



Aroostook County
Sheriff's Office

Peter A. Johnson, Sheriff
Erica L. Pelletier, Chief Deputy

Patrol

Transportation

Corrections

Civil Process

To: Aroostook County Board of Visitors & Legislators

From: Peter A. Johnson, Sheriff

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter A. Johnson", written over a horizontal line.

Date: January 22, 2025

Reference: Response to Recommendations from the Board of Visitors

Meetings completed for 2024:

March 29, 2024,	Meeting and full jail tour with interviews at the Sheriff's Office
May 13, 2024,	Meeting at the Sheriff's Office
July 12, 2024,	Meeting at the Sheriff's Office
November 1, 2024	Training-Policy-State and Federal law regarding BOV-Meeting at Sheriff's Office
December 9, 2024	Jail Tour and interviews with residents and meeting at the Sheriff's Office

On March 29, 2024, the Aroostook County Jail Board of Visitors met to review the recommendation listed below.

Attending the meeting were Heidi Rackliffe- ACAP Director of Programs; Erik Lamoreau- MicMac Tribal Health Center, Janice Jackson-Cary Medical Center, Sarah Wright- AMHC Program Director Crisis Services, Mike Gahagan- Caribou Police Chief, Martin Puckett-Executive Director of Central Aroostook Association, Craig Clossey-Jail Administrator for Aroostook County Jail, and Peter Johnson-Sheriff of Aroostook County.

During this meeting, the BOV toured the facility, spoke with the male and female resident population, talked to any staff they wanted to, and was allowed full access to all parts of the facility. The BOV reported the jail as clean and well-maintained. Positive remarks on the artwork that added color to the jail were noted. Challenges to the building's age were discussed regarding the lack of space for programming.

It was also discussed that there is still a vacancy on the Board of Visitors.

During this meeting, the board reviewed the recommendations they submitted on March 29, 2024. The Board of Visitors made the following recommendations to Sheriff Peter Johnson from the on-site visit of the Aroostook County Jail. Discussions followed, including recommendations, what the County Jail has done to address a few concerns, and what is still being worked through.

1. Increase access to programming, specifically ACAP assistance with workforce development skills.
2. Connect with employers to try to line up employment once released.

FAITHFULLY SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS SINCE 1839

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3. Look into automatic lights.
4. Funding for 2 "in-house" Mental Health/Substance Use Disorder counselors.
5. Agreement or MOU with an in-patient MH facility.
6. Women are to be treated equally with trustee status. When was the last female trustee?
7. Stop using prescribed medication as a disciplinary tool. Medical staff uses medication as a compliance tool.
8. More case management.
9. More learning opportunities.
10. Look into multipurpose rooms for visiting and education.
11. Put educational material on the iPad, possibly in groups via video.

Below is the work of the BOV and the Sheriff's Office Corrections staff in addressing the recommendations.

- (1) Increased access to programming, specifically ACAP assistance with workforce development skills, and
- (2) Connecting with employers to try and line up employment once released has been addressed with the addition of programming between the tour date and today's date.
- (3) The recommendation on is to look into automatic lights; they would not be feasible because they create a safety issue and possible blind spots.
- (4) The recommendation for funding for an in-house mental health provider/specialist: In January 2024, we started a full-time MH-SA specialist at the jail.
- (5) The board had recommended the possibility of an MOU with an in-patient treatment facility. Access to state facilities is limited to in-custody patients at a triage screening process for all involved. The limitations of the state facilities are a direct product of staffing issues.
- (6) The board also recommended female individuals have more opportunities for trustee status. The Jail Administrator is looking at changing the trustee policy and opening trustee status up to all individuals, not just individuals on post-conviction status. During 2024, we could still not find opportunities for female pre-sentenced residents. The struggle of finding people who want to work and positions in which we can properly monitor them in and around male inmates proved to be a challenge we could not resolve. We attempted to move interested females to other jails for program purposes. Still, other jails or our residents were not interested.
- (7) It was discovered that the nursing staff, not the corrections staff, would use the medication for compliance. Corrections staff have no authority to add or delete medications. Prescribed medications are the purview of the attending medical team and are dispensed by the medical team. The issue was discussed with the director of the medical team.
- (8)(9) There should be more case management and learning opportunities.

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We now have an additional Intensive Case Manager (ICM) from DHHS to assist our current ICM. We also have a full-time MH-SU case manager on site to assist further. ACAP has started programming at the jail to help with jobs and further education for persons released back to their respective communities. Individuals also have the opportunity to continue their education through Houlton Adult Education. Reducing the average daily population by 25% from 2023 has allowed more time for the ICM and ICM to focus on individuals.

(10)(11) Look into multipurpose rooms for visiting and education, and put educational material on the iPad, possibly in groups via video. Additional technology is available to individuals at the Aroostook County Jail using the tablets provided by Securus. The tables offer free access to educational and video programming. The tablet also allows for visitation with providers, friends, and family beyond what we offer in person. Our population does not take advantage of many free educational programs on the Securus tablet. Additionally, we are investigating the use of local facilities for programs that can't fit at the jail, such as rec spaces, rented spaces, and local adult education classrooms. We have contacted local members to research what is out there and how we can make this work.

Aroostook is fortunate to have a group of volunteers interested in our resident's success. Our incarcerated live on the margins of our society, and the BOV looks to improve their chances once they are released back home.

I want to thank the members of the Board of Visitors for their work and commitment to our community.

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