

## Law Enforcement Center Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q. When did the County first start talking about jail issues?  
A. In 2002, Douglas County realized their need for a larger facility and invited Pope County to join in their discussion for a potential partnership between the two counties.
2. Q. When did Pope County first start talking about just an LEC (Law Enforcement Center)?  
A. The County started talking about an LEC with holding cell capability when the cost of a full jail became prohibitive and when opportunities with other counties were pulled “off the table” by the other counties.
3. Q. Did Pope County explore partnering with other Counties to meet its jail needs?  
A. Yes. Pope County has held discussions with Douglas County on a Pope/Douglas partnership. Pope County has held discussions with Stevens, Traverse, Grant and Big Stone counties on a multi-county regional partnership. Pope County also held discussions with Stevens County on a two county regional partnership. Discussions with other counties have ended as other counties have determined their desire to plan for their own needs.
4. Q. Did Pope County back out of discussions with Stevens County for a joint jail?  
A. No. Stevens County notified Pope County of its desire to proceed with their own jail/LEC needs which ended our discussions.
5. Q. Why can't Pope County use the old jail cells at City Hall?  
A. Pope County cannot use the jail cells at City Hall because they no longer meet the Department of Corrections standards for jail cells and have since been decertified.
6. Q. Why do we need a Law Enforcement Center anyway?  
A. One of the first observations the Jail Task Force made was that the current facility was inadequate and the surroundings in which county law enforcement staff was carrying out their duties needed to change. The current Law Enforcement Center has no ability to hold prisoners securely while, at the same time, protecting staff and the public. Also, it does not allow for effective and lawful separation of males, females and juveniles. The current facility design is such that it does not allow for efficient productivity of staff. We have currently over 30 people working out of a space designed for about eight people. There is very little, if any, privacy, confidentiality or space to interview victims, witnesses or suspects. There is inadequate space for dispatch, evidence, storage and viable workspace. The heating and cooling has been an ongoing challenge for many years and is very difficult and expensive to remedy. This facility is a liability waiting to happen.
7. Q. What is Pope County spending to transport and house its prisoners?  
A. Over the past five years, Pope County has spent an average of \$260,000 per year to transport and house its prisoners in other counties.

8. Q. Where is Pope County currently housing its prisoners?
  - A. Pope County houses its prisoners in the following counties: Douglas, Todd, Otter Tail, Meeker and Sherburne counties. The housing per diems range from \$55 - \$90 per day and in all likelihood will be increasing in the future.
  
9. Q. Is it true that Pope County planned the LEC behind closed doors?
  - A. False. The County Board has held LEC discussions at regular Board meetings that are open to the public. These meetings have been reported in countless newspaper articles in the Pope County Tribune and Starbuck Times. The County Board established a 25 member Task Force of Pope County residents to make a recommendation to the Board about jail/LEC needs. When the Task Force met, the media was in attendance. A chronology of the Task Force meetings has been posted on the County website.
  
10. Q. How were the 25 members of the Task Force chosen?
  - A. The County sent letters sent to all the cities, law enforcement agencies, courts and public defenders. Sheriff Larson also invited participation of the Townships at their annual Township meeting and extended invitation to citizens who had expressed interest in having input in the jail discussions.
  
11. Q. Could the LEC be built at the Courthouse?
  - A. The County Board felt that costs associated with building onto the Courthouse are prohibitive and doing so would not allow for the County's future law enforcement needs. To add on to the Courthouse to build a viable LEC, the County would need to purchase property from adjacent homeowners, and would incur higher costs of construction due to the historical nature of the Courthouse.
  
12. Q. Why is the City choosing not to be a partner with the County on the LEC?
  - A. The County always remains open to discussing partnerships with the City. The County held discussions with the City until such time the City was uncertain about the financial obligations presented to them.
  
13. Q. Why did the County choose to build the LEC by John Deere?
  - A. After extensive consideration of the Courthouse site and other County owned property, the County felt the John Deere site allowed for more flexibility, future expansion of county facilities and is adjacent to a state radio tower site that is critical to Pope County's public safety radio system. This site also allows for easier and safer access to highways by law enforcement personnel.
  
