

League of Women Voters Copper Country
Jail Study Committee
Final Report August 2018

INTRODUCTION

The League of Women Voters applauds the fact that the Houghton County Board of Commissioners has agreed to address the needs of the Houghton County jail; these needs are indeed at a critical level. The jail falls well below required state standards and has done so for too many years. However, the League asks the Board to step back and take a broad view of the whole system designed to deliver justice and administrative services in our county rather than provide a short-term solution. The elegant but antiquated historic courthouse also has serious problems in need of remediation. Finally, the county employees who carry the responsibility for law enforcement and county administration are working in inadequate conditions on a daily basis. The League asks the Commissioners to slow the process down, and to form a committee which includes some commissioners plus others, to learn what type of facility will be supported by the local citizens, and to figure out where this facility should be located so that it will serve not only the immediate needs but those for the decades and generations to come.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Jail Study Committee of the Copper Country League of Women Voters is composed of Linda Belote, chair, Barry Fink, Sue Ellen Kingsley, Krissy Sundstrom and Valorie Troesch. Other League members who have provided us with assistance include Faith Morrison, Mary Marchaterre, Donna Cole and Leah Bectel. The study committee is very grateful for the kind and helpful cooperation received from Architect Karin Cooper, UPEA Project Manager for the Jail addition; County Sheriff Brian McLean; Michigan Technological Professor of Civil Engineering George Dewey and the many county employees who work in the County Courthouse and assisted with our tour of this historic building.

HISTORY

The history of Houghton County's jail is a rocky one. Originally located in the courthouse constructed in 1886, the county was warned in 1960 that the jail would be closed in seven months due to lack of safety features of fire protection and escape routes, inadequate female facilities, insufficient ventilation and lack of segregation of prisoners with different criminal statuses, if these failings were not corrected. Two attempts to pass millage for the necessary improvements failed: one in November 1960 and the second in January 1961. The jail was closed in February 1961. All prisoners were then transported to Marquette and Baraga, an expensive, non-sustainable solution. Millage for a new fireproof building with cell capacity for 26 prisoners, a garage, sheriff's offices and living quarters, and deputies' spaces was approved by voters in August 1962. This facility, currently in use, opened August 1963. Some upgrades were made in 1981 and again in 1986 without a millage increase. In 1991 a dorm-style work camp facility was opened near the airport, for up to 26 non-violent male prisoners. Since that time there have been several attempts at plans for a new facility with two of these becoming ballot proposals for millage to bring the jail into compliance with state requirements for county jails: one in 2000, the other in 2010. Both failed. [Source of history: *Investigation of Houghton County Criminal Justice Facilities: Needs, History, Forecasts and Options*, prepared by MTU students of Dr. George R. Dewey spring 2011].

At the July 11th 2017 Houghton County Board of Commissioners' meeting, Commissioner Palosaari stated that "it was time to stop kicking the can down the road." It was time to address the needs of the jail for more beds, and he said, he had a plan to do this at a cost of \$5.5 million. It was to add a two story structure with space for 64 beds in the area presently occupied by the courthouse parking deck. The Board voted 5-0 to schedule a special meeting on July 26 to discuss this subject. At the special meeting, citizens filled the conference room to standing-room-only capacity, and many asked questions, with some speaking about the need for citizen participation in the process to air their ideas and get buy-in from the voters. When asked about public input, two commissioners –Pintar and Ala-- said public input was desired; Commissioner Palosaari said none was wanted. In September 2017, a Request for Proposal was approved for the structure originally described by Commissioner Palosaari, and in December Upper Peninsula Engineers and Architects (UPEA)'s proposal was selected to make formal plans for this jail addition. The first draft of this plan was distributed in January 2018.

THE NEEDS OF THE JAIL

Houghton County Sheriff Brian McLean is complying with the County Jail Overcrowding State of Emergency Act 325 of 1982 when he reports jail overcrowding to the Houghton County Board of Commissioners, the governing body charged with the maintenance and well-being of the jail facility, its employees, and its occupants, located within their jurisdiction. Sheriff McLean has been doing such reporting at the monthly meetings of the Board. Current jail capacity is 28. In 2017 he made five such reports of overcrowded conditions at the jail. In total in 2017 there were 176 days with overcrowding; it occurred every month of the year, with the winter months being the worst: January, February and March had over 20 days each. (February was overcrowded every day of the month). Both January and February had 14 days showing occupied beds numbering in the 40s. The inmates without beds sleep on mattresses on the floor; December 2017 was overcrowded 29 of the 31 days.

Overcrowding, meanwhile, has resulted in other failures to comply with state standards. Currently inmates and their attorneys have no space for private conversation; this is conducted in a hallway within earshot of occupied cells. The only space for exercise is outside, but it is seldom used because there is only sufficient staff for supervision in one (inside) location; the space available for isolation for medical and behavioral issues is inadequate and there are no work camp opportunities for female inmates. The current jail is not ADA compliant inside the building, but the sheriff has been told they are "grandfathered in". It is possible to get to the front door of the jail facility without having to use any steps or ramps, however the parking area is far from the entrance, resulting in a difficult journey in winter. Safety of the law enforcement employees is an issue. The situation is critical.

