



Wisconsin Department of Corrections

Governor Tony Evers | Secretary Kevin A. Carr

Office of Detention Facilities

April 9, 2021

Sheriff Matthew Joski
Kewaunee County Sheriff's Department
620 Juneau Street
Kewaunee, WI 54941

RE: Kewaunee County Jail Deficiencies

Dear Sheriff Joski:

As you are aware, the Kewaunee County Jail has had ongoing physical plant deficiencies for a number of years. These issues and concerns have also been recognized by the Kewaunee County Board of Supervisors who have supported that steps be taken to identify and determine what corrective measures need to be addressed. This letter provides a chronology of the events that have taken place in the recent years in an attempt to study the future needs of the Jail. This also serves as notice for areas that need to be further studied by experts in the respected areas and reported back to my office for further review. I have also identified in closing areas that are in immediate need of correction.

Timeline of recent Jail Physical Plant Studies:

2016

April - Justice and Jail Analysis was completed noting:

- Limitations of the facility
- Liability report said the county is undefendable because of the physical layout and inability to directly monitor. (Noted from the closeout conversation you shared)

2017

January - National Institute of Corrections - Planning of New Institutions Workshop was completed

2019

January - County Board Approval to move to Phase I - Date: January 22nd, 2019 Cost \$60,700.00

- Contract with Venture to perform Justice Center Study.
- April 2019 Creation of Public Safety Study Committee
- Phase I Regular Meetings with Public Safety Study Committee

August - County Board Approval to move to Phase II – Date: August 20th, 2019 Cost \$67,100.00

2021

January 26th – County Board voted on moving to Phase III Cost \$163,000.00 – Motion Failed

February 9th – County Board Meeting - Public Safety Facility Study Committee Report

Presentation reiterating results of committee's findings and reports.

March 25th – On site Jail Review Completed

Your facility is inspected annually pursuant to Wisconsin State Statute 301.37(3). Over the past several inspection periods Kewaunee County has been notified of several areas that are in need of review. Because the county had recognized the need for review and began the process of studying the facility in 2016 our office has allowed you to maintain the current facility while that process has been ongoing allowing you to come up with a solution.

On January 26, 2021 the County Board of Supervisors voted to discontinue moving forward with the jail study and final design development phase process. Because the county stopped the process, it was then necessary take a look at previously identified deficiencies along with another on site review to incorporate any additional findings that are in need of immediate correction.

On March 25, 2021, an interim annual inspection of the Kewaunee County Jail was conducted pursuant to Wisconsin State Statute 301.37(3) focusing on the physical plant. That review has determined two actions to be completed.

- 1- Building Integrity Review
- 2- Immediate Correction Items

Building Integrity Review

In order to gain a better understanding of the buildings overall integrity the following areas need to be assessed by a professional in each of the respective areas. When that has been completed and reports generated, they will need to be forwarded to me for review.

- **Structural Engineer** – There are several cracks in the ceilings, walls and floors throughout the facility. A structural analysis of the facility needs to be completed.
- **Plumbing** – There are several pipes with significant rusting and corrosion along with leaking toilets and fixtures throughout the entire facility. The pipes have burst on two recent occasions. Valves are unable to be turned off due to corrosion. A study to determine the integrity of the overall plumbing system needs to be completed.
- **Electrical**- It is believed that the current system is original to the building. There are several areas where water is leaking from the roof and coming through light fixtures into the facility. There are exposed wires with no conduit or covering. It is not uncommon for the facility to lose power raising concern with electrical load. The jail encompasses the county 911 emergency communications center that is affected when this happens. A study to determine the integrity of the overall electrical system needs to be completed.

- **Roof-** The roof has noted leaking for several inspection periods and continues to leak especially in the spring thaw or during a heavy rain. Ceiling tiles throughout the facility have water damage causing some to collapse. A study to determine the integrity of the roof needs to be completed.

Immediate Correction Items:

On the date of the inspection, immediate action was taken that reduced the approved occupancy capacity from 22 to 16:

Under WI Statutes Chapter 301 Corrections, specifically 301.37(3) – the following areas are no longer approved for occupancy.

- Main Cellblock- Cell #1 Cracked safety glass in the back of the cell
- J Block- Cell #1 Toilet is leaking and the sink is not functioning
- Huber Dorm – Back 2 bunks on the left side of the room need to be removed due to serious issues with the metal being compromised

Other items in need of immediate correction:

- Ceiling tiles throughout the facility need to be replaced- damaged, missing
- Registers in housing units need to be repaired or replaced – bent corners, rusted
- Replace Bathroom tiles in Huber- missing tiles
- Replace Main Jail Entrance Door- Reported times when not functioning due to age
- Replace Vent Coverings – Rusted and deteriorated

All replacement items are to be submitted and approved in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DOC 350:

DOC 350.05 (2) FURNITURE AND FIXTURES.

Furniture and fixtures used in a jail shall be of detention strength materials and manufactured, sold, and installed by firms that specialize in detention equipment or ordered from a firm that will follow the specifications for detention strength equipment in this chapter...

