

JAIL OPERATING CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JOCAC) STATEMENT ON COLUMBIA COUNTY JAIL OPERATIONS – April 2025

To support a safe community, the citizens of Columbia County approved a levy in 2014 to provide funds to operate the Columbia County Jail. This levy was renewed in 2017 and 2020. One provision of this levy was to maintain the Jail Operations Citizens Advisory Committee, currently composed of five community members, appointed by the Columbia County Board of Commissioners, representing a diverse cross-section of the County.

The Committee's charge is to monitor the proper appropriation of jail levy funds. The JOCAC receives quarterly briefings on the budget, jail operations, personnel hires, and facility maintenance to verify that all funds raised by the levy are spent on jail operations. The Jail Operations Citizens Advisory Committee has verified that all funds raised by the levy have either been spent on jail operations or are in an account reserved for jail operations.

It has been more expensive to maintain the current level of operations due to increased expenses, including food, clothing, health care, corrections deputies, and facility maintenance of a 23-year-old infrastructure. In addition, the Columbia County Jail received less revenue from the U.S. Marshal Service bed rentals during COVID. It relied on reserves to bridge the funding gap, and reserves are now depleted. The Sheriff and Jail Commander are fiscally conservative, looking for creative solutions to provide care for inmates. Having reviewed the budget, the Jail Operating Advisory Committee acknowledges that with current funding, it will not be able to operate at its current level.