THE NEEDS OF THE COURTHOUSE

The two most apparent needs of the courthouse employees are a desperate shortage of electrical outlets and a shortage of storage space. In fact, it is not just a shortage of outlets, but of electricity that is inadequate, especially in the winter when individuals deal with insufficient heating by supplying their own space heaters, which cause frequent power outages. The courthouse employees are responsible for maintaining records of all types: marriage, birth, death, tax records, court records etc. The vaults currently in use are filled beyond capacity, and other nooks and crannies, including crawl spaces and space located (created) under the parking deck have been put to use for this purpose. The latter will be destroyed if the current addition comes to fruition. What is really needed is to complete the digitizing of all records and funds to pay for this monumental task AND more space to store such documents when this task is completed.

Although not immediately visible, issues of safety of employees becomes subtly apparent when the facilities that would serve as “protection” if a shooter incident could occur are seen; and the fire safety seems quite minimal in such an old building with so many cords plugged into so many electrical strips. The ‘craziness’ of the twisting and turning hallways with only occasional signage could be the cause of fatalities, if either a shooter or a fire should take over the Courthouse. Getting locked in a storage room was also a fear expressed during our tour. Concern was expressed about the loss of the windows from people who work in the south side of the courthouse, if the plan currently under consideration by the Commissioners is accepted. Not only do they bring in light, in some cases they are regarded as ‘emergency egress’ if doors should be blocked. When one stands back and reviews the overall situation of this historical facility, it is clear that it has the same syndrome as the jail, it is vastly overcrowded with too many employees, as well as too many records requiring storage. The only difference is that the jail has clear written guidelines to measure its capacity; the courthouse has none. Meanwhile, it was a pleasure to meet and be greeted by so many competent and friendly county employees who love their jobs of serving the residents of this county, in spite of the handicaps under which they perform the service. The historic nature of the courthouse is perhaps both a plus and a minus for swift and easy upgrade. Since it is on the State of Michigan and the National Register of Historic Places, there are technological fixes that might not be permitted here. Even covering the building on the south side might be a detriment to its historic value.

THE NEEDS OF THE SHERIFF’S OFFICE

When the current jail was originally built, the front area was the residence of the sheriff and his family. The present sheriff’s office was once a former sheriff’s bedroom. The spaces for storage of personal items of the sheriff and law enforcement officers are at maximum capacity at this time. Yet Rod Miller has informed the sheriff that, in fact, Houghton County has a shortage of officers by a factor of 100% i.e. there are currently four officers assigned to the jail, and there should be eight. This shortage is the reason for a slow response, at times, when an alarm is received from a courthouse employee, next door. There is no officer free to go immediately. Scheduling of officers on duty is a nightmare. To assure there is always one on duty 24 hours a day, judicious use of part-time officers is a necessity. In spite of its shortcomings, Sheriff McLean has stated that he is in support of the addition being planned for the parking deck space because it meets the current need—a need so critical.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS INVOLVEMENT

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization encouraging informed and active participation in government. It influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate. We have two separate and distinct roles:

- Voters Service/Citizen Education: we present unbiased nonpartisan information about elections, the voting process, and issues.
- Action/Advocacy: we are also nonpartisan, but, after study, we use our positions to advocate for or against particular policies in the public interest.

The Copper Country League formed a committee to study the Houghton County jail situation in January 2018 when it became clear that no public input was going to be sought for the plan for the County Jail, and no alternative plans or alternative locations were going to be considered for the facility. We had previously (2007) taken a position regarding the jail which was still in effect: The League of Women Voters of the Copper Country supports the construction of a new Houghton County Jail building (to

replace the facility in existence) with adequate facilities for functional, cost and energy efficient, secure operation in compliance with State Administrative Rule requirements, as set forth in the Rules for Jails, Lockups and Security Camps.

After the current 2018 study was undertaken, and public input was gathered, The League revised (April 2018) its position by adding this sentence to it: *LWVCC supports comprehensive planning to include the needs of the offices housed in the historic Courthouse, including Administrative offices, the Courts and also the administrative offices of the Sherriff's department as well as the Jail.*

See the Copper Country LWV WEBSITE www.lwvccmi.org.

In February the committee made its first presentation to Copper Country League members, citing jail history, and pros and cons of the UPEA plan under consideration by the Board of Commissioners at that time. We invited Karin Cooper, Project manager for the UPEA, to attend, and she did so, making a brief presentation of the plans for the addition to the jail. The documents prepared by League members for distribution at the meeting were then posted on the league website, along with a list of positive attributes of the UPEA plan prepared by Cooper and county jail consultant Rod Miller.

PUBLIC INPUT

The thrust of the League's attention was focused on convincing the Board of Commissioners of Houghton County to engage the public in the jail scope by soliciting public input, to gather ideas that might have a positive effect in the outcome of the plan, with the added value of bringing more people into the conversation whereby the citizens might get buy-in, as they gained in understanding the need for such a facility. The lack of such public input was attributed as the 'cause' of the failure of the 2010 millage on the ballot. (Dewey students' study 2011). At the March meeting of the Board, during the opening public comments, a League representative asked the commissioners to join with the League in holding 3 public input meetings: one in Laird Township, one in Hancock and one in Calumet. When the commissioners failed to respond, either at the time of public comment, nor during the time allotted to 'jail update' on the agenda, another League representative informed the Board during closing public comments that their failure to respond meant that the League alone would hold such meetings, and would then present the Commissioners with the results. The dates and times for the public meetings were announced as tentative for Laird Township for March 26 or 27, and April 3 at 5 p.m. at Hancock; April 5 at Calumet at 7:30 p.m. This report has been prepared to create a record of our study and its results for the purpose of informing the commissioners of what we've learned to help them reach the best decision possible.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

