

Dane County Exec, Sheriff, County Board Supervisors: It's time to complete jail consolidation project

Posted on Monday, Dec 19, 2022

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Dane County Executive Joe Parisi and Sheriff Calvin Barrett were joined by County Board Supervisors today in calling on the County Board to fund the long debated county jail consolidation project. Under new resolutions introduced within the past few days, the County Board now has two new options to move the work forward. Final designs on the jail consolidation project will be complete in the next several weeks but if dollars for the project aren't approved by spring, bidding on construction can't proceed, delaying the work even longer.

"The County Board needs to either pay for the project it asked be designed or allow the public a say in how to proceed on the jail," County Executive Joe Parisi said. "While not as high as a few months ago, national inflation remains and that means the longer this issue remains unresolved, costs will be higher and inmates are either stuck in 70 year old jail space here or spending time in jails in other counties away from their homes and families."

One of the three new resolutions now before the Board on the jail would move \$13.5 million in prior authorized borrowing not utilized on other capital projects to this work. This solution doesn't increase the overall amount of budgeted county borrowing. Two other resolutions set the stage for a countywide binding April referendum in which the public would decide whether the county should borrow an additional \$13.5 million, the estimated funds needed to pay for the compromise jail design previously approved by the County Board.

"Consistent with the findings of the 2016 Dane County Jail Study, the project must move forward, any delay in moving out of the CCB Jail will continue to increase the

risk and exposure of staff and residents to health and life safety issues,” said Sheriff Barrett.

For the binding referendum to be included on the April spring ballot, the County Board would have to approve the measure at its scheduled January 19 meeting. The other resolution to reallocate prior borrowing would need to be adopted before the project is put out to bid. As of now, bids will be ready for release in the spring. That would put the county in a position to award a contract this fall.

“We have debated details of the jail project for almost a decade. In the meantime, the safety and health of both detainees and sheriff deputies continue to be put at risk,” said Dane County Board Supervisor Maureen McCarville. “I fully support the reallocation of budgeted funds to get this project done before inflation makes those funds inadequate. If my colleagues won’t support using the existing funds, I fully support asking our voters to support additional borrowing. Ignoring the ongoing safety issues is not an option.”

The resolution calling for a referendum on the jail this spring was referred to the County Board’s Executive Committee and Personnel and Finance Committee for review and action. It would need to be adopted at the Board’s January 19, 2022 meeting to be included on the April ballot.

The resolution to reallocate borrowing was referred to the Board’s Public Protection and Judiciary and Personnel and Finance committees and requires a two-thirds vote of the full County Board to be adopted.

“The Sheriff and I stood here together six months ago and asked the County Board to allow the public a say on this important project but we were told this decision was the Board’s responsibility,” Parisi said. “So we’re here again to ask that the Board make a decision and choose one of the two reasonable paths forward on this compromise.”