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**TO: Stan Harper, Facilities Committee Chair**  
**FROM: Dustin D. Heuerman, Sheriff** *DH*  
**DATE: January 17, 2020**  
**RE: Jail Consolidation and Renovation**

I recently spoke with Representative Carol Ammons about pre-trial reform legislation that is likely going to be considered in 2020. I'm told that it has the potential to reduce the number of inmates in our custody, but by how many is not currently known as this is in the very early stages of development. I do hope it helps to reduce the jail population and thereby some of the issues we are commonly seeing in the jails. I'm inclined to believe that this reform will not reduce the jail population drastically, though, because of the offenses that inmates in my custody are accused of committing, but I honestly have no idea since the legislation has not yet been passed. Representative Ammons expressed the desire to have some type of reform in place by January 2021. This intended reform should be taken into consideration when discussing any criminal justice infrastructure plans here in Champaign County.

I want to be clear, though, that we continue to have issues at the downtown and satellite jails that adversely affect both operations and the welfare of inmates in our custody. Consolidation and renovation will be needed to address the needs of both our inmates and our employees; however, I want to make sure we are making the changes that are appropriate and make the most sense. It is difficult to predict what the future will bring.

I also realize that we continue to be one major issue away from having to invest large amounts of money into the downtown jail, or to house inmates from the downtown jail in other counties. Based on the downtown jail's daily population average of 47 inmates in 2019, and the estimated average cost \$100/inmate/day for housing inmates in other counties, if we did have to close the downtown jail and relocate inmates because of an issue it would cost Champaign County approximately \$1,715,500 per year. There is no guarantee that the surrounding counties would be able to house all of these inmates and we would still be responsible for transporting the inmates to and from court appearances, which would also likely increase our operating costs. Due to operational constraints and classification issues, it is possible additional inmates would also need to be relocated.

Considering the above information, there are several routes that can be taken. While the decision is ultimately up to the County Board, I wanted to make sure the Facilities Committee is informed of the most likely options, including possible ramifications of those options, which are listed in no particular order.

- 1) Move forward with the plan “as-is” as it meets all the current and anticipated future needs of Champaign County;
- 2) Move forward with the plan “as-is” but reduce the number of beds by 54. While this will meet the maximum numbers of inmates we have experienced lately, it doesn’t allow much fluctuation in jail population, a population the Sheriff’s Office has no control over. The Board will need to recognize that an additional cost of approximately \$100/inmate/day for each inmate we house outside of the county will be incurred if we don’t have enough space to safety house and properly classify inmates in our custody. This would require an increased budget for Corrections.
- 3) Move forward with a minimal plan for increasing the capacity at the Satellite jail to allow the downtown jail to be closed. It should be noted, though, that when drafting the original jail consolidation plan community input into things like a “softer” booking area, more program space, and larger visitation area were incorporated. These would likely not be an option under this minimal plan. This addition would have to be for special management housing and large enough to house all of the inmate numbers typically housed at the downtown jail.
- 4) Postpone any plans to consolidate/renovate the jails and give the pre-trial reform legislation a reasonable amount of time to see the impact on jail population. While we are waiting to see the results of the pretrial reform, I would recommend investing resources in the Sheriff’s Office and its relocation plan. Regardless of the effects of legislation on the jail, the issues with the Sheriff’s Office will still need to be addressed. An updated Sheriff’s Office facility is imperative to operating more effectively and efficiently, allowing us to better serve the residents and visitors of Champaign County.

I support pre-trial reform and hope it succeeds in reducing the jail population and providing more community resources. I am also working in the community to try and bring more community resources to divert people from being arrested. For some reason a lot of emphasis has been put on the Sheriff having say over pre-trial reform when I actually have a minimal role in the process. I have much more ability to help affect change in how inmates are treated when they are in my facility, which is why my goal with this jail consolidation/renovation plan is to improve that environment. While I have very little say in who is in my custody, I see myself as part of the conversation with the State’s Attorney and judges. As Sheriff, though, I also have to address the deficiencies we are currently experiencing in order to help provide a better environment for inmates and correctional officers. I fear that if we continue to not take appropriate action with the downtown jail, an inmate or correctional officer could be severely injured or public safety could be at risk. It might be easy to advocate against any resources being put into a jail, but the reality is that the issues will need addressed one way or another – either by investing in a facility that better meets our needs or in our current facilities when there is a major issue that has to be

unexpectedly repaired or replaced – or worse yet, an unexpected issue that forces the closure of the downtown jail before a relocation plan is in place.

As you know, there were many issues at the downtown jail in 2019. Some of these included the cell doors randomly opening and closing, a leaking roof that can barely be repaired anymore, a cockroach infestation, parts of the deteriorating building being removed that could potentially be used as weapons by inmates and incidents where correctional officers were attacked. Dana and his team quickly work to address issues that come up, but the issues seem to be increasing in number and severity. We also continue to struggle with adequately addressing inmates with mental illness in both facilities. While I am working with community groups and legislators to develop community alternatives for those with mental illness who might be better served outside of jail, I cannot whole-heartedly turn a blind eye to the reality of our current needs regarding mentally ill inmates and adequate facilities to address those needs. I am not only worried about the safety of inmates and staff at the downtown jail, but also about the work and living environment they experience every day.

My goal for the future is to continue to regularly keep the Facilities Committee informed of deficiencies seen in the Sheriff's Office and jails so that this Committee and the County Board can make an informed decision on how to best invest taxpayer money on infrastructure. As always, I am available for any discussion or questions you or the Committee might have.

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