

## Commissioners, County Council joint meeting today about jail construction project

Written by Administrator

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Following the Scott County Commissioners' meeting that begins at 9 a.m. today (Wednesday), those officials will have a joint session with the Scott County Council to discuss the possibility of building a new jail. Plans are for Commissioners to meet in an closed executive session at 8:30 a.m., followed by their regular bi-monthly business meeting at 9 a.m. Those will be followed at 11 a.m. by the joint session with the County Council.

Both the 9 a.m. business meeting and joint session with the Council are open to the public. All three meetings will be held in the Commissioners' Meeting Room on the first floor of the Courthouse in downtown Scottsburg. For over a year, Scott County has had to house some of its prisoners outside the county, most going to Clark County Jail in Jeffersonville. When Commissioners last met on March 19, all three men decided to request the joint session to seriously discuss the overcrowded facility and how to resolve it. In mid-March, 25 more prisoners had been sent to Clark County as Sheriff Dan McClain tried to stay close to a maximum prison population of 88. Noted Commissioner Bob Tobias, the county could soon be spending upwards to \$2,000 per day to house prisoners outside the county or \$750,000 per year. "That will eat up all COIT (County Option Income Tax) jail money," he said. COIT jail funds can be spent on housing as well as operating the jail, but, when the increase in COIT was approved by the County Council some years ago, COIT jail dollars were to be saved to offset the cost of building a new jail. Jail construction was deemed at that time a permanent answer to overcrowding problems. "We've had presentation after presentation (on building a new jail and other options). I feel this is money being wasted and paid (to out-of-county entities). We need to start construction. The Council has said it needs to know what the Commissioners want to do. Let's tell them," advised Commissioner Mark Hays. He added, "This horse has been run around the block 14 times now."

Commissioner Larry Blevins agreed. "It's come to the point now that we either do or don't. We either end up paying \$1 million to house prisoners or \$1 million to build a jail," he said.

Tobias told his fellow officials, "I suggest we each revisit the plans (already presented to the Commissioners) and be prepared to make a decision two weeks from now."m Blevins said Commissioners also need to have a joint session with the County Council on Emergency Medical Services/Emergency Management issues.