

**PRESS RELEASE LWVCC, May 19, 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*

**Historical Timeline**

8-5-2025 Millage for \$32 million for a new jail/sheriff's office does not pass 44% yes, **54% no**.

11-2025 Three Houghton County Jail committees have been active since November 2025 (agenda, minutes at *houghtoncounty.net*). Overall goal: ***Develop a jail/sheriff's office plan that the public can support.***

4-14-2026 Committees' reports to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) were heard in April 2026. (see also appendix).

**County Held Properties Committee**—Commissioner Keranen (committee chair) reported that there were grant stipulations that affect selling the Marina. He also reported that the Transfer Station is experiencing difficulties finding a party interested in buying it. There was no recommendation to sell either of those properties. The Canal View appraisal was not complete on 4/14/2026, and thus, discussion related to that property was delayed until the 5/12/2026 Board meeting.

**Sharon Avenue and Jail Re-Use Committee**—Commissioner Britz (committee chair) reported on progress in assessing the Sharon Avenue property for re-use as County offices and for the MSU Extension office.

**Jail Committee**—Faith Morrison (committee representative) summarized the contents of the 15-page report of the Jail committee. Specific recommendations were made. The Jail Committee's written report is posted on the LWVCC website (*lhwccmi.org*, under *Houghton County Jail Update*).

5-12-2026 At its regular May meeting, the County Board discussed the assessment of Canal View that was received 4/27/2026. The Board voted 4-1 not to offer Canal View for sale. Details are in this press release.

6-9-2026 June BOC meeting

7-14-2026 July BOC meeting

8-11-2026 4pm Deadline place a jail millage on the November 3, 2026 ballot

8-11-2026 6pm August BOC meeting

9-24-2026 Absentee voter ballots available for the November election

## **Jail Discussion Status report 5-19-2026**

The following jail-related discussions have taken place since the 5/4/26 press release:  
(some meeting recordings are posted at [www.youtube.com/@CountyofHoughton](http://www.youtube.com/@CountyofHoughton))

5/11/2026 County Board Work Session  
5/12/2026 County Board Regular Meeting  
5/14/2026 Jail Committee meeting

Summaries of these discussions and other communications follow.

**The May 11, 2026 Regular County Board of Commissioners Work Session** was a very long session (nearly 3 hours) and included the following discussions/advances.

(Agenda F5) **Community Corrections Invitation.** Trevor Kadlec, Community Corrections Director for Marquette County, spoke about how Houghton County could benefit from joining the Marquette Regional Community Corrections Advisory Board (MRCCAB). This presentation mirrored one he gave on April 30<sup>th</sup> to regional stakeholders in the judiciary and law enforcement (video of that meeting is posted at [lwvccmi.org](http://lwvccmi.org) under *Houghton County Jail Initiative*).

In her invitation to the April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting, Treatment Court Case Manager Andrea Johnson described the MRCCAB as opening to us “a range of evidence-based services currently unavailable in the region.” Also, her invitation said that “participation in the regional Community Corrections program offers a cost-efficient approach to strengthening pretrial services, treatment court operations, jail population management, and access to evidence-based programs for individuals involved in the justice system.” Judge Nicholas J. Daavetila (97<sup>th</sup> District Court) and Judge Brittany A. Bulleit (12<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court) were both present on April 30<sup>th</sup>, and were vocal supporters of the Community Corrections opportunity. Kadlec emphasized that if Houghton joined promptly, he would write the county into his proposal for FY 2027. The promised services would be paid for in full by the State—no costs to Houghton County. The participation in MRCCAB would require one county commissioner to join the board and come to Marquette for six meetings per year.

**The May 12, 2026 Regular County Board of Commissioners meeting** (recording to be posted at [www.youtube.com/@CountyofHoughton](http://www.youtube.com/@CountyofHoughton)) included the following jail-related discussions/actions:

(Agenda J8) **Marquette Regional Community Corrections Advisory Board.** The County Board unanimously approved Houghton County joining the MRCCAB. Chair Tom Tikkanen noted that our circuit judge sat at the previous day’s work session the whole time and that speaks to her strong support.

