

JAIL NEEDS SUBCOMMITTEE (in common with the Jail Committee)

MEETING-5th Floor-Conference Room

MARCH 23, 2026 – 4:00 PM

MINUTES

Call to Order:

Sheriff Saaranen called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Roll Call:

The following responded to County Clerk, Jennifer Kelly:

Jail-Needs Subcommittee: Sheriff Josh Saaranen, Captain Travis Dessellier, Faith Morrison, Justin LaCosse, Valorie Troesch, Mike Hamilton.

Jail Committee: Jared Hyrkas, Gretchen Janssen, Faith Morrison, Todd LaRoux, Mike Hamilton, Justin LaCosse, Josh Saaranen, Valorie Troesch, Andrea Johnson.

Approval of Agenda/Additions:

Faith Morrison asked that item “e” be added to discuss the Jail Committee reports that need to be submitted to the Board of Commissioners for the April 14, 2026 meeting.

Sheriff Saaranen asked that item “b” include the recommendation for spaces and Andrea Johnson asked to discuss jail diversion programs under “b”.

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Todd LaRoux to approve the agenda with the additions as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 10, Nays 0.

Approval of February 11, 2026 minutes:

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Travis Dessellier to approve the February 11, 2026 minutes as presented.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

Public Comments:

None.

New Business:

A. Update on Jail Committee/ Board of Commissioners

Gretchen Janssen stated she toured the Delta County Jail and will provide a report soon. The facility was developed by the same consultants Houghton County hired, AbonmarchByce. The Delta jail is a modern pod design with noticeably larger spaces for jail operations. No pictures were allowed; no floor plans were able to be shared.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed the Facebook posts for social media. He would like to see committee members ramp up posting to the account. Hyrkas asked Faith Morrison if she could provide the frequently asked questions (FAQs) that the League of Women Voters has collected, and Morrison agreed.

Andrea Johnson discussed posting about the efforts being done to try and receive federal funding for engineering work on the jail.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed an email sent to the Commissioners regarding the federal funding. He asked Janssen to address this at the next Work Session. He asked if the schematic design is intended to be ready for the November 2026 ballot, and if money is available for this fiscal year or the next fiscal year. He discussed a conceptual design, which is a 3-D rendering of the building that should be able to be done in 2 months. Faith Morrison stated the County paid \$3,500 for a schematic design of that type for the last election. Sheriff confirmed a 3-D rendering was done before; it was used in the communications to voters about the millage. Morrison noted that unfortunately that 3-D rendering did not include the intended courtroom in the jail floor plan. It also omitted details as a juvenile holdover space and other elements.

B. Progress on jail square footage document (Saaranen, Dessellier)

Sheriff Saaranen discussed the task of assigning square footages and details to the intended jail designed based on the AbonmarchByce report. Saaranen and Captain Travis Dessellier are finding the task challenging and are leaning on the Department of Corrections (DOC) requirements for square footage recommendations. They are working on a list of the needed spaces. He discussed the many areas that are needing square footages.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed his review of the spreadsheet that Faith Morrison shared with the committee in the last meeting. He noticed the building being 28,000 square feet, but the report shows 37,000 square feet. Morrison explained the meaning of some of the columns in the table in her spreadsheet. Currently there are 28 beds in the jail; one column was a scale up by the consultants of departmental sizes to accommodate 51 beds in a new jail, the number of beds that would minimally allow our jail to be able to comply with inmate classification regulations.

Faith Morrison discussed having the reasons why spaces need to be bigger so the committee can answer the public's concerns about costs.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed that the table included a training program room, the sheriff offices, and a conference room, but asked the Sheriff if these purposes could all use the same room. The Sheriff said they possibly could. Hyrkas found the rooms list confusing as they refer to the 2-4 beds being called "single". Sheriff explained he wants single high security level cells and other cells could be shared. Chairman Hyrkas discussed having 25 two (2) person cells. The breakdown of the types of cells is not yet determined. A dorm would require supervision and would only be suitable for inmates that share classification and are the lowest security inmates. Hyrkas referred to page 102 in the consultants' report and discussed options, 1, 2 and 3. Faith Morrison stated page 56 of that report has square footages. Chairman Hyrkas stated it needs to be determined what the bare minimum square footage is. Could we pick 5/6ths of the size the consultants suggest and then just work with it. The last millage was \$32 million. Chairman Hyrkas said you don't want under fund a project and get stuck holding the bag. Chairman Hyrkas commented that he'd seen it that everyone likes a low cost project until there are cost overruns. Chairman Hyrkas said he does think we could do it for a little less, but how much less is still not clear. We're not going to know the true amount until the design is done.