The format for each of the three public input meetings was the same: an introduction to explain why the League chose to hold them; a 10 minute presentation of the current plan by UPEA made by Karin Cooper and a League PowerPoint presentation describing 5 potential plans along with the principal advantages and disadvantages of each one: (1) the plan proposed by the commissioners to add onto the existing jail/courthouse; (2) build a new sheriff's department and jail along with a district courtroom across the street from the Houghton County Courthouse and eventually – but not now – secure funding to renovate the existing Sheriff's office facility and Courthouse for expansion of courthouse offices and operations; (3) build a new sheriff's department and jail along with a district courtroom across the street

from the Houghton County Courthouse and also secure funding now to renovate the existing Sheriff's office facility and Courthouse for expansion of courthouse offices and operations; (4) build a new combined Courthouse, Sheriff's Office and jail in a new location, possibly on City of Houghton-owned property near Wal-Mart with a millage to be voted on in 2019; convert the courthouse to alternative use to be decided by the public; (5) do nothing . Following these presentations, the meeting was opened to comments and questions. The League took notes to record questions and comments. Attendance at the meetings (not counting League members, the sheriff, Cooper, or other county employees) was as follows: Laird Township 15; Hancock High School 60; Calumet High School 40.

THE SURVEY

The League created and posted on its website a survey open to anyone to complete. It was on the Leagues website until May 8, 2018. The survey is included in this report as Appendix A.

The survey was intended to learn how much members of the public were willing to pay in additional property taxes to support the various alternatives for a new jail, sheriff's office and courthouse (Questions 1 – 4) and which of the 5 alternatives the public preferred (Question 5). Additionally, the League asked if respondents were registered voters in Houghton County (Question 6).

The League subsequently determined that the survey design itself had several problems. The three most relevant problems are (1) respondents could complete the survey multiple times and the League had no way of knowing how many times some respondents may have done this. (2) The survey was not scientifically conducted – it was open to anyone to complete, it does not guarantee that it is representative of voter sentiment, and the participation numbers are small relative to the number of registered voters in Houghton County. (3) Questions 1-4 were worded in such a way that the League received feedback that respondents were not sure how to complete the questions. Some respondents checked only the highest dollar amount they would support while others checked any dollar amount they would support. The League had no way to distinguish between answers and respondent intent. When it became apparent that this was giving us data that could not be analyzed with any certainty as to how respondents intended to answer these four questions, the League decided to omit questions 1 – 4 from the survey as of approximately mid-April 2018, and to proceed with only questions 5 and 6.

Questions 5 and 6, however, were included continuously in the survey through May 8, 2018, and yielded data from which the League can draw preliminary conclusions, bearing in mind the survey limitations (1) and (2) previously disclosed. The following table reports data acquired through May 8, 2018, for Questions 5 and 6. There were 193 respondents who completed Question 5 and 188 respondents who completed Question 6. In Question 5, respondents could select as many approaches as they supported for resolution of the Jail/Sheriff/Courthouse issues, so the total number of votes for all options exceeds the number of respondents. Not all Respondents answered the question about voter registration.

Based on the responses to this survey, the League concludes as follows:

1. The public recognizes the need for a solution to the jail problems of overcrowding and failure to meet Michigan legal standards for a county jail facility. Only 11.24% of respondents stated that the County should do nothing about the jail problem. But the public also views the jail problem as inter-connected with county facilities (sheriff's office and courthouse) and that the solution

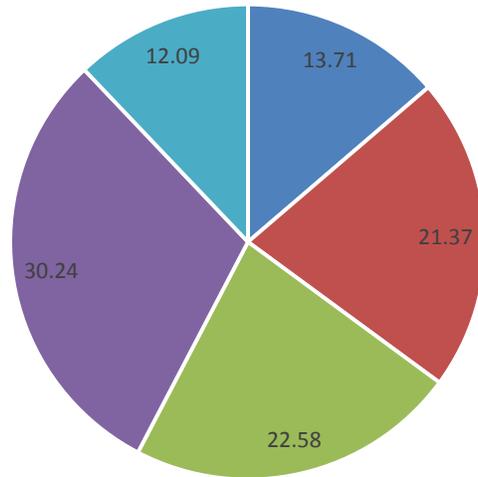
needs to be an integrated one that considers the long-term needs of the County rather than a short-term fix.

2. This is borne out by voter preferences for the various solutions. Only 14.23% of the respondents favor the proposal made by the Houghton County Commissioners and which is now approved to appear on the November 2018 ballot as a millage request for \$10.9 million to build an addition to the existing Sheriff's office and jail where the parking deck is now located behind the Courthouse. In contrast to this, 74.54% - nearly three-quarters - of the respondents favor some other option that ultimately includes renovations to or a complete rebuilding of not only the jail but also the Sheriff's Office and the County Courthouse whether at existing or alternative locations.

