

Oceana County Sheriff's Office and Jail

Masterplan

Reminder
Election
Day
August 2

Millage Proposal Questions and Answers



For additional information:

Visit www.oceana.mi.us/community-safety

Sheriff Craig Mast

216 Lincoln Street

Hart, MI 49420

(231) 873-2121

mastc@oceanasheriff.net

Community Safety Concerns

Does the county need a jail?

Yes. The Michigan Constitution requires that each county in the state operate a jail; which carries with it the responsibility for the care and well-being of employees, inmates, and visitors. For example, the Michigan Department of Corrections requires a minimum temperature range for a correctional facility. Properly calibrated environmental control systems, absent in the existing facility, are an ongoing deficiency.

How old is the current jail and Sheriff's offices?

54 years old. The existing jail and Sheriff's Department offices were originally constructed in 1968. The jail section underwent an expansion in 1988 to address a need to house more inmates.

Where is the current jail/Sheriff's offices located?

The jail and Sheriff's Department offices are located in downtown Hart, Michigan.

Why do we need a new jail/Sheriff offices?

The existing jail and Sheriff's Department offices no longer serve their mission. The jail in particular is a 1950s era linear design that is operationally challenging when compared to modern design standards for correctional facilities, such as pod-style inmate housing units with 360° views and monitoring.

When individuals are booked into the county jail, they are assigned a classification, for instance to determine serious offenders versus less serious offenders. The existing jail cannot

accommodate the variability of classifications that are mandated by the Michigan Department of Corrections, meaning serious offenders could share a cell with less serious offenders

A consultant hired by the county to evaluate environmental control systems and operational effectiveness of the existing facility determined that environmental improvements are likely to cost \$4.5 million to \$5.6 million. A new facility with proper environmental control systems increases the longevity of a building because it reduces humidity which promotes rust and deterioration of equipment; and proper air controls provide a healthier working environment. Operational inefficiencies, with the existing facility, however, would remain due to the linear design of the facility.

How does the existing jail compare in size to other counties?

The existing jail provides 2.53 beds per thousand people. The average county jail in Michigan is 3.5 beds per thousand people.

How does an undersized jail affect the county's criminal justice system?

Law enforcement officials aren't the only ones affected by the lack of jail space. The entire criminal justice system in the county is impacted. For example:

- Judges are forced to decide which inmates must be released early due to chronic overcrowding;
- The prosecuting attorney has expressed frustration, stating that often people charged with crimes do not even show up to court because there is not punishment for failing to appear;

- Probation violators face no punishment for not complying with their sentences.

During a public meeting on May 5, Sheriff Mast said that his department has 800 outstanding warrants. Is this correct? And, if so, what does that mean regarding the jail?

Sheriff Mast did state that his department has 800 outstanding warrants and that if he directed his deputies to act on them that he would fill the existing jail instantly, thus causing an overcrowding situation that must then be acted on. A larger jail does allow the Sheriff to enhance community safety by acting on these warrants.

What is the impact on services provided to inmates through the jail and Sheriff's Department?

Two notable inmate-focused service deficiencies exist with today's facility. First, there is inadequate space to conduct inmate medical examinations and to administer treatment by the jail nurse or an on-call physician.

Second, there is no room to properly segregate inmates with mental health issues, meaning, serious offenders could share a cell with less serious offenders. West Michigan Community Mental Health provides a mental health liaison to assess the mental health of inmates.

[Community Safety Plan](#)

To effectively address deficiencies of existing facilities the County Board desires to issue bonds to construct and operate a new facility of approximately 144 beds. To make the annual debt service (principal and interest) payments, and to provide operating funds for a new facility, the County Board will present voters

with an August 2 ballot proposal for a new additional millage. A complete copy of the ballot proposal is included at the end of this document.

Why is a new additional millage needed?

A new facility will require borrowing funds for the project. The county does not have the funds to complete a project like this. If it did, we would already have a new facility. A new additional millage is the only option to generate the revenue necessary to make the annual debt service payments and provide operating funds for the facility.

How much is the millage?

On May 5, the County Board approved submitting a ballot proposal to voters for a new millage of 2.25 mills to fund the estimated \$35 million project. The purpose of the request is to construct, equip, furnish, finance, and operate a new county jail and Sheriff's Department offices, which will replace the existing facilities.

How much will a 2.25 mill tax levy cost property owners:

The cost is \$2.25 for every \$1,000 of the property's taxable value. A property with a taxable value of \$100,000 will pay \$225 per year or \$18.75 per month.

How long will the new additional millage be levied?

The ballot language states that it will be levied for a maximum of 20 years beginning in 2022 and continuing through 2041.

If approved by voters, does the County Board have to levy the full amount of the new additional millage each year?

Because the taxable value of property throughout Oceana County changes over time, it's possible that the County Board could levy less than the full 2.25 mills in certain years and still generate the annual revenue necessary to make debt service payments and to cover some operating costs.

This is a new millage. What's been happening with other voter-approved millages in the county?

