



June 29, 2016

Greene Co. Commission Receives Letter from Springfield Mayor Declining Proposal to Partially Fund Temporary Jail

Springfield, MO – On Friday, June 24, Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens notified Greene County in a letter that City Council voted to decline the proposal to partially fund a temporary jail facility. The City Council did not offer any counter-proposal.

“The Commission continues to make public safety a priority,” said Presiding Commissioner Bob Cirtin. “We are back to square one in reviewing our options to address the reality of overcapacity at the jail and meet the demands on our underfunded criminal justice system.”

Greene County continues to house more than 100 inmates in five other jails each day at an approximate cost of more than \$3,500 per day. As those jails are close to or have reached their capacity, the County is facing the prospect of sending inmates as far away as northeastern Missouri. “We believed this temporary jail facility was a viable and fiscally prudent option at this point,” said Commissioner Cirtin. “We asked the City to invest in this proposal because we needed their help and we want to house all prisoners here including those on municipal charges. The commission will now consider building and leasing a temporary facility without financial assistance from the City. We have not budgeted for this expenditure and we will have to determine what the impact would be on the current budget, as well as future budgets.”

The cost of the temporary jail facility is estimated to be approximately \$1.5 million per year. It would take several weeks to bid the project and then 90 to 125 days to build. “Looking at the maximum end of that time range, it could be mid-December before the project is complete,” said Commissioner Roseann Bentley.

“In this most recent letter the Council asked us not to view the city’s legal action against us as adversarial and to join them in asking the court to decide which opinion is correct – however, the city had already taken more legal action before the Mayor sent this letter,” said Cirtin. “It is disappointing to us that while City Council was considering our proposal, the city of Springfield was actually ramping up its legal action with additional filings on June 10.”

Regarding the letter’s reference to discussing a long-term solution to the jail’s capacity challenges, Commissioner Harold Bengsch stated that the Commission continues to study long-term options as well as the findings and recommendations of the Financial Advisory Task Force. “We have met with a number of Greene County municipalities about the report already and have several more cities to meet with including Springfield,” said Bengsch. “We have many great partnerships with municipalities in Greene County and it is our sincere desire to move forward and continue in a spirit of cooperation to make sure all Greene County citizens are safe and well-served.”

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