Question 5 Which of the following approaches to the facility issues would you support? (Select all that you would support.)	Number of Votes	Percentage of All Votes
Build an addition to the existing Sheriff's office and jail where the parking deck is now (the least expensive solution addressing only the most urgent problems).	38	14.23
Build a new Sheriff's office and jail (with a district court room) across the street on County property or elsewhere and EVENTUALLY renovate the courthouse and the existing Sheriff's office and jail for County courthouse office expansion (a more expensive and comprehensive solution, but solving some problems is deferred).	57	21.35
Build a new Sheriff's office and jail (with a district court room) somewhere else in the City of Houghton and CONCURRENTLY renovate the courthouse and the existing Sheriff's office and jail for County courthouse expansion (a more costly solution but with more problems addressed).	61	22.85
Build a combined courthouse, Sheriff's office, and jail in a new location, likely on City of Houghton-owned property near Wal-Mart (a more costly solution but with more problems addressed).	81	30.34
Do Nothing (and continue to risk negative consequences to the County from governmental authorities and lawsuits).	30	11.24
Total Votes	267	100
Question 6 Are you registered to vote in Houghton County?	Number	Percentage
Yes	176	93.6
No	12	6.4
Total Responding to Question	188	100

These results are depicted in a chart form on the following page.

Jail/Sheriff/Courthouse Options and Support
(Support shown in percentages)



- Where the parking deck is
- Sheriff and Jail across from courthouse
- Sheriff and Jail across from courthouse; Renovate courthouse
- Sheriff/Jail/Courthouse behind Walmart
- Do nothing

OTHER PUBLIC INPUT – COMMENTS

The League kept a record of public questions and comments made at the three public input meetings and also allowed respondents to add comments to the online survey. All comments are included in Appendix C. Responses to LWVCC Community Survey/ Comments Section - 65 of 177 respondents included comments as of 5/9/18 (see Appendix B)

Comments have been categorized in terms of general input and frequency in descending order as follows:

Need More Long Term Thinking for a Comprehensive Approach -	18
Need More Efforts on Rehabilitation/Diversion/Mental Health/ Decrease Numbers of Inmates and need for # of beds	12
Concerns re. costs &/or need for more information regarding projected costs	8
Fix the Historic Courthouse building & provide needed space for offices there	8
Leave the Historic Courthouse and go to another location	7
Need More Time for exploring alternatives	7
Utilize Camp Kitwen (reference DMG article of 4/5 comments of candidate)	6
Build New Complex outside of residential core of Houghton City	5

Leave the jail in Houghton/do the addition	5
Build on County property across the street from Courthouse	3
Provide space for use by the community in a new complex	3
Specifically opposed to the proposed addition	2
Specifically opposed to building across the street	2
Stay in the current location	2
Utilize the mall	1
Utilize taxes to set aside and build a fund for general capital expenditures needed in the future	1
Analyze crime information to understand incarceration numbers and make projections and reduce the numbers	1
Tear down the old courthouse, create open green space in city neighborhood.	1

CONCLUDING REMARKS

On July 10th, 2018 at a regular meeting of the Board of Houghton County Commissioners, the following County Jail Bond Proposal was approved 5 – 0.

Shall the County of Houghton, Michigan, borrow the principal sum of not to exceed Eleven Million Dollars (\$11,000,000) and issue its general obligation unlimited tax bonds, in one or more series, payable in not to exceed twenty (20) years from date of issuance of each series, for the purpose of paying the costs of acquiring, constructing, furnishing and equipping, additions, improvements, and remodeling of the county jail, including site improvements, appurtenances and attachments thereto?

At the August 14th County Commissioners’ Meeting, the Board was given a list of dates and locations of five informational meetings that will be held in October to explain the jail project to the voters. More meetings are yet to be scheduled and announced. Participants will include Architect Karin Cooper of U.P. Engineers and Architects, Sheriff Brian McLean, Undersheriff Kevin Coppo, Jail Administrator Doug Hebner, and County Administrator Eric Forsberg. The County Commissioners were encouraged to attend the meetings to be held in their own districts.

On August 14 the Board of the Copper Country League of Women Voters also met. After hearing a report from Jail Study participants, Board members discussed the position of CCLWV regarding the jail project. Should we support the current project? Oppose it? Or, take no position. The unanimous response was to “take no position”, and to continue to encourage voters to become informed and to vote their opinion in the upcoming election.

Appendix A
League of Women Voters Houghton County Jail/Courthouse Survey

Thank you for taking the Jail/Courthouse Project Survey from the League of Women Voters of the Copper Country. The purpose of the survey is to collect community input for the Houghton County Commissioners. The results will be shared with the County Commissioners.

Serious problems at the jail require that the Houghton County Jail be upgraded, and the County Commissioners are moving forward with a plan to replace the parking deck on the Courthouse with a jail addition. The current draft solution addresses the most serious deficiencies at the jail but leaves Courthouse and sheriff's department problems unaddressed and creates new problems with parking and jail/Courthouse interactions. The current proposal also leaves no room for addressing future needs. The County needs your input to guide decision making.

Any addition/change to the jail will require a property tax jail millage be assessed on Houghton County landowners.

Thank you for taking the time to give input to your public officials.

Background: No cost estimates for any current proposal are available yet. For comparison, the 2010 plan had an estimated cost of \$15,000,000 over 30 years. For a home valued at \$100,000, the additional property tax would be \$44.40 the first year and decrease each year after.

Below are broad cost range questions asking what you would support for taxes for some options.

