

Community News

Juvenile detention

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Martin said he has seen the formulas the state uses to determine dollar amounts “was not feasible,” which is the reason the conversation on other options for housing juveniles arose earlier this year. He said he is concerned county taxpayers “have to pay \$134,000”

until 2027.
“Yeah, because we didn’t get that contract terminated before July 1,” Milburn-Kee said.
“Which would have pushed it onto the next year,” Beerbower said.
“I would love to have reviewed that contract sooner,” Milburn-Kee said.
Martin said although the matter is a “done deal,” a complaint should be filed by the county counselor that

the county cannot meet that cost “due to county financial hardships.”
“That letter should have been filed. It should have been sent,” he said. “If they came back with something else, to me, I would have said take me to court and say OK, due to the financial hardships of Bourbon County, we cannot afford \$134,000.”
Martin said the three commissioners and previ-

ous commissioners have said “we are hurting right now.”
“And now we’re seeing \$134,000,” he said. “There are contracts broken every day through the courts at the local, state and national levels. Why not challenge it?”
“I’m not saying we’re not going to,” Beerbower said.
Beerbower said commissioners have asked Johnson to determine where the county stands within its current contract.
“My next step was to reach out to the Department of Corrections,” Beerbower said.
“There’s statutes and there’s contracts,” Martin said. “Don’t get the two mixed together. Let’s address the contract part of it.”
Later, Martin asked if commissioners plan to challenge the matter with the contract with the Girard center.
“That’s kind of the consensus,” Beerbower said.
Milburn-Kee asked Martin if he would contact Johnson County about correcting their contract to state “no more than” based on figures that were discussed. Martin said he would reach out.
“We don’t want to pay them more per day than what we think we’re going to pay them,” she said.
County Clerk Susan Walker said she would try to find the state statute concerning cancelling contracts due to “financial hardship.” Beerbower asked Walker to forward that statute to commissioners and Johnson.

There was brief discussion on potentially investing more money in CDs.
“We could invest more,” Walker said. “We have more. We could sit on those tax dollars for awhile ... as we’re receiving them, we could be investing those tax dollars.”
Tran brought up the age of the contract with the center in Girard, which was signed Nov. 1, 1992. He said that contract is an “insurance policy” for the county.
“We’re paying \$134,000 to an NGO that promises to house juveniles, and that’s great, but we don’t use \$134,000 worth of services according to the sheriff,” he said. “If we’re going to pay insurance policies ... and we’re banking other things, if we’re going to bank, let’s bank. Let’s earmark certain dollar amounts and throw them into a CD. The point is, if we’re going to bank money, let’s bank money the right way. And in the future, instead of paying something like this, let’s take a look at the cost in totality and do a risk assessment. That’s what this is about, a risk assessment.”
Milburn-Kee said commissioners have been informed on the number of juveniles housed each year and a risk assessment has been done.
“They said Johnson County is the way to go,” she said.
“The topic has been breached by previous commissions and why we continue down the path we’ve

been on, paying this kind of money,” Tran said. “Even before they raised it in 2025, it was still way more than we ever took juveniles to there.”
Beerbower said commissioners need to speak with the budget advisory committee as the matter moves forward.
In June, Mike Walden, director for the SEK Regional Juvenile Detention Center and other administrators at the facility appeared before the commission. Walden talked about the history and operations of the facility, the center’s interlocal agreement with Bourbon County signed in 1992 and laws concerning placement of juveniles.
The commission took no action following a discussion on the juvenile detention budget.
Also that month, commissioners talked with Martin, Undersheriff Kevin Davidson and Angie Eads, director of the Sixth Judicial District Community Corrections regarding a potential to save money through a change in the provider for juvenile detention services.
Martin said he would like commissioners to consider changing from an annual contract with the Southeast Kansas Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Girard to a “pay as you go” agreement with facilities in either Johnson County or Douglas County. Davidson said Johnson and Douglas counties offer similar per-day rates and services.

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