

# Committee for Public Safety

## Report to the Platte County Commission

November 14, 2023

On July 17, 2023, the Platte County Commission adopted Resolution 2023-RES-071 appointing Platte County residents to the Public Safety Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to find and recommend viable solutions for inmate detention. The members appointed were April Baxter, Kenneth Brown, Pat Cockrill, Jim DePriest, Mark Ferguson, Roger Lewis, James McCall, and Greg Plumb.

In addition, the Commission requested:

1. The committee should look for viable solutions that are aimed at short, medium, and long-term time frames.
2. The committee should consider the cost and how the cost will be paid.
3. The committee should consider options for multi-jurisdictional partnerships.
4. The committee should consider where a facility should be located.

The Commission provided background materials, including:

1. An updated study from Bill Garnos
2. A grand jury report from the September 2022 court term
3. Presiding Commissioner Scott Fricker's comments on forming jail committee
4. Bill Garnos slides, including final slides, not in report
5. Bill Garnos presentation recording starts at 27:15
6. Sunshine law handbook

The Committee met on the following dates, having given public notice of the agenda for each meeting. Mark Ferguson was elected chair, Roger Lewis was elected vice-chair, and April Baxter was elected Secretary.

- July 25 6:00 pm at Platte County Administration Building 2d floor
- August 1 6:00 pm at Platte Co Detention Center for jail tour
- August 8 6:00 pm at Platte Co Detention Center for jail tour for those unable to attend  
August 1
- August 15 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- September 5 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- September 12 4:00 pm at Platte County Courthouse for tour
- September 19 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- October 3 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- October 17 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- \*At the October 17 meeting, additional parameters were given to the committee to limit our recommendation to the current footprint and jail only
- October 30 6:00 pm at Platte County Administration Building 2d floor for public comment
- November 8 6:00 pm at KCPD North Patrol Division Community Room
- November 14 6:00 pm at the Riverside Municipal Court Room

After considering information provided by the Platte County Commission, the Platte County Sheriff's Office, Platte County Prosecuting Attorney's Office, Platte County Circuit and Associate

Circuit judges, architects from HMN Architects, committee members and others, the Committee learned the following:

1. The current jail is designed to hold 152 beds in 7 pods. It has recently housed over 200 inmates, with many sleeping on mattresses on the floor. As of September 2023, the average daily population has been 194 inmates.
2. The current jail is not able to house inmates from the cities in Platte County who are being held for municipal violations.
3. Projections from Bill Garnos, based on anticipated continued growth in Platte County, will require space for 464 inmates by 2048.
4. Most of the inmates are pre-trial detainees, which means they have not yet been sentenced. When felons (serious crimes such as murder, rape, etc.) have been sentenced, they are quickly transported by county deputies to a Missouri Department of Corrections facility (usually a prison). As pre-trial detainees, the standards are different from those for convicted felons in a prison. In *Ahrens v. Thomas*, a federal lawsuit in the late 1970s over the conditions in the Platte County jail at that time, it was determined that Platte County was constitutionally required to provide certain quality facilities for such pre-trial detainees.
5. The current jail was last renovated in 2017.

The Committee toured the current jail and courthouse to see in-person the conditions under which the Sheriff's Department is operating. Operation of the courts requires sheriff deputies to transport inmates from the jail to the courtroom for hearings, provide general security for

the courthouse, and specific security for circuit and associate circuit judges and their staffs, as well as members of juries and victims of violent crime.

Due to the historic nature of the original part of the courthouse, the exterior cannot be changed. However, changes may be made to the back of the building, which do not extend above the current building roof line.

The State of Missouri has adopted standards, based on the American Corrections Association national standards. These standards should be followed in construction and operation of the jail.

The Committee examined various solutions aimed at short, medium, and long-term time frames. Building a facility that would meet projected needs for the next 20 to 25 years would provide open beds that could be rented to other agencies, including the U.S. Marshal Office, at a current rate of \$90 to \$100 per bed per night.

The Committee considered estimates of the cost and how to pay for it. Based on the estimates provided by HMN the cost for a “stacked” facility on the northwest corner of the current property (currently used for a parking lot) would be about \$69,696,246. Using a new sales tax for 10 years, assuming a 3% growth in tax revenue, based on the 2019 general sales tax (pre-COVID) at 1/4 of a cent would generate \$56 million. At 3/8 of a cent would generate \$84 million. Assuming a 3% growth rate, based on the 2022 general sale tax (after most of COVID) at

1/4 of a cent would generate \$64 million. At 3/8 of a cent would generate \$96 million. The County would need to seek financing, probably through general obligation bonds. Michael Short of STIFEL provided information about how the bond process would work.

The Committee considered options for multi-jurisdictional partnerships. Partnering with Kansas City, Missouri would appear to have advantages, but there are a number of issues, including management of the facility, inmates housed on property with no mass transportation for visitors, and transportation to the respective courthouses for hearings and trials.

The Committee considered where a facility should be located, with the following proposals:

1. Expand current jail at current location
2. Build a new jail facility at a different location
3. Build a new “justice center” that would include a jail, sheriff's offices, prosecutor's offices, and circuit courtrooms, chambers, and ancillary spaces
4. Remodel current administrative building to be used for circuit courts and expand the jail at the current location, building a new administrative building at a different location

The Committee found:

1. There is sufficient room on the current property to expand the jail to meet the goal needs.

2. Building a separate jail, with the courtrooms remaining in the current location would increase the operating expenses for the Sheriff's Department due to the need to physically transport inmates from the distant jail facility to the current courtrooms.
3. Building a new "justice center" would increase the cost considerably.
4. Remodeling the current administration building for circuit courts can be considered at a later time.

The Committee recommends that the Platte County Commission authorize a basic construction proposal to build a "stacked" addition to the current jail on the county property on the northwest corner of the current county buildings, with 312 new beds in addition to the existing 152 beds for a total of 464 beds in at least 13 pods built in the same general arrangement as the current cells, day rooms, and security hub. Expansion of service areas, including kitchen, laundry, holding areas and attorney-client meeting rooms to be included.

The Committee further recommends that the Commission submit a proposal to the voters of the county to adopt a sales tax to expire in 10 years at either 1/4 of a cent or 3/8 of a cent rates, as the Commission chooses.