Mike Hamilton discussed that 60-70 beds could be a goal with the possibility of only building half now to keep the price down. Faith Morrison discussed saving money by doing the full building footprint but building some things later.

Sheriff discussed the importance of the safety of their evidence and records.

Chairman Hyrkas discussed the fee for having a design done.

Faith Morrison and Chairman Hyrkas discussed the need to get an RFP from engineers for a design. Maybe go to the voters for \$2 million for a design. Several people said it would be tough to go to the voters twice, once for the design and again for the build.

Valorie Troesch discussed the grant request that Dan Holcomb submitted to Congressman Bergman for \$2 million for an engineering design. If this is awarded the funds would only come in 2027. Faith Morrison noted the next budget year for the county will begin in October 2026 and maybe the county could budget for the engineering work. Chairman Hyrkas discussed the risk on the price increasing and what is the square footage everyone can live with to start the process. He stated the Committee may wish to not recommend pursuing the November 2026 election for a millage as there is too much to figure out yet. Valorie Troesch stated more specifics need to be given to the voters. Todd LaRoux stated it would be good to talk to local contractors and that the public would feel better about a jail project that involved local contractors. He agrees to needing a design for the new jail and Sheriff Offices.

Andrea Johnson discussed remote screening of pre-trial inmates that could possibly be released to reduce jail size and therefore cost. She stated that no additional space is needed for such a program to be implemented. It is done at the booking process. Currently when some inmates are given early release, they are not receiving supervision. She stressed the need for supervision for public safety. She believes state funding is available for the remote screening process. She will report more after her next meeting in Marquette in May 2026.

C. Schedule final report to Jail Committee

Sheriff Saaranen discussed having the square footage and a list of spaces they will need for the April 6, 2026 Jail Committee meeting.

D. Jail scenarios (new, edited, used in social media)

Travis Dessellier stated he is working on an evidence room scenario to add to the four existing scenarios. Faith Morrison noted that we do not yet have videos made of the existing scenarios.

Valorie Troesch stated we need four (4) videos that are 1 minute or less. She will try to find someone that will do it for free and make the videos.

Faith Morrison stated some new pictures are available from the current jail. The new pictures include a staff member so that it is more clear how small the spaces are in the current jail.

Justin LaCosse reminded the committee that he had created some PDF documents that took Dessellier's scenarios and added pictures. Faith Morrison suggested that a short teaser post could be done with pictures and then have a link to go to the full scenario PDF that LaCosse made.

Old Business:

a. Update on Previous Action Items (see below)

The Committee retired the remaining action items as they are not essential to our current priorities.

Action Items from Last Meeting (tabled/retired/done):

1. Faith Morrison will ask Administrator Rheault, Roy Britz, and Tom Tikkanen if the county's audit document contains the values of all of its properties.
2. Sheriff will track down narratives of how the job of law enforcement in Houghton County has evolved over the last 20 years.
3. Sheriff will have an update on the police blotter at a later date.

Next meeting date and time:

The Committee agreed to meet next on **Thursday, April 2, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.** in the 5th floor conference room, with Teams available. The central purpose of this meeting is to finalize input to the Jail Committee to use in its report to the County Board.

Public Comments:

None.

Adjournment:

Motion was made by Faith Morrison and seconded by Mike Hamilton to adjourn the meeting at 5:36 p.m.

The Motion carried by a voice vote. Ayes 6, Nays 0.

JOSH SAARANEN
Sheriff

JENNIFER KELLY
COUNTY CLERK/REGISTER OF DEEDS

APPROVED: _____
JK