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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**GREENE COUNTY COMMISSION AND SHERIFF SPEAK TO PUBLIC SAFETY
IMPORTANCE OF TEMPORARY JAIL FACILITY PROPOSAL**

Springfield, MO – On Tuesday, the Greene County Commission and Sheriff Jim C. Arnott emphasized the importance of the decision of Springfield’s City Council tonight with regard to the temporary jail facility proposal and its impact on public safety. Commissioner Cirtin’s remarks are below.

“The Greene County Commission and the Sheriff are here today because our citizens have communicated that their top priority is public safety and it is also our priority. We believe critically important decisions will be made today that will impact our ability to keep citizens safe, especially those in Springfield. In response to Springfield’s rising crime rate and the burden of jail over-capacity, we have recently presented a proposal to City Council to partner and cost-share on a temporary jail facility that would allow us to once again house municipal offenders and inmates and support the men and women of the Springfield Police Department and law enforcement of other municipalities.

At this time, we have not received any communication from Council regarding the proposal we presented or any outreach to negotiate the terms. The city has said through the media that to enter into a contract for \$3 million, they must have that amount on hand. Tonight they will vote on allocation of more than \$3 million. As we examined the ordinance the City will vote on this evening regarding appropriation of the carryover fund balance and increasing expenses in the amount of \$3,213,570, there is no mention of funds being allocated to support this public safety proposal. Rather, it appears they will proceed with their list that includes among other things \$200,000 for new carpet, \$300,000 for Founder’s Park, \$130,640 for a compensation consultant, \$175,000 for planning master plan update and \$100,000 for a Kearney Street Economic Development Study. That’s nearly \$1 million right there – we’ve made it clear in the media we would accept a commitment per year of that amount if it would make this more feasible to the City.

We find ourselves at a critically important crossroads in what is truly a public safety crisis. The County is asking for the City’s help in responding to their increasing crime rate in the most prudent and cost-effective way. We recognize that resources are limited for both the City and County. But we also believe public safety is our fiscal priority and we cannot afford NOT to respond to this crisis. We have to act to maintain the public safety of our citizens and to keep our region’s economy growing.

We believed our proposal to be very fair:

- In 2015, the annual cost of the jail was a little over \$13 million.
- 53% of that total cost is covered by reimbursement from state and federal governments as well as other counties, inmates and fees. Of the remaining 47% of the cost of the jail, a Springfield resident pays \$14.47 per person, per year. A resident of an unincorporated area of Greene County pays about two times more or \$34.66 per person, per year.
- We need the City’s help to maintain public safety. In response to a court order, the County is spending \$3 million to add court room facilities in the Judicial Courts building which has also required moving the Prosecutors office to an off-campus building which must be renovated.

As well, because of data collected from our extensive experience with reciprocal agreements, we have come to the conclusion that this temporary facility option is the most prudent for the short term and makes the most fiscal sense as

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we pivot to working on longer term solutions to the public safety challenges we face, not only related to the jail, but the entire criminal justice system for which the county is responsible. We spent approximately half a million dollars on reciprocal agreements last year and while we budgeted that amount for this year, we have already exceeded it and we are not halfway through the year. It is projected we will spend \$1 million in reciprocity this year if nothing changes.

As the City finally starts to send municipal offenders to other jails, we had hoped the temporary jail proposal with designated beds for municipal offenders would save them from the expense, logistical challenges and liability associated with this type of arrangement for a longer period of time, also. Most of all, we want to have the capacity to house all offenders and inmates arrested in Springfield and elsewhere, to keep all of the citizens in Greene County safe in the most cost-effective way possible.”

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