(Agenda J10) **Canal View Appraisal and future of the Jail Initiative.** There was an extended discussion of this agenda item and ultimately a vote on a motion to not sell Canal View. That motion passed by a vote of 4-1, in which Commissioner Keranen cast the only dissenting vote. The discussion that took place is outlined below.

- Adam Laplander, Director of Canal View. Laplander summarized the appraisal that had been received from HealthTrust of Sarasota, Florida (182 pages; received 4/27/2026, cost \$5,000; report posted on *hwccmi.org* under *Houghton County Jail Initiative*). The assessors indicated that, for nursing homes, the appropriate assessment method is based on the current number of occupied beds. Canal View currently has 145 filled beds, appraised at \$14.5 million which corresponds to roughly ~\$100,000/occupied bed. When appraising a nursing home, they do not consider facility improvements, age of the facility or other fixed conditions, just the number of occupied beds. A \$14.5 million sale of Canal View would be reduced by obligations such as:
  - State re-capture of prior support \$5-7million
  - Pension liabilities \$3million
  - PTO (paid time off) liability \$0.6million
  - Other small liabilities such as contracted vendors, lease agreements.
- Commissioner Anderson made comments. My summary: Anderson said there would be other liabilities:
  - After paying off pension liability, if it were not sufficient, the County might still be responsible for some expenses
  - Health insurance would present some liabilities
  - The investments that taxpayers have paid to make the building in excellent capital condition would just be “a boon” to a new buyer since we have 197 beds and the buyer would only pay for currently-used capacity.
  - The first thing a new owner would do is cut staff and the County would lose jobs and the quality of care would decline
- Board Chair Tikkanen made comments. My summary: Tikkanen said Houghton County is charged with protecting residents in three areas: law enforcement, the elderly and infirm, and the environment. He noted that if Canal View went into private ownership, the County would not be able to ensure appropriate, quality facilities for the elderly and infirm. Private boards are located elsewhere and their goals are different. The voters of Houghton County have spoken of their strong support of Canal View with their landslide votes in support of its millage. We [the Board] have made a decision on the marina, on the transfer station [not to sell], and that the future location of the jail is to be Sharon Avenue. The only thing left to decide is what to do with Canal View.
- Commissioner Keranen made comments. My summary: Keranen said he did not think there would only be a couple of million left over after a sale of Canal View. He indicated that he wanted to keep digging deeper into the question of its value and possible sale. As a conservative, he does not want to reach into people’s [taxpayers] pockets. He indicated that the State Constitution says that the county needs to run a jail, but not a nursing home.
- Commissioner Britz made comments. My summary: It’s time to give the public an answer [on the status of Canal View]. There will be happy and unhappy people, but it’s time to answer the question and move on. I respect what you’re saying [Commissioner Keranen] but I’ve been discussing this jail for 30 years.
- Final roll-call vote on the motion not to sell Canal View: 4-1, with Commissioner Keranen casting the sole “no” vote.

(Agenda J12) **Sharon Avenue Renovation.** Todd LaRoux, County Building Inspector, updated the Board on schematic designs for the Sharon Avenue church building that had been delivered by OHM (posted on the *lwvccmi.org* website). OHM came up with a fix for the snow load on the sanctuary area. LaRoux discussed HVAC options and recommended option 3 from that plan. The total square footage is 12,000 sf. Commissioner Britz commented that moving the building department to the new space would help the courthouse with its single-point-of-entry issue, as that department has the most foot traffic of all offices in the building. Clerk Kelly said that the new space would provide a much-needed secure, low humidity location for early voting. After further discussion, a motion was passed to pay \$113,500 to OHM to bring the work to full design, structural drawings, along with HVAC. Motion passed unanimously.

(Agenda N) **Public Comment.** Faith Morrison said that Commissioner Keranen is right that we cannot go back to the public with the same story/plan for the jail and expect to get a different result. We could try that, but maybe it would not work. She said we have to explain to the public the efforts that have been taken since the last vote to address what we heard from the public. Changes to the plan that could be part of a 2026 vote include:

1. We could choose to aim for a small size (70 beds could go down to 60, maybe fewer)
2. Community Corrections program with Marquette could be implemented, if funded, resulting in a smaller population in the jail.
3. We could make clear the degree to which the Board has considered and addressed design/process concerns that were voiced by the public during the 2025 millage.