1. It would be worth paying \$25/year in additional property taxes to fix the jail to bring it up to mandatory modern standards.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

2. It would be worth paying \$45/year (\$25 jail + \$20 courthouse) to, on top of fixing the jail, to bring the county courthouse up to modern standards, including important safety improvements.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

3. It would be worth paying \$55/year (\$25 jail + \$20 courthouse + \$10 sheriff) to fix both the jail and the courthouse and the county sheriff's office.
 - Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree

4. It would be worth paying whatever it takes to create a good, long term solution.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. Which of the following approaches to the facility issues would you support (multiple selections are allowed)?
- NOTE:** Camp Kitwen is slated for demolition in August 2018 and is NOT an option for the site of the Houghton County jail.
- Build an addition to the existing Sheriff's office and jail where the parking deck is now.
 - Build a new Sheriff's office and jail (with a district court room) across the street on County property or elsewhere and *eventually* renovate the courthouse and the existing Sheriff's office and jail for County courthouse office expansion.
 - Build a new Sheriff's office and jail (with a district court room) somewhere else and *concurrently* renovate the courthouse and the existing Sheriff's office and jail for County courthouse expansion.
 - Build a combined courthouse, Sheriff's office, and jail in a new location, likely on City of Houghton-owned property near Wal-Mart.
 - Do Nothing
6. Are you registered to vote in Houghton County?
- Yes
 - No

Comments or Suggestions:

League of Women Voters of the Copper Country
PO Box 815
Houghton, MI 49931
cclwvmi@gmail.com
Survey can be filled out online at lwvccmi.org

Appendix B Comments Received

- Our justice system needs our support. I would like to see the existing courthouse modified to become a community center, where there could be counseling and community meetings. For too long we have thought of justice as synonymous with punishment, but research has shown that rehabilitation is a better long-term approach
- Renovate the abandoned state prison south of the city (Camp Kitwen) for a jail and rent excess space to Keweenaw and Ontonagon Counties. Use the current Houghton Avenue building for renovated court space, if it is needed. **_Show why_ additional court space is needed. DO NOT BUILD A LARGER JAIL IN THE CITY WHEN A CURRENT MINIMUM SECURITY PRISON ALREADY EXISTS IN HOUGHTON COUNTY WAITING TO BE USED FOR ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE**
- suggest that we find ways to lower the number of people in jail
- Build in the current location as the jail was designed to have as second floor and wrap an addition to that on the deck. Renovate the Sheriffs office in the current location and do some updates and modifications to the court but preserve some of its historic value
- The county has failed to respond to the city about the land where they offered to help. This is just bad governing. We need long range planning
- The costs listed above are troubling because it is not clear what they are based on - are they reasonable? For how long of a period of time will these additional costs be needed. I think having a jail in the middle of a residential area is a bad idea. How about the Copper Country ex-mall? Any possibility in reusing this existing and almost-abandoned structure and site? I'm not in favor of building a new facility if we don't have to
- Our justice system needs our support. I would like to see the existing courthouse modified to become a community center, where there could be counseling and community meetings. For too long we have thought of justice as synonymous with punishment, but research has shown that rehabilitation is a better long-term approach
- With it's negativity, not fully unwarranted but negativity nonetheless, the LWVCC is effectively ruining the best chance we have of addressing the immediate needs. You'll never get the necessary support for truly comprehensive solution, such as the 2010 proposal. The majority of voters in this county are simply too ignorant to understand, and too apathetic to care. And they like it that way. Relying on reasoning with Houghton County voters is a recipe for guaranteed failure. Camp Kitwin can be demolished in 2018 and in 2020 we'll still have fools writing letters to the editor that Camp Kitwin is a viable solution
- My family's support for an extra millage is fully dependent on the location of the new facility. If they plan to build a bigger facility than what they can connect to the existing building, it must be out of town (e.g., near Walmart) for us to support it.
- The proposed addition on the parking deck only continues the vandalism of our historic courthouse property. It will be nothing but a holding tank for inmates and does nothing to address rehabilitation, addiction services, and other real steps that can keep people out of jail in the first place. Our sheriff's policy of arresting addicts "for their own good" has not worked anywhere else in the world. Why would it work here?
- I strongly support Comm. Ala's proposal for a separate facility, with or without the courthouse component, elsewhere in the city. Building across the street is a non-starter: it is a residential area, and it needs the parking, open space, community garden, etc. if the city hopes to continue attracting residents and boosting property values. Downtown Houghton is growing, and we do not need more barbed-wire fringed dead spaces in the very heart of the city.

