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## County jail population a concern

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MARINETTE — It was evident at Monday's meeting of the county board's Law Enforcement Committee that anxiety over the growing number of inmates in the Marinette County Jail is escalating.

Jail Administrator Bob Majewski reported to the committee that the population of the 165-bed facility in the Law Enforcement Center on University Drive averaged about 145 inmates in February.

"We had a very busy month in February," he said. "I believe this February, if not the highest, was one of the highest months for population that we've had in this facility."

Sheriff Jerry Sauve told the county board Feb. 28 that the county was near a "crisis stage" with its rising jail population and difficulty maintaining a full staff.

"As Bob said we continue to trend high and we're doing what we can to make it workable," he said.

Sauve told the county board last month that he has met with the county's two circuit judges to



Sauve

find solutions to ease the overcrowding.

Supervisor Ken Keller, committee chairman, said it was premature to talk about adding another pod to the facility, which it has been estimated would cost about \$9 million.

"We would need a thorough review of the judicial system that we have," he said. "We have 22 Department of Corrections holds and 53 on presentence (status) in jail right now.

"Those numbers are high, we've got to do something with those numbers."

The urgency of the problem was evident by the appearance of Supervisor Mark Anderson, the chairman of the county board, at Tuesday's meeting.

He recalled when the National Institute of Corrections came to Marinette and did two or three studies before the current Law Enforcement Center was built more than 13 years ago.

"I thought we needed this facility because of the inadequacies of the way the other facility (on Ella Court Street) was built," Anderson

said, "The one thing that came out of those studies is you can't build yourself out of this problem.

"This facility has served its purpose well, we need to find the mousetrap to keep it from getting to that point (full). These guys do an excellent job running it. We're way ahead of talking about another pod."

Anderson said the whole criminal justice system needs a review.

"I've talked with Ken and John (Lefebvre, interim county administrator) that before we start talking about all of this stuff (like adding

See **JAIL, A3**

## JAIL:

a pod) we need someone to come in here and do a 100-percent review of the process.”

“I hope once we have a full-time administrator that we can have some in-depth discussions. We’ve got to start talking about other solutions other than a building.”

Anderson said his biggest concerns is that fear will drive policies on how to confront the problem.

“There’s been other counties that had substantial numbers and they’ve gone through processes to reduce that by a third,” Keller said.

Anderson recalls touring the Shawano County facility after it was built 14 or 15 years ago.

“It was built before this facility was constructed,” he said. “They have not filled it up and they’re still taking prisoners from other counties.

“They found a mousetrap to keep their jail from being full. I don’t know the answers, I’m not in criminal justice.”

He told Majewski that he’s doing a very good job running the jail.

“I have a good staff,” Majewski said. “If it wasn’t for them this problem would be much worse.”

Earlier in his report to the committee, Majewski reported that his staff is still short two people after the hiring of Joe Moser as inmate education program coordinator.

Sauve told the county board last month that the county is having difficulty retaining corrections officers because other counties have higher pay scales for the positions.

“We’re going to have an ongoing recruitment,” he said. “We have to do something with HR (human resources) on that. We have ideas and we have two openings.”

Anderson said an action taken last week by the county board’s Personnel

## FROM A1

Committee should help make it easier for the county to retain corrections officers.

The Personnel Committee voted last Tuesday to recommend the county board approve a one-time pay adjustment to 34 employees hired below the Wipfli wage study midpoint pay scale during the past three years,

Several county employees could get additional pay increases when the Carlson-Dettmann study is completed.

Anderson said if the county board approves the recommendation for pay increases when it meets March 28 it would hopefully resolve some of the concerns of corrections officers that were hired three or four years ago.

“I have to give John a lot of credit for coming up with the idea,” Anderson said.

“We talked about that at our management meeting about what a nice step that was,” Sauve said. “We appreciate it very much.”