(Agenda O) **Announcements.** Chair Tikkanen floated the idea of moving the Board meetings back to the afternoon since the summer season brings many activities to the evenings and attendance is down. Commissioner Keranen agreed that this was worth considering.

**The May 14, 2026 Jail Committee Meeting** included the following discussions/advances.

The committee heard from 1) Lexi Tater, a volunteer working on social media efforts to support the jail effort, 2) Douglas Dukes and John Pollack, both retired sheriffs and representatives of Elevatus Architecture, a firm in Fort Wayne, Indiana that designs jails, and 3) from chair Jarod Hyrkas, who indicated he will be stepping away from the committee.

**Lexi Tater from UP North Advocacy** showed the committee material that make the case for the need for a new jail. The idea is to make social-media friendly materials that can be shared among groups who wish to pass this information onto their followers.

**Elevatus Architecture, Jail Designers.** Douglas Dukes ([ddukes@elevatus.com](mailto:ddukes@elevatus.com)) and John Pollack ([jpollack@elevatus.com](mailto:jpollack@elevatus.com)) of Elevatus Architecture were invited by a committee member to share with the Jail Committee what services they could supply in its efforts to design a jail plan that the Houghton County public could support. The design approach of Elevatus is “prototyping design.” In short, the sheriff and team would visit an Elevatus-designed facility that matches the size and general expectations for a Houghton County Jail. The sheriff would then identify features he likes, and changes he would want, and in that way arrive at a design quickly and smoothly. This approach skips the “blank sheet” start

of design, which can be time consuming to carry out and confounding to a sheriff who can see what is “wrong” with a jail that is not suitable to him, but who would be confounded with a “from the ground up” design starting with a blank page.

Before he retired and joined Elevatus, Sheriff John Pollack had the experience of building a jail with the Elevatus team. He indicated that although the general contractor for his jail was not local to his community, there were many subcontractors who were.

Sheriff Josh Saaranen spent time on May 14 with the two visiting sheriffs and was able to ask many questions. At the Jail Committee meeting, several members asked questions of the visitors about the designing and selling of a jail to the public.

**Resignation of the Committee Chair.** Jared Hyrkas told the committee that he is stepping away from the Jail Committee, both as chair and as a member. He said the time commitment had become too high, and also he wanted to avoid any possible conflicts of interest should his firm wish to bid on jail-related work. He urged the committee members to tell the two commissioners on the committee (Tikkanen, Janssen, neither of whom were able to be present) if they had a suggestion for a new chair/member.

**Upcoming meetings:**

**(Open to the public; locations and credentials for online participation posted on the County’s website [houghtoncounty.net](http://houghtoncounty.net))**

- 6/1/2026 Jail Committee Meeting, 4pm (5<sup>th</sup> floor)
- 6/1/2026 County Board Work Session, 10am (5<sup>th</sup> floor).
- 6/9/2026 County Board Regular Meeting, 6pm (3<sup>rd</sup> floor)

**APPENDIX—Excerpts from Minutes of the Houghton County Board of Commissioners Regular meeting on April 14, 2026**

**5. Jail Committees Final Reports**

**County Held Property Committee:**

Commissioner Keranen stated the appraisal on the Canal View property would be complete on April 23, 2026. The Marina has some grants with stipulations and the Transfer Station is experiencing difficulties finding a future sale.

Chairman Tikkanen recommended maintaining the Marina and Transfer Station.

Commissioner Keranen let the board know that he will email the appraisal to them when he receives it.

**Sharon Avenue Property Committee:**

Chairman Britz stated until we have a facility to move people to, we cannot move forward. He discussed the OHM RFP for the construction concerns and firewall. OHM is looking into the concerns. He talked about moving the Building Department, Clerks/Register of Deeds offices and Administration offices to the Sharon Avenue Property. The Commissioner Hall would also be moved to the property.

Jaikob Djerf brought up that the Equalization Department needs to be in the same location as the Clerk/Register of Deeds Office.