- Institute a restorative justice system and drastically reduce the use of the jail to violent offenders. Put up other people in contracted rooms, or release them with minor bail fees. Do not spend millions to reinforce a broken penal system that endangers the rehabilitation of our communities most vulnerable members. We want healing and rehabilitation, move our courts, law enforcement and jail towards that model. I think it might be cheaper too...
- There is nowhere on this survey to indicate which solution or combination of solutions is preferred. I would most strongly support the following. Build a new Sheriff's office and jail (with a district court room) across the street on County property and CONCURRENTLY renovate the courthouse and the existing Sheriff's office and jail for County courthouse office expansion
- I am eager to learn more about the different ideas and encourage our county commissioners to take the time to explore alternatives to the one being considered currently
- Quick fix addition won't work!
- I would prefer that the county choose an option that is a long-term solution, that deals with the minimum problems like safety and overcrowding, but also includes enough space for the courthouse, and that is also forward-thinking in terms of inmate services. What are inmates' needs for rehab? Can Houghton provide some of those needs? I think it will be better for all of us in the long run to build a more expensive jail that takes this into account. The said I do not feel I can really answer question five without more information about each option and a cost estimate in terms of how much each option would cost. I believe some of these costs are implied in questions 1-4, but they do not seem to correspond 1-to-1 to the options in 5. I read the fact sheets and they do not include this info
- Option 1 is shortsighted. Option 4 is entirely too open ended with regard to cost to expect anyone to agree to it. There is no option provided here to expand the courthouse space which is needed above and beyond any renovation. An 85 to 95 bed facility in the middle of a residential area is poor municipal planning. This plan also precludes any future expansion of necessary courthouse space
- #5's 'approaches' contain no proportionality of costs - i.e. is the second approach half again as expensive or twice as expensive as the first approach? It is hard to weigh the best options when there is no cost/benefit information
- Lastly, we strongly recommend that CCLWV let Houghton County citizens know this survey is available (newspaper, radio, etc.) so that they can make input
- We as a community need to update facilities as needed. We supported a county jail to be built in the past, now it is time to build another. The existing courthouse has served its purpose. I know it has a lot of history, but the County cannot afford to keep putting money into a building that is outdated, and has served its purpose. We would be better served with taxpayer money to build a whole new facility, and sell the current building to a private individual/group, that would invest in the building and have it as an investment. We need look no further than Baraga County and their courthouse. It is becoming a financial burden on the county with the constant maintenance it requires. The new administration building was a good first step, however, if they were to go back in time, the whole courthouse could/should have been moved to where the administration buildings are at now. There are many individuals in the area with great ideas that could make the Houghton County courthouse a profitable building and keep the historic look to it.
- Trying to piece the current jail/courthouse with an addition would not solve the problem we are faced with at this point. I would not support this
- We should also look at a sales tax in the county that would help pay for the new facility. It would help take some of the burden off of property owners

- Thank You....
- It is a little difficult to make a choice with the given parameters but something has to be done asap. I have a daughter that is a deputy Sheriff and the existing conditions are deplorable for both the staff and the prisoners. It certainly would be nice to build on the current site but there has to be some common ground where the decision is based not so much on cost but on long term usability. It would be a shame to do just the minimum and 5 years down the road we again face overcrowding or old building issues....and have to come up with another new plan that costs even more
- #4 - "whatever" is too open ended - up to 2x or 3x the cost of the current proposed. I prefer a good, long term solution rather than one that meets current jail needs but does not address other issues identified. Costs will only increase over time. Fix it all now
- A Blue Ribbon panel charged with finding a solution that the county board must take to the voting public including an active campaign to pass the question
- Excellent presentation
- I don't know what should be done. I would like to have everything on the table until the county looks at all possibilities. (This includes public input throughout
- Thank you for moderating the forum tonight. I learned a lot. At this time, I cannot say which options I support. The only option I definitely do not support is to do nothing. To know which options I support, I would need to know what each option would cost. I think that it will be much more cost effective long term to just take care of all the problems now. If something tells me that this is incorrect, I will enthusiastically vote for the current proposal to take care of just the jail, and I encourage others to do the same. I understand we don't know what the costs would be. I think that the Board of Commissioners should wait six months and get bids on two more solutions, so that we can give the public more information to decide between
- I would support building a new Sheriff's office and jail near Walmart. I would like to see the current courthouse preserved somehow. However, I don't believe I understand all of the implications of having a jail at a different location than the courthouse. Whatever building/additions are built should be ultra energy efficient. Extra upfront costs for this ultra energy efficiency will be recouped
- Answer #5 - #1 choice is CONCURRENTLY, #2 choice is Wal-Mart
Any short-term resolution will make this an issue again
- The County makes a serious mistake not doing more to develop public support prior to doing their design work. It seems that their approach is to just complain about the shortcomings of existing facilities by pointing out the problems (in the local press) and then to use that negative perception to sell their latest plan as a solution to these problems. Public infrastructure like jails are notoriously difficult to get voter support for because most voters do not ever expect to use them and have little sympathy for those who end up there. At the same time, our local sheriff and deputies along with our local judges have a generally positive public perception. The county commissioners somehow need to leverage the positive public perception of our first responders and judicial system to gain support for the real needs these public servants face every day to adequately and safely do their job. Additionally, they must somehow couple the jail/court infrastructure needs with solutions to the associated problem of mental health and drug rehabilitation. A comprehensive approach like this takes time and lots of effort. This should have been a priority as a continuing activity since the last voter rejection. Sadly, the current County Commissioners do not seem to be willing to invest the needed time, effort, and resources to build this public support PRIOR to asking voters for their financial support. Very short sighted. I expect they will find that the very same voters who rejected their efforts in the

last two ballot initiatives will be equally unimpressed with their current effort. It is not that the last two efforts were not good solutions to our needs, but rather there was inadequate ground work PRIOR to trying to sell them. Where is the leadership?

