

**Washington County Jail
Citizens Advisory Committee
Recommendation**

June 28 2016

The Citizens Advisory Committee was charged by the Washington County Board of Supervisors with making a recommendation on a path moving forward in regard to the Washington County Jail.

The 16 members of this committee met 8 times over the last 4 months to review the facts in regard to the current situation at the jail. Prohaska and Associates reviewed current situation at the jail, the needs assessment study and presented 4 options for the committee to review that the County Board ultimately has to choose from. The members of the committee toured the current jail and county court facilities. A sub committee toured both the Saunders County Jail and the Mills County Jail to see examples of modern jail designs to compare and contrast to the current Washington County facility.

The four options presented to the committee were;

Option 1

Add on / Remodel the current facility to increase the capacity to the 60 beds, provide a secure path to the courtrooms and increase the size of the current county courtroom.

Option 2

Build a new "Justice Center" on a green field site with 60 beds, sheriff's department facility, court facilities and county attorney facilities.

Option 3

Maintain a 15 bed jail. Transport county inmates to other jails for housing.

Option 4

Close the county jail and transport / house all inmates at other facilities.

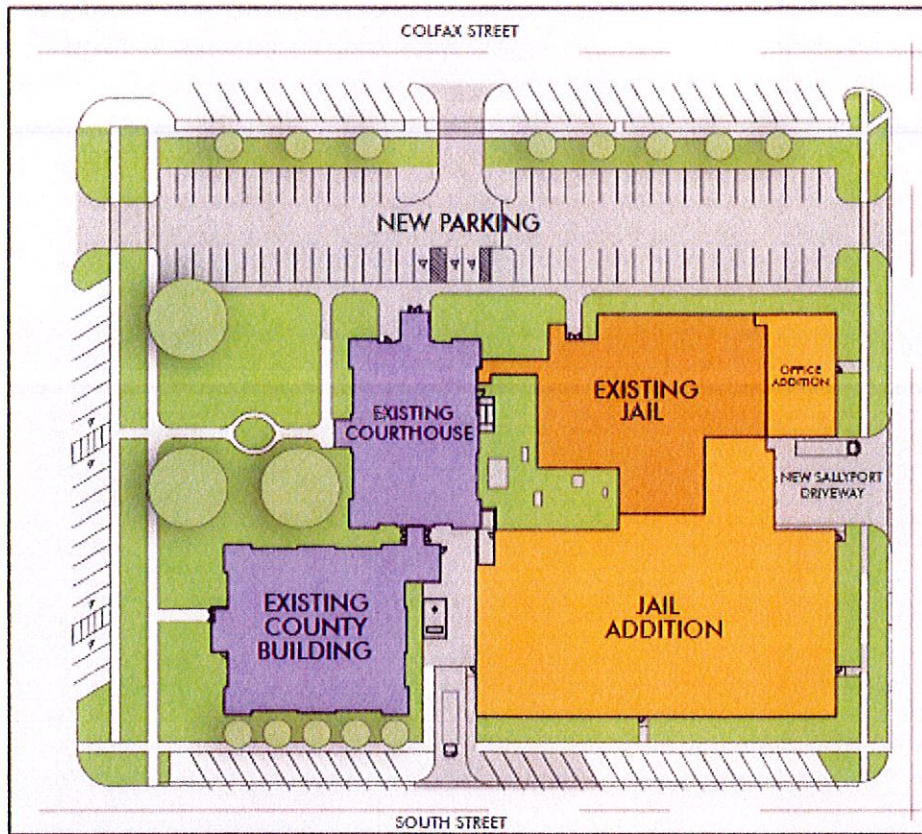
The Citizens Advisory Committee unanimously recommends that the County Board move forward with Option 2, building a new Justice Center on a green field site.

The members of the committee offered many reasons why this option was the best overall for the future of the county including;

The current facility does not meet the current needs of the county to safely house the prisoners in its charge. There are serious safety concerns in both our jail facility and county courtroom for not only our law enforcement staff but also the public and the prisoner's themselves.