Commissioner Britz stated a four-year extension was given to the MSU Extension Office by the City of Hancock to keep their office at the HOCO Arena. OHM is ready to discuss further recommendations. Todd and Joel went to look at the property. OHM wants to get together next week to discuss options.

Chairman Tikkanen stated the current jail could be reused but a new roof would be needed. Possible storage. He feels the Sharon Avenue property is structurally sound. Todd LaRoux stated OHM came up with a fix for the roof to be load bearing.

**Jail Committee:**

Faith Morrison discussed the 15-page report in the Board's packet. The Committee had 8 meetings. She will post it on the LWV Website and on the County website if given permission. She discussed the design and how many people need to be housed are important items. The design was for a 51 daily population in the jail. She discussed the Committee's recommendations.

Chairman Tikkanen discussed the appraisal from Canal View and to discuss it at the May meeting or to call a special meeting. He discussed the bond issue for the cost that is estimated for the new jail and whether to put the milage on in November 2026 or wait until November 2028. Commissioner Anderson discussed narrowing down what the need is for November 2026 by talking to contractors and developers. Faith Morrison gave a breakdown of spaces and cells, booking space, housing juveniles, and mental health areas for inmates. Chairman discussed the three (3) Committees continuing.

# JUSTICE

## FIRM EXPERIENCE





84	Jails
26	Prisons
6	Courts
10	Juvenile
9	Work Release
17	Miscellaneous/ Law Enforcement



**CANADA**  
Toronto South Detention Centre  
DESIGN



**CUBA**  
Guantanamo Bay Camp 5 & 6,  
Camp Echo  
Guantanamo Bay Fleet Hospital  
Annex  
Guantanamo Bay Secure  
Communications Facility



**FLORIDA**  
Citrus County  
Collier County Jail  
Graceville Correctional Facility  
Lee County Gun Range  
Lowell Correctional Institution  
Moore Haven Correctional Facility  
Naples Jail Center  
Palm Beach County  
Pinellas County Jail Facilities  
Assessment  
Sarasota County Law Enforcement  
Sarasota County Gun Range  
Expansion  
South Florida Evaluation &  
Treatment Center  
St. Lucie County Correctional Facility



**FLORIDA**  
Sumter Correctional Reception  
Center  
SVP Treatment Center  
Volusia County



**GEORGIA**  
Coffee County Jail Study  
Douglas County Jail Study  
Rabun County Detention Center  
Richmond County Jail Master Plan  
Riverbend Correctional Facility  
Webster Detention Center Ph I



**IDAHO**  
Idaho DOC Change Order 1 -  
Phase I & Phase II



**ILLINOIS**  
Clark County Jail  
Illinois Womens Prison  
Jefferson County Justice Center



**INDIANA**  
Adams County Courthouse  
Renovation  
Adams County Sheriff's Office +  
Detention Center (SODC)  
Allen County Jail  
Allen County Justice Campus  
Master Plan



**INDIANA**  
Bashor Healing + Recovery Unit  
Bashor Elkhart Juvenile  
Detention Facility  
Boone County Jail  
Carroll County Jail  
Cass County Jail Addition  
Cass County Juvenile Detention  
Center  
Clay County Jail  
Clinton County Jail  
Clinton County Juvenile  
Treatment Facility  
Clinton County Work Release  
Community Justice Campus -  
Adult Detention Center  
Crawford County Judicial Complex  
Crawford County Judicial  
Complex - Work Release  
Decatur County SODC  
DeKalb County Community  
Corrections Center  
DeKalb County SODC  
Fayette County Jail  
Federal Building - US Courthouse  
Fort Wayne Police Department  
Renovation  
Fountain County Jail  
Fulton County SODC

**INDIANA**  
Sumter Correctional Reception  
Center  
SVP Treatment Center  
Volusia County

**INDIANA**  
Bashor Healing + Recovery Unit  
Bashor Elkhart Juvenile  
Detention Facility  
Boone County Jail  
Carroll County Jail  
Cass County Jail Addition  
Cass County Juvenile Detention  
Center  
Clay County Jail  
Clinton County Jail  
Clinton County Juvenile  
Treatment Facility  
Clinton County Work Release  
Community Justice Campus -  
Adult Detention Center  
Crawford County Judicial Complex  
Crawford County Judicial  
Complex - Work Release  
Decatur County SODC  
DeKalb County Community  
Corrections Center  
DeKalb County SODC  
Fayette County Jail  
Federal Building - US Courthouse  
Fort Wayne Police Department  
Renovation  
Fountain County Jail  
Fulton County SODC