- The good people of Houghton County are tired of hearing about this issue. Please do your best to bring viable, well communicated ideas to the table...it is easy to vote no when you feel like you don't have the entire situation in your view. The last couple rounds were disasters, please do something different and put this mess to bed
- I fully support a complete new overhaul and the taxes along with it. Unfortunately there are too many ignorant voters in the county who can't see the real issues here and we will be lucky to even get small changes approved
- This problem should have been taken care of years ago when the county had the opportunity to build a new courthouse and jail using freed-up tax money
- Why would a new facility have to be built in the city of Houghton? How about between Hancock and Calumet?
- Build new! Please, no renovations to these old buildings (expensive lipstick on a pig). The old court house has served its purpose, is a safety hazard and should now be demolished (along with the jail), then turn the area into parking with a green space. Retaining old buildings sounds nice, but someone has to keep them from falling apart, which takes lots of money. They tore down the old high school, yes?
- This has been run into the ground twice before. The public had all the info they needed to send it into the ashes of defeat because plans get too grandiose. We need to fix the jail! Not provide an entirely new facility for all. I have to make due with the status quo in my life everyday! So can the court, and the sheriffs dept. I will support the proposed addition the way it stands now, but I absolutely will vote NO on anything else, and I'm not alone
- You are on the wrong track
- In the April 5 Gazette, Greg Markkanen (candidate) suggests USING Kitwen as a Regional Facility -- I am definitely in favor of that
- Also -- I believe the option to build across the street is not worth pursuing because it has failed twice. Downtown Houghton is not the place to put an expensive Jail Facility. If the jail must stay downtown, keep it small. If you want a large facility, use Walmart or Kitwen. Keep downtown Houghton, a WELCOMING NEIGHBORHOOD!!!
- Residents MAY tolerate a \$25 annual increase but it seems the county commissioners need to be replaced with fresh people who are open to transparency instead of the antiquated old woolen minds stuck on making state of the art living accommodations for drug dealers who should just get a one way ticket back to where they came from. There is no reason the prisoners should have better housing than most students in rentals and a lot of the local working folk. We can't trust most of our commissioners to ONLY do what the public wants. The idea may get better support after an election that removes much of the current board. I expect a mileage vote will be defeated if the current board stays in place
- I will never vote for a jail at its current location. I do not think we need a new jail. Many of the current occupants belong in drug alcohol programs or mental health facilities. This could reduce the population by half at least. The additional beds in my opinion are just a money making scheme. Although I seldom agree with republicans there was a candidate for the 110th in Ontonagon this week supporting a joint facility with Ontonagon and Baraga countries. Makes sense to me.
- Cost to taxpayers without open-ended budget/millage is required

- Adding in space for community use, lectures, youth events, or emergency shelter may increase people's willingness to spend more. As it is now those of us that don't commit crimes don't feel we should make it comfortable for those that do but if there were a public use section that helps the community's other issues such as homelessness then yes
- This proposal doesn't take into effect the result for Courthouse employees: Reg of Deeds & Treasurer's office. Where parking would be - handicapped entrance, etc.
- These are short-term solutions. Where are the solutions to fix the overpopulation in the first place? The jail should be shut down and the money should go towards legitimate drug rehabilitation programs and minimum income requirements for citizens in Houghton County. When we are talking about so much money over 30 years, why aren't we talking about investing that money back into the people? Putting money into jails does not help people. It shows an at-risk population just where you want them to go. I see nothing innovative about these proposals and therefore cannot ever support system that doesn't put people first
- Include a community space.
- All are pie in the sky proposals. Build a monument for prisoners. Don't do the crime and you won't need a Holiday Inn
- Take the whole complex out of residential core of city
- If the project goes it should be constructed on a guaranteed maximum price
- Why in the world would you abandon such a historic courthouse? Don't you dare expect to waste my money on that. I'd support a nail expansion only
- We should use camp Kitwen. It already exists, is a relatively new facility, and had planets of room for future expansion
- It seems the majority of inmates are repeat offenders. The facility must be adequate for them. Why does Houghton County accept Baraga area inmates if there is a severe overcrowding?
- Lobby our state representatives to postpone demolition of camp Kitwen. Then lobby the representatives again to STOP the demolition and donate half the cost of the "would be" demolition to the county to help remodel the facility to meet state codes for jails. This would be a win-win opportunity for the state to help the county at no cost to the state. Then, seek to revise whatever state regulation it is that prevents the camp from being used as a jail. Additionally, revise whatever regulation that states the court house, sheriff offices and jail have to be in the city of Houghton. Archaic laws and regulations can be revised to accommodate current conditions and logic.
- The voters deserve a practical long term solution to this issue. The taxpayers favor a multi-county solution to meet other needs along with the jail & courthouse. EVERY roadblock to this option can be overcome by working with our current State Representative and legislation. Houghton County and the Western UP have many needs that could be fulfilled by considering the former Camp Kitwin.
- We need modern government facilities to support Houghton County citizens and the economic development base I keep hearing citizens say we need to have to create employment opportunities for our young people
- I would like to see a comprehensive analysis as to why, despite decreases in our local population and a national decrease in violent crimes, our jail population continues to grow larger: what are these crimes for which people have been jailed over the past 20 years, what are the trends for each crimes, and what other factors are at play....and, what are we going to do to change those trends? What's going wrong here? I'd like to know. The real problem here is not being assessed, and until it is we can't find any true solutions

