

**PRESS RELEASE LWVCC, May 4, 2026**

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE COPPER COUNTRY**

**Addressing Issues with the Houghton County Jail**

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**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 (and one subcommittee) 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.*** Focus is on what the public is saying about why they did not support the 2025 millage and addressing those issues.
- 4-14-2026 Two of the committees' reports (Jail Committee and the Sharon Avenue and Jail Re-Use Committee) were delivered to the Board of Commissioners on April 14, 2026. The Jail Committee's written report is posted on the LWVCC website (*lwccmi.org*, under Houghton County Jail Update). The Sharon Avenue and Jail Re-Use Committee's verbal report by Commissioner Britz was described in the posted meeting minutes.
- 5-12-2026 The County-Held Properties Committee's report is expected at the Board's regular May meeting on Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup>. It was delayed from the April due date to allow for it to include the results of a requested financial assessment of Canal View.
- 8-4-2026 4pm This is the deadline for the Houghton County Board to vote to place a jail millage on the November 3, 2026 ballot (*reference: Jail Committee minutes 3-2-26*).
- 9-24-2026 Absentee voter ballots are to be available for the November election on September 24, 2026 (40 days before the election).

**Jail Discussion Status report 5-4-2026**

The following jail-related discussions have taken place since the 4/12/26 press release:

- 4/14/2026 County Board Regular Meeting
- 4/30/2026 Community Corrections Stakeholders Meeting – a meeting to hear an invitation for Houghton, Keweenaw, and Baraga Counties to join the Marquette Regional Community Corrections program.

Summaries of these discussions follow.

**The April 14, 2026 Regular County Board of Commissioners meeting** included the following discussions/advances (Item I.5).

- a. *County Held Property Committee.* Commissioner Keranen stated that the appraisal requested for the Canal View property would be completed on April 23, 2026; the County Held Property Committee's report would therefore be presented in May rather than in April.
- b. *Sharon Avenue Property Committee.* Commission Vice-Chair Britz discussed the progress on the church-building evaluation project that has been awarded to OHM of Hancock. The OHM team has met with various stakeholders and county employees to design and price the conversion of the former church building to usable county property, perhaps for various county departments that are currently in the courthouse. Commissioner Britz also reminded the Board that the County had committed to housing the MSU Extension Office once they can no longer use their current space in Hancock's HOCO Arena.
- c. *Jail Committee.* Committee member Faith Morrison presented the Jail Committee's report to the Board. The entire 15-page report is in the posted meeting packet and is also at [hwccmi.org](http://hwccmi.org) under Houghton County Jail Initiative. The committee's report has the following recommendations:

**Recommendations from the April 14, 2026 Jail Committee Report:**

(available on at [hwccmi.org](http://hwccmi.org) under *Houghton County Jail Initiative* or through this direct link:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SdZvxp7kgYsx7zkz8RL9DUhxO3S9SPvi/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SdZvxp7kgYsx7zkz8RL9DUhxO3S9SPvi/view?usp=drive_link) )

- Continue the work to do space planning for the proposed facility (work with square footages to reduce the cost of the plan)
- Seek input from local experts (leverage local expertise to do the re-design and costing)
- Make formal Board commitments (to improve the public's certainty in what the plan actually is)
- Weigh trade-offs for a November 2026 vote versus a later vote (don't want to drag on too long versus more time to refine the plan)
- Budget the jail project (The FY 2027 Houghton County budget should include financial commitments to moving the jail design/plan forward)

**On April 30, 2026 a group of law enforcement and county stakeholders heard a presentation on the topic of joining the Marquette Regional Community Corrections program.** Stakeholders from county law enforcement, the courts, and related entities were invited to a meeting on April 30, 2026, at 12:00 PM to learn about opportunities for Houghton, Baraga, and Keweenaw Counties to collaborate with the Marquette Regional Community Corrections program. Trevor Kadlec, Community Corrections Director for Marquette County, spoke for an hour about their desire to unite the counties in the U.P. in a common Community Corrections Program that would provide pretrial services, treatment court operations, jail population management, and access to evidence-based programs for individuals involved in the justice system.

Pretrial services provided through the proposed program would allow those awaiting trial to be released safely while being subject to appropriate monitoring, for example: regular drug testing, electronic monitoring through devices, or regular check-ins with the program officers. Kadlec indicated that the

proposed services would be provided to the counties at no cost to the counties through their Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) grant funding. The only county resource commitment that would be required is that a member of the Board of Commissioners from each county would need to be appointed to the regional board. The regional board meets in-person, six times annually, in Marquette.

The discussions at the April 30<sup>th</sup> meeting were well received by those attending. The meeting concluded with discussion of next steps, which are to review the materials that were presented and to discuss support for joining the Marquette Regional Community Corrections Board. The involvement and leadership of the counties' judiciaries is key to obtaining the support of the county board, according to Kadlec. There was verbal indication that the judiciary is strongly supportive of this proposal and that they would meet to bring the topic the Boards of Commissioners as soon as possible. Kadlec indicated that to include new counties into his FY2027 proposal he would appreciate hearing back from interested new counties within a few weeks.

**Summary:** The May 12, 2026 meeting of the Board of Commissioners of Houghton County is expected to include a review of the report of the County Held Properties Committee. There is likely to be a discussion of how to go forward with the Houghton County jail project.

In addition, there may be at least preliminary discussion of the proposal for Houghton County to join the Marquette Regional Community Corrections program.

#### **Upcoming meetings:**

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

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| 5/7/2026  | Jail Committee meeting, 4pm, (5 <sup>th</sup> floor conference room, courthouse) <i>NOTE THIS MEETING MAY BE RESCHEDULED TO THE FOLLOWING WEEK</i> (as advised by the committee chair). Watch <i>houghtoncounty.net</i> under News for an update. |
| 5/11/2026 | County Board Work Session, 10am (5 <sup>th</sup> floor). This meeting was rescheduled from its regular date the previous week at the request of the commissioners.  |
| 5/12/2026 | County Board Regular Meeting, 6pm (3 <sup>rd</sup> floor)   |