ELEVATUS CONSTRUCTION

Hancock County Jail  
 Hancock County Work Release  
 Hendricks County Work Release Study  
 Henry County SODC  
 Indiana Law Enforcement Academy  
 Indiana Law Enforcement Center  
 Indiana Women's Prison Behavioral Health and Treatment  
 Jasper County Youth Center  
 Jay County Jail  
 Johnson County Court Services & Community Corrections  
 Kosciusko County Justice Building  
 Kosciusko County Work Release Center  
 LaGrange County Justice Services Building  
 Marion County Community Justice Campus - Adult Detention Center  
 Marion County Youth and Family Services  
 Miami Correctional Facility  
 Morgan County Courthouse Renovation  
 Morgan County Jail  
 New Castle Correctional Facility  
 Noble County Jail  
 Noble County Work Release  
 Northwest Indiana Correctional Facility  
 Owen County Sheriff's Office + Detention Center  
 Parke County Jail + 911 Center  
 Parke County Work Release  
 Porter County Jail  
 Randolph County Jail  
 Rockville Correctional Facility  
 Scott County Jail Study  
 Steuben County Jail  
 Steuben County Juvenile Detention Center  
 Tippecanoe County Jail  
 US Penitentiary - Terre Haute  
 Wayne County Jail  
 Wells County Jail  
 White County Jail  
 White County Work Release  
 Whitley County Jail  
 Whitley County SODC

## KANSAS

Federal Correctional Institution Leavenworth  
 Ford County Jail Study  
 Kansas Female Boot Camp

## KENTUCKY

Bath County Courthouse  
 Boyd County Jail  
 Carter County Courthouse Roof Repair  
 Carter County Detention Center  
 Clay County, Detention Center  
 Harlan County Detention Center  
 Jessamine County Restricted Custody Center  
 Kenton County Jail  
 Knox County Jail Study  
 Muhlenberg County Detention Center  
 Muhlenberg County Detention Facilities  
 Perry County Justice Center

## MICHIGAN

Christian County Justice Study  
 Eaton County Jail Expansion and Study  
 Genesee County Juvenile Justice Center  
 Kalamazoo County Jail Study  
 Lenawee County Jail  
 Ogemaw County Jail  
 Otsego County Jail Study  
 Sanilac County Detention Center  
 Sanilac County Jail Addition and Renovation and Study

## MISSOURI

Audrain County Jail  
 Boone County Jail Phase II  
 Cape Girardeau  
 Crawford County Justice Center Study  
 Franklin County Public Safety Facility  
 Grundy County Jail  
 Lawrence County Law Enforcement Center  
 Perry County Jail  
 Pettis County Jail - Justice Center

St. Charles County Jail  
 St. Clair County Jail  
 St. Francois County Jail

## MONTANA

Flathead County Public Safety Facility

## NEVADA

Elko County Jail Mental Health Addition

## NORTH CAROLINA

Butner Correctional  
 Charlotte Law Enforcement  
 Mecklenburg County Jail North  
 Mecklenburg County Courthouse  
 Central Prison Maximum Security Complex  
 Central Prison Mental Health  
 Central Prison Regional Medical  
 Swannanoa Valley Adult Female

## NORTH DAKOTA

Lake Region Law Enforcement Center  
 Richland County Jail Study  
 Walsh County Justice Center Study

## OKLAHOMA

Lawton Correctional Facility  
 Oklahoma Dept. of Corrections IDIQ  
 Ponca City Public Safety Center

## SOUTH DAKOTA

Fall River Justice Needs Analysis and Conceptual Design  
 Lawrence County Public Safety and Services Center  
 Lincoln County Justice Center

## SOUTH CAROLINA

Charleston County Detention Center  
 Goose Creek Naval Brig Expansion

## TENNESSEE

Unicoi County Jail

## TEXAS

Montgomery County Evaluation & Treatment Center



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