Voters previously approved a reduced millage for the Medical Care Facility (MCF) from 2.50 mills to 2.00 mills (-0.50 mills); the County Board reduced the tax levy associated with a debt service millage for MCF from .50 mills to .20 mills (-0.30 mills). This same MCF debt millage expires after 2022 (-0.20 mills).

Also, for the past few years, the County Board has levied an annual reduction in the ambulance millage from 1.0 mills to 0.90 mills (-0.10 mills).

If voters approve the new additional millage, what deficiencies with the existing facility will be resolved following construction of a new facility?

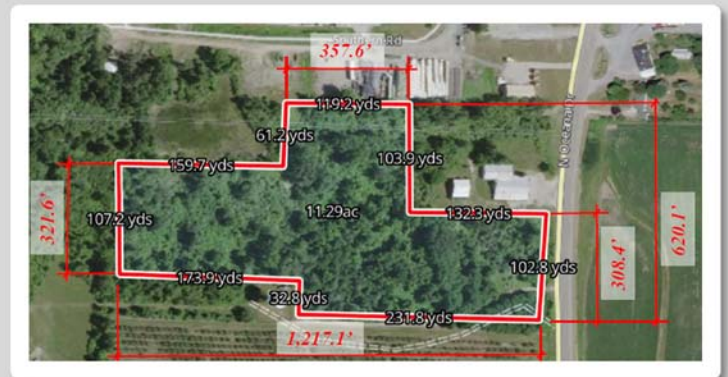
- Corrections staff can fully comply with MDOC classification mandate;
- A modern pod-style inmate housing unit offers direct monitoring of all inmates and eliminates "blind spots;"
- Environmental and operational improvements;
- Segregate of inmates with mental health issues;
- Improved inmate medical services;
- Provide sufficient quantity of space, configuration, and layout for the major services areas in the department:

corrections, patrol, medical, housing, investigations, and so on;

- Increased compliance with the American with Disabilities Act involving the movement/mobility of inmates within a corrections facility.

Where would a new jail and Sheriff's Department offices be located?

Although a final decision about a location can only be made upon approval by voters of a new millage, an area located on N. Oceana Drive in the city of Hart, Michigan is a preferred option.



Preliminary location just south of Polk Road.

What would a new facility look like?

In order to understand what the projected costs might be for a new facility, a preliminary design was created by a consulting firm. However, a final design would only be created if the new millage is approved by voters.



Draft design. A larger image can be found at the end of this document.

Other Information

Does the county have a lot of outstanding debt already?

No. The county's total indebtedness of \$583,600 is less than 1/10th of 1 percent of the allowable limit in Michigan, and all of this debt will be paid off by November 2023.

How do we rank in overall tax assessments compared to other counties?

Relying on data available from the Michigan Department of Treasury's website, as of 2021, Oceana County ranks 17th in county tax assessments (general operating and voter-approved millages) when compared to the other 82 counties in the state. The ranking excludes local tax assessments and school assessments that are received by those respective local entities.

What would happen to the existing jail and Sheriff's Department building?

The existing facility does not meet the correctional and law enforcement mission of the county and would be substantially demolished. The section of the building that includes administrative offices may be salvageable for use by general county offices and courts presently located in the courthouse adjacent to the existing jail.

Demolition costs would be paid from the county's general operating budget.

When would a new facility be ready to use?

If the new millage is approved by voters on August 2, a preliminary project schedule

identified December 2024 as the most likely date to begin operations in the facility.

Who will build the new facility?

That has not yet been determined. A competitive bid process will be used to select a qualified contractor.

Will the new facility house people from outside the county?

The purpose of a new facility is to meet the needs of Oceana County, not to overbuild to accommodate inmates from other areas. Although we would charge a daily rate to house inmates from outside Oceana County, the funds received would not be sufficient to offset the operating costs of the facility.

Why should inmates be comfortable in a jail?

The Michigan Department of Corrections has statewide minimum requirements that the Sheriff must comply with. Cells in a new jail will still be "bare bones" with cement floors and metal bunk beds with economy-grade mattresses and pillows.

Ballot Proposal

NEW ADDITIONAL MILLAGE
PROPOSITION
2.25 MILL FOR A NEW
COUNTY JAIL AND SHERIFF'S
DEPARTMENT OFFICES

Shall the limitation on general ad valorem taxes within Oceana County, as established by Article IX, Section 6 of the Michigan Constitution, against all taxable real and personal property within Oceana County be increased by an additional 2.25 mill (\$2.25 per \$1,000 of taxable value) for a period of 20 years, 2022 through 2041 inclusive, for the purpose of constructing, equipping, furnishing, financing, and operating a new County Jail and Sheriff's Department offices, which would replace the existing facilities, subject to reduction as provided by law?

If this new additional millage is approved, it is estimated that the levy of 2.25 mill will provide revenue of \$3,094,085 in the first calendar year (2023) of the levy, which will be disbursed to Oceana County. As required by law, a portion of the revenue from the millage will be disbursed to tax increment authorities, including the City of Hart Tax Increment Finance Authority.

Draft Facility Site & Design Concept

