

Washburn County Board to Discuss Potential Land Purchase

Washburn County has been evaluating long-term options to address jail capacity challenges and Department of Corrections (DOC) requirements. Over the past several years, county officials have explored multiple locations in and around the Shell Lake area for a new jail, though no final site has been selected.

To ensure the County is prepared for the future, the County Board will discuss the potential purchase of land in Spooner at an upcoming meeting. Officials emphasize that this discussion does **not** mean a decision has been made to build a jail. The purchase would provide an option for county master planning and any use of the land would be carefully evaluated before decisions are made. This property acquisition would not have an impact on the mill rate for taxpayers. If plans change, the property could be sold at a later date. The agenda item is intended to keep the community informed and to start an open dialogue. Community members are encouraged to attend the February Board meeting to learn more and provide input.

For more information, a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs) about this discussion is provided below.

Public FAQ

Why is Washburn County discussing a possible land purchase?

Washburn County has been evaluating long-term options to address jail capacity challenges and Department of corrections (DOC) requirements. Discussing a potential land purchase is part of planning for the future and ensuring options are available if needed.

Does this mean a new jail will be built?

No. Discussing or purchasing land does not mean a decision has been made to build a jail. No final location has been selected and no construction plans have been approved. Any future action would require additional study, public discussion and formal approval by the County Board.

Why is Spooner being discussed?

Spooner is one of several areas evaluated over time due to available land, infrastructure, access for law enforcement, its central location in the County and long-term planning considerations.

Why is this being discussed now?

County officials want to ensure Washburn County is prepared for future needs. Discussing land options now allows the County to be proactive while keeping decisions open and transparent.

How many acres is this parcel?

21.9 acres

Would this raise taxes?

No. Washburn County has a Development Fund that the land costs would be paid from.

What happens if the land is purchased but never used for a jail?

The property could be sold at a later date or used for other County needs. Purchasing this land does not commit the County to a specific use.

Why can't the current jail just be expanded or renovated?

County officials have explored multiple options over several years, including renovation and expansion. Capacity limits, facility constraints and DOC requirements are part of the ongoing evaluation. The current facility has been evaluated for expansion but has a one-time expansion option and would not allow any future expansion on that site.

Have alternatives to a new jail been considered?

Yes. The County continues to review a range of options, including continuing to 'house out,' partnerships and other approaches to managing inmate populations. Currently, these options are at a savings to the County but that may not always be the case.

Will the public have a chance to weigh in?

Yes. Any significant future decisions would involve public meetings, additional reviews and formal County Board approval. Community input is an important part of the process.

What is being discussed at the upcoming meeting?

The County Board will discuss whether to pursue a potential land purchase as an option for future planning. No final decisions on construction or land use will be made at this meeting.

How can I learn more or share any concern?

Community members are encouraged to attend the County Board meeting in February, review meeting materials and contact their County Board Supervisor with questions or feedback.

Key Takeaway

This discussion is about planning and transparency, not a final decision. Washburn County is working to responsibly address long-term needs while keeping the public informed and involved.