- In light of that, I also would have liked to have seen, above, an option that includes increasing our taxes by \$5 or even just \$2.50 a year in order to fund whatever it might take to actually DECREASE our rate of incarceration, rather than passively accepting projects of future increase. We incarcerate like totalitarian nations, rather than free democracies. Not all such efforts might be wildly successful, but it would be worth trying some of them, for the sake of a better quality of life for all of us, much less reduced County costs for handling offenders
- I chose the options I did because I am not in favor of "stop gap" and "good enough for now" solutions to problems: let's do what needs to be done to effect a solution that will work for the next 100 years. Let's renovate the courthouse to function as a courthouse and use the existing jail/Sheriff's Dept. to take pressure off of it. And let's build a new jail/Sheriff facility across the street. And solve the problem. If people can afford houses that are worth what they are worth, they can also afford that amount of tax increase. I see people waste money left and right on stupid stuff that is self indulgent and mostly boosts their egos...I am certain that most of them can afford that kind of increase. This is the cost of being a citizen of a democracy, and it really isn't that high. Also, I had to move downstate for work for a number of years and owned a home there, and I paid far more in property taxes than I do here. It ain't that bad here in terms of taxes. And the quality of life is far better in other ways
- I also wish that we, as citizens collectively, would get more proactive about getting ahead of the curve on clearly predictable expenses like these: instead of having to borrow money every time we need to repair or improve our societal assets, why can't we be paying a smaller amount into fund that builds over time, EARNS interest, and will be available to pay for things like this when we need them? We KNOW that we'll need to incur costs like these (as well as for county roads, and for our schools, for examples) and, like any well managed household, we could be saving up for them rather than running to the bond market or "increasing" taxes in emergency mode every time we bump up against the reality of life and are forced to pay for the basic costs of running a civil society. 30 years from now, when the millage ends, that amount of money will seem so cheap that I'd be in favor of just continuing it in order to build a general capital expenditures fund for the county. If we had done that after the last time a millage expired for capital expenditures, we'd not be having these funding issues now..
- I did not see any discussion on the use of bail its impact on jail populations. in many areas people held in lieu of bail are a large part of the population. What steps have we taken to reduce the number of people held prior to their court date. In many cases these people in jail for an inability to pay. Jailing for inability to pay is rampant in Michigan and held as illegal by the Supreme Court. We might be able to greatly reduce our inmate population with a combination of bail reform and actual adherence to the Supreme Court ruling banning the jailing of a person due to inability to pay. i am a property owner and tax payer in Houghton county but not a voter.
- Think outside the box, and in a win - win manner, and anything is possible. Here is something to help you dream. <https://www.bloomingtonmn.gov/cob/bloomington-civic-plaza>
- Can video streaming be used for arraignments and court appearances so inmates don't have to go into courthouse
 - Per Judge Wisti, no, inmates are entitled by constitution to appear in person for most things and being there in person has other advantages to impress on inmates the seriousness of proceedings
- Isn't there more courthouse stuff being done online, so doesn't that reduce the need for staff and space
 - Per Jennifer Lorenz, no, just the opposite. It actually increases staff needs and equipment requires more space

- Comment – regarding faulty outlets and wiring and conditions, community will support building new or renovation if they know
- Comment – how long will this expansion last?
 - Sheriff – can't project out even 10 years. Could be outdated in 3 years. No way to know.
- Comment – questions on jail expandability in various locations
- Comment – provide a wider range of tax costs using smaller and greater home values
- Comment – alternative to jail – we need to find ways to keep them out or rehabilitate – need emphasis on this
- Comment – put it to Keweenaw voters too because they will use the jail
- Comment – stop using band-aids and step into the 21st century. This person stated he will never support 1875 thinking. Progress requires hard work and organization.
- Comment – people rally around schools – we should do the same for law enforcement and county workers who serve us
- Comment – interest rates are low and this is a good time for investment
- Comment – disappointed that there is no time for public comments and greater public buy-in
- Comment – compare to Portage Library where people were involved in long process with 3 different design ideas
- Comment – couldn't a brand new facility be made very energy efficient?
 - Karin – yes absolutely. It would be bigger so might cost more but square foot costs could be much lower
- Comment – fervent need to preserve historic courthouse and not add more warts to it
- Comment – is the mall an option?
 - Not in city of Houghton. Palosaari – ceilings also not high enough
- How much money does 1 mil raise?
 - Kathie Beattie - \$900,000
- Comment – need community buy-in – maybe another survey on options
- Comment – thank League for work – need public participation and buy-in.
- Does Dodge street remain open – up to the city council to make this decision
- Baraga County is struggling to maintain its historic courthouse. It's turned into a white elephant. Alternative 4 is the best option for Houghton County
- What are alternatives to use the courthouse?
- County needs a new jail – it is a danger to staff, inmates, the public. I think the vote needs to be slowed down. I applaud the League – you're on top of it. The current proposal doesn't address the courthouse needs. The community wants to participate in the decision.
- Is parking deck in good shape? Yes, it has life in it though it leaks
- Sheriff – we are understaffed but we make do.
- Don't build based on money; build based on need. A few years ago, we had an open house at the jail so people could participate and see how the employees, the inmates were. One person's mind was changed saying "this is third world."
- Are you aware of flooding in the basement of the courthouse? Water leaked in on South Street and water is coming in the back. I've received 2 complaints from staff – prefer a different solution. They work in the vault where there is no escape.
- Cost of new design: (per Karen Cooper, architect) \$25,000 for current design and we cut our fee from \$35,000 to the county. Maybe \$60,000 for a new design study for all facilities – sheriff, courthouse, and jail.
- Pet peeve – no commissioners are at this meeting. Note: there was a statewide MI Association of Counties that was being held this week and many commissioners are attending.

- #4 would be costly to bring in utilities. Note – utilities are already at Wal-Mart, Aspirus, and hotel.
- No money is available for brick and mortar projects through state or federal grants. Delta County and Alpena County are building new jails. It can be done.
- How will handicapped have access? Architect: plan is in its infancy and handicapped access will be addressed. Must be addressed to be legal.
- Alternative 4 – I work with parolees. Would drug court and detox unit be included? Any services currently offered would be included in a new facility. New services would have to be decided.