

PRESS RELEASE LWVCC, September 6, 2026

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE COPPER COUNTRY

Addressing Issues with the Houghton County Jail

Faith Morrison, *Advocate for Addressing HoCo Jail Issues*
fmorriso9@yahoo.com, cell: 906-487-9703
website: lhwccmi.org

Jail Discussion Update 09-06-2026

The following jail-related discussions have been scheduled or have taken place since the 8/15/26 LWVCC press release: (some meeting recordings are posted at www.youtube.com/@CountyofHoughton)

8/10/2026	Jail Committee Meeting, 4pm LACKED QUORUM
8/17/2026	Jail Committee Meeting, 4pm LACKED QUORUM
8/18/2026	Summer Board Meeting of the League of Women Voters of the Copper Country
8/26/2026	Addendum #1 Submitted by Morrison to Board of Commissioners
8/27/2026	Recording of Copper Country Today radio program
8/27/2026	Planning Meeting "Coffee with the Sheriff"
9/8/2026	County Board Regular Work Session CANCELLED

Summaries appear below.

Cancelled Meetings. During final Public Comments of the August 11, 2026 regular meeting of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners, Jail Committee co-chair Morrison noted that an attempted Jail Committee meeting on 8/10/2026 lacked a quorum, and the meeting was not held.

A Jail Committee meeting had been scheduled for Monday, August 17, 2026 at 4pm in the 5th floor conference room of the courthouse. That meeting also lacked a quorum and was not held.

On 9/1/2026 the County Clerk posted on the Board of Commissioners' website that the 9/8/2026 Board of Commissioners Work Session had been cancelled.

League of Women Voters of the Copper Country Endorse 2026 Jail Millage

On August 18, 2026, the Board of the League of Women Voters of the Copper Country (LWVCC) discussed the 2026 Jail Millage at great length. After the discussion, the LWVCC Board voted unanimously to support the 2026 Jail Millage.

The League of Women Voters organization is nonpartisan, which means the LWV does not support individual candidates or political parties. The LWV does take positions on items of public interest, such as ballot questions. The LWV process for taking a position on a ballot question requires that the issue be studied by the membership and that a formal statement of the LWV's position on the topic be posted for the public to see. Since 2007, the LWVCC has had a formal position concerning the need in Houghton County for a new jail:

Source: LWVCCMI.org, "League Positions"

Houghton County Facilities/Jail, Courthouse, Sheriff's Office

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 as of 04/2007) 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. 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 Sheriff's department as well as the Jail.

In alignment with its positions, the LWV of the Copper Country find that the 2026 Jail Project process and planning meets our stated position (quoted above), and the League urges the public to vote Yes on the 2026 Houghton County Jail Millage on November 3, 2026.

Addendum #1 Submitted by Morrison to Board of Commissioners (8/26/2026)

As a follow up to the County Board Plain Language Resolution on the jail millage, Resolution 26-18, Faith Morrison, co-chair of the Jail Committee has submitted a draft resolution "Addendum #1" for the County Board to consider for their September 15th meeting (pdf attached).

As stated in the draft resolution, the purpose of Addendum #1 is to explicitly commit the County Board to the minimum capacity of the housing spaces in the proposed jail-build going before the voters in November. On August 11, 2026, the County Board passed Resolution 26-18, which specified that at least 60 housing beds would be included in the jail build. Proposed Addendum #1 specifies that the minimum number of beds will be 70. The reason for this proposed resolution is to share with the public the Board's plans for the proposed jail build as soon as the Board has made a decision. In conversations with the Sheriff, it has become clear that he has serious concerns that a 60-bed build will be too small to address the needs of Houghton County for the 40+ years the proposed new jail is expected to serve the County. Morrison believes that if the Board is moving towards a larger jail, that it would be best for the Board to let the public know that this is where their plans are at this time, and why. A great deal is being asked of the public on November 3rd. She urges the County Board to be as specific as they possibly can be about their intentions for the future jail build (housing capacity, and any other issues), so that the public can weigh the pros and cons of their vote on November 3rd.

Recording of Copper Country Today radio program (8/27/2026)

Houghton County Board of Commissioners Chairman Tom Tikkanen, along with Sheriff Josh Saaranen, and Jail Committee co-Chair Faith Morrison, sat down with host Tim Peters to record an episode of WOLV's Copper Country Today. They discussed the 2026 Jail Project. The recording of the interview may be accessed from podcast apps as the August 30, 2026 episode of Copper Country Today.

Coffee with Sheriff Saaranen Events (8/27/2026)

Members of the Jail Committee, working with Sheriff Josh Saaranen, have scheduled six “Coffee with Sheriff Saaranen” events taking place at the Houghton County Jail in September (flyer graphic included):

Thursday September 3, 2pm (date has passed)
Tuesday September 8, 5pm
Thursday September 10, 2pm
Thursday September 17, 2pm
Tuesday September 22, 5pm
Thursday September 24, 2pm

Members of the public are invited to sit down to coffee with the Sheriff and committee members in the conference room of the Houghton County Jail, 403 E. Sharon Avenue, Houghton. These are casual events, and there will be no presentations. Those who wish to tour the jail may do so at this time, upon request. The Sheriff and the Jail Committee invite the questions of the public and are offering to give their perspective on the upcoming jail millage ballot.

Upcoming meetings/events related to the jail project: (Open to the public; online credentials at houghtoncounty.net)

The next assembly of the County Board is its regular September meeting on September 15, 2026 at 6pm in the 3rd floor Circuit Courtroom in the courthouse.

9/15/2026	County Board Regular Meeting, 6pm (3 rd floor courtroom)
9/2026	Coffee with Sheriff Saaranen (see schedule)
10/2026	Further Public Discussions of the Jail Millage (TBD)
10/05/2026	County Board Work Session, 10am (5 th floor conference room)
10/13/2026	County Board Regular meeting, 6pm (3 rd floor courtroom)
11/3/2026	Election Day

Attachments: proposed Resolution Addendum #1

Coffee with Sheriff Saaranen and members of the Jail Committee

September
Thursdays
at 2:00pm

Tuesday
September
8th & 22nd
at 5:00pm



403 E Houghton Ave

Meet the Sheriff and tour the building
Learn about the Sheriff's Office operations and services
Ask questions about the 2026 Jail Project



Can't attend these sessions?
Individual or group tours
available upon request:
jsaaranen@houghtonsheriff.com