14. Q. Why does the County need a 10,000 square foot LEC facility?
  - A. While 10,000 square feet sounds like a lot, it really isn't excessive by today's standards. When you take into consideration the garage and storage space, mechanical room, future expansion capability and Department of Corrections (DOC) required space for a holding facility, it meets our needs today and allows us to expand in the future. It also gives Law Enforcement enough work space to function efficiently. One of the biggest issues that this facility addresses is the safety of staff, prisoners and the community.

15. Q. Is it true that prisoners can only be held for 24 hours in the new LEC?
- A. No. The facility, as designed, is considered to be a municipal holding facility that allows prisoners to be held for 48 hours, which excludes the day of arrest, weekends and holidays. Over a holiday weekend, a person arrested on Friday, could be held up to six days under this type of licensing.
16. Q. Is it true that a petition was brought to the County Board to reconsider the LEC?
- A. Yes. A petition was received by the County Board that asked the County Board to reverse their decision to build a Law Enforcement Center.
17. Q. Why is the County just building an LEC that does not include a jail?
- A. While this facility does not include a full jail, it does include the ability for the County to hold prisoners locally up to 48 hours excluding day of arrest, weekends and holidays. This was a conscious decision by the County Board understanding that a full jail would be costly to build and that other counties are in the process of designing facilities which Pope County may be able to partner with, as bed space is available. This allows us the flexibility to add a jail in the future, if one is needed.
18. Q. Would local contractors have an opportunity to work on the LEC project?
- A. Yes. Local contractors will have the opportunity to bid on the LEC project.
19. Q. Will the LEC create more jobs?
- A. Yes. There will be a need within this facility for additional staff to accommodate the needs of the holding facility. The additional positions could be filled with unlicensed civilians.
20. Q. Why hasn't the County started building the LEC?
- A. With the election of three new County Commissioners, the Board felt it was important to allow the new Commissioners the opportunity to become fully educated on the development of this project before moving forward.
21. Q. What is a bond?
- A. A bond is an IOU, promising to pay back to the bondholder, the principal on a given date with interest at a stated rate over a period of time. Bonds for the LEC are in \$5,000 denominations and may be held by a number of bondholders.
22. Q. What is the total amount of the bond?
- A. The County HRA issued \$3,400,000 in bonds to finance the Law Enforcement Center. No money was borrowed to pay the costs of issuing the bonds, as the County and the HRA chose to pay all costs of issuance from funds on hand.
23. Q. Can the money from the bond be returned?
- A. No. Money from the bond cannot be returned to bondholders at this time. The bonds cannot be paid back before their stated maturity date of 2/1/2019. At that time, the bonds which mature in 2020 and later can be paid off early at the option of the County and/or the HRA if funds are available or if the bond is refinanced.

24. Q. Can the County Board choose not to build the LEC?
- A. From a financial perspective, if the LEC is not constructed, the money in the construction fund would be invested at rates not greater than the borrowing rate (an IRS rule) and used to make bond payments.
25. Q. Can the money from the bond be used for something else?
- A. No. The bonds were issued by authority of Minnesota Statutes, Section 641.24, which indicates that the bonds can be issued to “construct a jail or other law enforcement facilities for the county sheriff, deputy sheriffs, and other employees of the sheriff and other law enforcement agencies”.
26. Q. Why is the HRA (Housing & Redevelopment Authority) issuing the bond for the LEC?
- A. Minnesota Statutes, Section 641.24, requires that, to finance under this statute, the County may, by resolution of the county board, enter into a lease agreement with a statutory or home rule charter city within the county, or a county Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), for financing and construction of the facilities outlined in Question 5.
27. Q. Is it true my taxes will double because of the Law Enforcement Center (LEC)?
- A. No. Payments on the LEC bond were structured to coordinate with the County’s existing bond payments to keep taxes as low as possible. Interest due in the first year of the LEC bond are already included in your taxes payable in 2009. Example: For a residential homestead of \$100,000, the tax increase, as a result of the LEC bond, is \$11.81. Because the bond payments are coordinated with existing bonds, taxes for the combination of the new and existing bonds will decline after this year, unless additional bonds are issued in the future.
28. Q. Is it true the County had to do a referendum to build the LEC?
- A. No. The statute described above does not require a referendum.
29. Q. Is it true the County will have to pay taxes on the LEC?
- A. No. The statute reads, “no tax shall be imposed upon or in lieu of a tax upon the property”.