Building on a greenfield site allows the preservation of the current parking and courthouse lawn. It preserves the beauty and character of the existing courthouse. The committee felt that we are at a crossroads moment in the history of Washington County. Option 2 is the best path for the future of the county because choosing to expand the jail on the Courthouse site locks the county into all future expansion of the jail to be made only on this site or we risk wasting the millions invested now.

Site Plan for Option 1 (building on the current courthouse site, uses nearly all available square footage of the North, West and South sides of the site)



Site Plan ↑
No Scale

- Jail & Jail Office Addition
- Existing Jail
- Existing County Building & Courthouse

By choosing to move the jail offsite now, the money spent on this project is safeguarded for future generations when an expansion is needed again, whether that be in 10, 20 or 40 years in the future.

Building a new facility on a greenfield site would allow for a single story facility which offers the best option for future expansion, provides for ample parking, and offers most overall value for the dollars being spent on the project.

Building on a green field site away from the active jail and courtroom facilities also provides for the continued operation of both the jail and courts while the new facility is being constructed. The logistics of maintaining the jail and court functionality during the construction seemed to offer many challenges that put the safety of the Jail employees, the public and the prisoners at risk.

The vacated spaces in the existing courthouse and Sheriff's office could be used to house the current uses of the county annex building at such time that the county board would make that determination. The sale of the county annex building could potentially offset the cost of the green field site for construction of the new facility.

Building offsite would negate the need to spend \$260,000 on moving the communication tower on the courthouse site. The 911 dispatch center and communications facilities would not need to be moved from the current location.

Building on a greenfield site in a non residential area would provide space for a secure facility by allowing for drive through sally ports to load and unload prisoners in an enclosed area.

Building on a greenfield site and combining the court facilities at the site offers the opportunity to create a secure division between the public, court staff and the prisoners.

Option 4 (closing the current facility) was ruled out immediately by the committee as there is no real "closing" of this facility as a booking and temporary holding facility is going to be required. The current staffing levels would still be required along with the dramatic increase in the cost of transportation and housing of the inmates. This option does nothing to address the safety issues present at the current jail or court facilities.

Option 3 (maintaining a 15 bed facility and transporting / housing the remaining population at other facilities) was ruled out due to the overwhelming safety issues present in the current facilities(both the jail and the courtrooms). The cost of transportation and housing the inmates offsite is projected to be nearly the same or higher than the cost of building and operating the new facility over 20 years.

Option 1 (remodel the current jail to 60 beds, sheriff's office, courts, county attorney's office) was ruled out due to many reasons. Primarily due to lack of future expansion ability, the lack of available parking at the current site, the cost of relocating the communication tower, the physical space restrictions of expanding the current County Court and County Attorney offices vs the dollars required to remodel the areas and the logistics of remodeling and expanding a facility that is actively holding prisoners. Future expansion on the courthouse site would be limited to moving to vertically, building another story on top of the proposed 2 story facility. This limitation presents many issues with no more room for additional parking and the size of the jail eventually overtaking the courthouse facility on the current site. While this may be many years in the future, it does need to be taken into consideration now when deciding how to move forward with a jail expansion that will be a cost to many future generations.

Financing the project

The Citizens advisory committee strongly suggested that the County Board of Supervisors finance the project by using the public facilities bonding authority available to it under State Statute 23-120. The importance of this project is obvious to the committee and should be put into motion as soon as possible.

Citizens Advisory Committee Members

Bill McPhillips

Bob Prieksat

Brad Andersen

Dan Douglas

Dan Flynn

Dennis Zolk

Emily Anderson

Janine Hunt

Joseph Lager

Kim Quick

Mike Anderson

Nancy Peters

Russ Cook

Tim O'Dell

Todd Trimpe

Vicky Kellogg