

Detention Facility Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Why does Carbon County need a Detention Facility?

There are people that should be in jail that aren't because contracted facilities are often full or we don't have the manpower to transport them there. Carbon County is required to provide for the detention of inmates per Montana law. Yellowstone County is regularly 100+ inmates over capacity and almost never has room for Carbon County's arrestees. Currently, Deputies transport most of our inmates to Gallatin County (a 5-hour round trip costing \$514), and when they are full, deputies transport to the Broadwater County facility in Townsend (a 9-hour round trip costing \$852) or the Rosebud County facility in Forsyth (a 5-hour round trip costing \$530). These facilities are also often full leaving our last resort the Custer County facility in Miles City. The distance to facilities and overcrowding of those facilities results in criminals walking our streets because there is no place to house them. In the case that someone is transported, it results in the almost complete elimination of patrolling deputies as officers spend the majority of their shift transporting.

Why a 100-Bed Facility?

Operating costs for a 50 vs. 100 bed facility are similar; rented beds can help pay Carbon County's operating costs. There are economies of scale when operating a larger facility. Cutting housing square footage does reduce the construction cost of the facility significantly. The largest operational cost is staffing; the number of staff needed for 24/7 coverage in a 50-bed facility is not significantly lower than a 100-bed facility. With more bed space, Carbon County would be able to rent out beds to other counties and law enforcement agencies to offset operating costs and eliminate the need to pass an operating levy for the facility. This approach is easier than creating a multi-county facility which would rely on three bond measures passing for the facility to be constructed. These contracts could generate revenues, especially after the construction bond is paid off. The larger facility also gives Carbon County the ability to increase the number of beds utilized by not contracting beds, rather than expanding the facility.

Why locate the Facility in Joliet?

Affordability, centrally located in the county, and access to workforce were major factors in selecting this site. After going through a Request for Proposals process, the Stevens' property was selected as the best location when considering land cost, site preparation costs including water and sewer facilities, the availability of possible workforce, and public acceptance. There were 17 site proposals received by the Commissioners. All sites offered in Red Lodge were too small, cost prohibitive, or subject to subdivision covenants which made those sites impractical. Joliet's central location in the county and proximity to partners in Stillwater and Sweetgrass counties also make it the favored location. Carbon County has received confirmation from the Town of Joliet and their engineers that the Town has the water and sewer capacity for the facility; some lines may need to be upsized to accommodate the facility's higher water needs. There is no provision in law for the location of the facility to be put to a formal vote. The Commissioners were elected to make decisions on behalf of the citizens of Carbon County and selected the site on its merits from the sites that were proposed. The site of the facility had to be determined prior to the election being ordered.

More information is available on Carbon County's website:

<https://co.carbon.mt.us/construction-issues/detention-facility-planning/>

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How much is it going to cost me?

The project is expected to cost between \$22,000,000 and \$26,000,000. Based on a high construction estimate of \$26,000,000, bond service would require 37.44 Mills which translates to approximately \$43.80 per year per \$100,000 in taxable value. Commissioners will be working with architects to narrow down actual project cost and expect this number to go down significantly. To calculate the impact to a specific property, apply the following formula:

$\text{Taxable Value} \times 37.44 \text{ Mills} / 1,000 = \text{Estimated Annual Tax Impact of the Bonds.}$

Carbon County is exploring other funding sources to reduce the cost to the taxpayers. Specifically, we are looking at USDA Rural Development Community Facilities Grants. Locating the facility in Joliet makes the project eligible to apply for this grant program which could cover up to 35% of the construction costs.

Why do people have to be in jail?

There has to be an end game for people that will not comply with alternatives to detention. There are currently 211 outstanding warrants in Carbon County Courts totaling \$481,868 and the Montana Highway Patrol has more than 2,000 outstanding warrants in the Billings District. Another \$271,612 has been turned over to collections.

Individuals who are incarcerated and placed in detention facilities are put there for a variety of reasons. Primarily it has to do with severity of offenses. For example, homicide suspects, assault suspects, sexual assault suspects, are placed in detention due to the seriousness of the offense they are suspected of. Another consideration is the propensity of offenders to commit crimes while charges are currently pending. For example, an offender with a high recidivism offense, such as sexual assault of a minor, needs to be in jail until their charges are resolved and they are sentenced for the crime committed. For the safety of the community, these individuals need to be monitored and segregated from the public due to the nature of their offense, and the likelihood they will commit the same offense again. There is always the ability to bond out of jail. However, when, or if this is done, conditions of release are set by the judge, and monitoring regulations can be set with probation or parole.

Jailing individuals initially on offenses committed can also provide discretion to the Judge presiding over the case. For example, a suspended driving offender, who has served 24-hrs in jail, can have that time applied at sentencing by the appropriate court and streamline the court process.

What is the timeline for this process?

5/4/2020.....Bond amount finalized and ballot language submitted
8/4/2020.....Bond election via mail. ballots mailed 15-20 days before
October 2020.....Close on Bonds
April 2021.....Architects complete design work
June 2021.....County completes bidding process
August 2021.....Necessary permits acquired by County; construction begins (12-16 months)
Summer 2022.....Hiring/training Detention Facility staff
Winter 2023.....Carbon County Detention Facility projected to house first inmates

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