

The renovation project of the Washington County Detention Center was scheduled to be completed in late fall, but work is going faster than expected. An early open date forced Sheriff Claude Combs to attend the July 7 council meeting to discuss additional staffing.

Last year Combs said he informed the council that there would initially be a need for three additional jailer positions, but in the 2014 budget only two positions were budgeted for.

“It’s projected that we will need four new positions, but I feel like we can get by with three,” Combs said, explaining the new system requires two jailers on duty at all times. “Now, we might get it opened and start filling it and see that we need four and if that’s the case I will have to come back for that other position. For now, however, I feel like three is a good place to start.”

Combs had been advertising the positions and hopes to have them filled in time to train new staff members under the current system.

“That way they will have a strong understanding of how we do things now and then all of us as a staff can get training with the new system,” he said.

The council approved a motion to go from two to three deputies and between now and August will have to meet to discuss the additional appropriation in the budget that will be required to pay for the position.

The council had budgeted \$10,000 for each of the two positions.

The council also gave Combs permission to fill the three positions.

Combs also informed the county council that he replaced a dispatcher.

Elected county officials will take a tour of the completed jail when the new electronic operating systems are in place and then Combs said he plans to invite the county in as well to see what their money is going for.

“This county did the right thing in building this new facility,” he said. “You didn’t just build something that would be filled in six months. This is a place that will meet our needs for some time to come and we want the public to come in and get a look at it.”

No date on the council’s walk through or the public open house has been set.

A dispatcher took a job in the clerk’s office and Combs had to fill the other position.

In other business, the council unanimously improved an upgrade in the mailing system.

The current system is still in use, but is virtually obsolete.

The new system will save the county between \$45 and \$90 on a monthly basis.

The council also approved the Washington County Police Retirement plan and an amendment to that plan, which puts that fund in line with IRS requirements.

Sabrina Burdine, the new executive director with the Washington County Economic Growth Partnership gave the council an update.

She said the company has begun the search and has started advertising the position of business manager.

Burdine said they have also had a lot of contact with local small businesses that have expressed desires to grow and add on to their current operations.

Delaney Park Manager John Burlington gave a quarterly update to the council about the park. He said he and his staff were slammed over the July 4th holiday.

The council thanked Burlington for the hard work and the continued improvement.

"I was out there recently and you guys are to be commended for how the park looks," said Councilman Gerlad Fleming.

Burlington informed the council the park is continuing to replace electric meters in small increments.

The council appointed Jon Spaulding to the Critical Access of Salem Board.

They also agreed to fill a position in the highway Department for District 2.

The council also discussed purchasing a new grater. The current grater is 27 years old. Purchasing the equipment brand new would be around \$300,000, but the county is looking at a used model in the neighborhood of \$89,000.

The council's next meeting will be Budget hearings, which are scheduled for July 21, 22 and 23 starting at 8:30 a.m. each day.