that Detective Charlie Klein discussed the conditions of the evidence lockers, and how sewer issues have happened as there is a leaky pipe in that room and the nurse's room has the same issue. Evidence must be stored in the jail to preserve chain of possession.

Valorie Troesch said the committee needs to identify the spaces the jail needs such as a proper sally port, larger nurse's area, evidence area and rooms for programs.

Faith Morrison is working on identifying the space needed based on the consultants' report. Common working space in the current jail cannot be expanded now (booking, corrections, kitchen, nursing, etc.) as those rooms are surrounded by inmate housing. She discussed that the consultant's report has sizes of common spaces to accommodate a 51-bed jail, which is what is called for by our current average daily population with inmate classification accounted for. We have the recommended sizes of the common areas for the 51-bed jail design.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed mental health and treatment areas. Faith Morrison stated we would need 1725 square feet according to the consultants' report (51-bed design). There is no program space now. The recommended space is on the summary table in the report.

Dan Holcomb recommended using AI to back calculate the sizes of various spaces instead of someone doing the work. Faith Morrison agreed that this might work and she could try it and Justin LaCosse agreed to work with her on this.

6. Other action items

- i. Tom Tikkanen share the consultant's written narrative beyond the Power point.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the Board is meeting next week. He hopes for 1) a Motion to be done for the committee reports to be submitted to the board for the April meeting and 2) to authorize an estimate of engineering costs for reuse of the Sharon Avenue property. He discussed getting quotes for an engineering estimated cost to adding a 3-hour firewall to separate the spaces that have different fire ratings and to install studs to support the snow load. The Board would ask for an RFP.

Chairman Tikkanen said it is his hope to have the millage on the November 2026 ballot. For now, all the committees will proceed but only the Jail Committee will continue after the reports are done. Once the reports are in, the board can vote on the county-held property question and move the jail planning forward.

- ii. Did the county board request a report from the County-Held properties committee by a certain time?

The appraisal of Canal View has been ordered and the report be delivered to the Board by March 15. After the April committee reports, two of the committees will have completed their tasks. Tikkanen recommended some of the committee members from those committees join the Jail Committee when those other committees stop. Some subcommittees may need to be formed.

B. New Business

1. Developing a plan of the new jail – steps to get there

Chairman Hyrkas suggested 10 steps to develop a plan. He has emailed it to everyone.

10 Steps (Hyrkas)

1. *Determine location*
2. *Determine what spaces*
3. *Approximate sizes (number of beds and sf*
4. *Construction type*
5. *Schematic design now?*
6. *Project costs*
7. *Other sources of funding*
8. *A bigger press release*
9. *Doing bonding length*
10. *Which election to go to*

Point 1: Sharon Avenue

Points 2 and 3:

Faith Morrison will use the information from the consultants to get square footages together. Chairman Hyrkas needs the square footage of the building to know what the most efficient way is to build the jail. What can be saved on construction costs.

Point 4:

Faith Morrison stated that in the 2024 plan the cells would be prefab.

Todd LaRoux discussed that in that plan the utilities were able to be accessed outside the perimeter and thus repairs would not impact operations.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated there may be ways to save money on construction compared to the 2024 estimates.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed planning for building smaller now with more beds/pods for the future. The space for the expansion will be there from the start of the plan.

Faith Morrison stated the report shows a zero increase in staff until 2044. There would be one (1) person in the control room. Staffing is an expensive, ongoing cost that can be avoided with the proper design.

Points 5, 6, 7 and 8:

Chairman Hyrkas stated steps need to be taken further to get to be ready to create RFPs for jail construction done. If there is no federal funding, the Board of Commissioners will have to produce something to the voters so they can see and understand what is needed for a new jail.

Faith Morrison discussed putting the small courtroom in the design as this has been agreed upon.

Commissioner Tikkanen is hopeful that the reports will be done in April, and the Board will be able to see if it is wise to sell any county-held properties. He stated that to move forward it needs to be determined where to build. An RFP will move us towards more firm plans for a new jail. The question is to do it now or wait for April.

Points 9 and 10:

Chairman Hyrkas stated he feels it is ok to wait for April to see what the committees recommend and then have in the RFP what is needed and put a schematic design together.

Faith Morrison discussed Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) standards for a new jail.

Commissioner Tikkanen discussed cutting building costs to the exterior. He has seen some newer jails that are really plain.

Faith Morrison discussed asking for a group tour of the Delta jail which is a reasonably new jail.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed getting help to find out what the taxpayers will agree to. He discussed the different construct types and to accept local bids that may affect the cost.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated local bids would mean local opportunities.

Mike Hamilton stated everyone should consider the new construction issue when using blocks. Frost causes issues with the outside of buildings.

Commissioner Tikkanen said that Treasurer, Lisa Mattila and Equalization Director, Jaikob Djerf should be brought in for discussion.

Faith Morrison feels that Andrea Johnson is a new asset for the committees. She has knowledge about programs that reduces inmates re-offending. The Sheriff has said that alcohol, drugs, and mental health are 90% of the occupancy at the jail.

Andrea Johnson discussed universal screening and the likelihood for it to return to court hearings and the jail in the future. Universal screening could be done in the jail if there is space.

Dan Holcomb discussed the life expectancy of a new jail. Questioned future improvements to be at a minimum impact on the taxpayers.

Chairman Hyrkas stated the life expectancy could be figured out on the infrastructure but not on the operational.

Faith Morrison stated the Sheriff is more comfortable with 70 or 80 beds. He has been concerned that the building will be too small decades into the future.

Chairman Hyrkas stated a basic jail is needed at some point. If we can pass a 50-bed jail then we should do it.

Commissioner Janssen said a \$2 million addition now will cost \$4-5 million in the future.

Commissioner Tikkanen stated the Sheriff has had to declare an emergency more than once due to overcrowding. He thanked Judge Wisti for starting the Treatment Court.

2. Possible millage date (confirm once we get closer and know what else will be on the ballot)

Chairman Tikkanen stated he hoped November 2026.

3. Goals for/before next meeting(s)

Chairman Hyrkas said he has a good handle on issues of construction type trade-offs.

4. Next meeting date and time.

March 3, 2026 at 4:00 p.m. in the 5th floor conference room with Microsoft Teams.

J. Adjournment

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Commissioner Tikkanen to adjourn the meeting at 5:42 p.m.

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

JARED HYRKAS

JENNIFER KELLY
COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED: _____
JK