DOC 350.04 Construction plans. (1) Before design development begins, a county that intends to build or remodel a jail shall file a letter of intent with the department’s regional detention facilities specialist. **(2)** Copies of original and updated drawings of the area within the secure perimeter of the jail shall be submitted to the department’s regional detention facilities specialist at the same time the drawings are submitted to the county. **(3)** All sites, plans, and specifications for construction or remodeling of a jail shall comply with the Wisconsin commercial building code. **(4)** Prior to publication of bid documents, one complete set of plans and specifications shall be forwarded to the department for review and approval. **(5)** Any proposed changes to the approved plans must be submitted to the department for review and approval.

While this letter focuses on physical plant, it is also important to be mindful as you move forward to continue to include discussions regarding the current design flaws and operational inefficiencies.

I have also attached a letter I received from Jail Administrator Chris VanErem that outlines his shared concerns that we reviewed together. Administrator VanErem has cataloged several

pictures that were taken of areas within the jail that are being referenced. It is noted that you have continued to bring forth your concerns and have been diligent in your efforts to provide education throughout the process of the prior jail study.

Please provide me with your corrective action plan regarding the Building Integrity Review and Immediate Correction Items. If you have any questions regarding this letter please contact me and we can review them together.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Thelen".

Nancy Thelen, Inspector
Northeast Region
DOC- Office of Detention Facilities

Cc: Lt. Chris VanErem, Jail Administrator
Greg Bucholtz, Director – ODF
File



KEWAUNEE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

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MATTHEW J. JOSKI
SHERIFF

Kewaunee County Jail – Deficiencies

Roof

- The Jail has been in need of a new roof for a lengthy period of time. We have experienced water running into the Jail through the ceiling, requiring staff to place buckets in various areas throughout the Jail to catch the water coming in. This is most common during the spring thaw or during heavy rains, this will be apparent as we review the photos of the Jail.
- **Roof to the Kewaunee County Safety Building should be replaced.**

Ceiling/Walls/Floors

- Ceiling tiles are damaged, bowing inward, and some have collapsed due to water leaking into the Jail from the roof.
- There is significant cracking in the cement blocks in the secure cell blocks. In the bathroom area of the Huber Dorm there is an approximately 1/8 inch crack in the corner of the east wall, running the entire length of the wall and down the southeast corner of the wall to the floor.
- There are holes in walls, created by inmates. These areas have been patched but are then damaged again.
- Bathroom tiles are missing in Huber bathroom area, creating security concerns.

Ceiling tiles in the Jail hallways should be replaced with a security ceiling. Cracking in ceiling in secure areas should be evaluated for structural integrity and fixed for security purposes. Holes in walls

should be repaired so as not to show previous damage. Remaining Huber bathroom tiles should be removed and corrected.

Plumbing

- All pipes have significant rust and corrosion and some are being held in place by use of 2x4 boards and in one instance a plastic bottle. We have had two situations over the last couple of years with pipes bursting with the most recent incident occurring in spring of 2020. The water closets are so corroded that you can see rust eating through the door in one of the photos.
- Clogged drains are a common and maintenance is contacted on a regular to correct the issue.
- In December of 2020 an incident occurred in the Jail in which an inmate plugged his toilet, flooding his cell. Officers were unable to turn the valves to stop the water and the toilet continued to overflow. This required officers to make entry, with a combative inmate in the cell, to physically remove the stoppage with their own hands. This is a serious security concern by not allowing officers to utilize proper security precautions in dealing with a combative individual due to deficiencies of the facility.
- **All plumbing should be evaluated and repaired where necessary.**

Fixtures

- Most of the sinks and toilets are cracked and are leaking, causing water damage throughout the facility and staff are continuously calling maintenance to fix valves and flushing mechanisms.
- All bunk beds are in need of replacement.
- Vent coverings are rusted and deteriorating. Vents are a significant security issue as they are easily manipulated by inmates to bend the metal, possibly breaking off a piece, creating access to a weapon.
- Light fixtures experience water leakage, as well, requiring staff to place buckets under the fixtures and at times remove the covering to release the build-up.
- **All fixtures in the Jail should be replaced.**

Electrical/Wiring

- I believe the electrical within the Jail is original and not intended for the additional equipment necessary to operate a 911 Dispatch Center. This has required upgrades in certain areas to support the equipment necessary to perform our duties. It is not uncommon to lose power due to blown circuits when officers plug in a vacuum or extension cord to utilize some other basic electrical equipment.
- Many wires throughout the facility are obsolete creating difficulties and spacing issues when equipment is in need of replacement/repair.
- **Electrical should be evaluated to determine if upgrades are necessary and any wiring not in use be removed.**

Locking Mechanisms

- Locking mechanisms are old and antiquated, requiring maintenance to fabricate or modify parts as they are no longer available by manufacturer. Locking and unlocking of doors are conducted manually, by staff.
- Image 77 illustrates the locking mechanism for the Main Cell Block. Staff have become familiar with manipulating this locking mechanism to operate as it can become stuck in operation if not completed appropriately.
- Image 85 illustrates the doorframe to the main door to enter the secure area of the Jail. In this photo it is visible that oil is running down the frame of the door as staff regularly sprays the latch with WD-40 to ensure the door closes and opens when needed.
- **Locking mechanisms and doors should be replaced.**