

# Commission Administrative Session

## June 19, 2023

### Public Comments

Today I'd like to announce the formation of a committee whose sole purpose it will be to help find solutions to our overcrowded inmate detention center.

This is just the next step in a process that began early last year when inmate populations exploded after being drastically reduced for safety reasons during covid.

In a detention facility with 180 beds and a safe maximum population of 153 inmates, the population surged to 240 inmates, at which point the Sheriff's Department began transferring inmates to nearby counties bringing the inmate population back down to 210; still significantly above safe levels.

The County Commission began regular discussions with the Sheriff's department about ways to reduce the population, but no easy solutions emerged. And while transferring inmates back and forth from Platte City to nearby counties is an adequate short-term solution, it's not sustainable, it's dangerous, it's expensive, and there's no guarantee those jails will have space for us when we need it.

On March 24th, the Platte County Grand Jury delivered a letter to Presiding Judge Thomas Fincham in response to a jail tour that they took in February. Among other related comments, the Grand Jury stated in the letter that "the Jail is over capacity" and that "these capacity issues do not allow individuals to be incarcerated that need to be incarcerated".

And just last month, the Commission received an Inmate Population Trends and Projections report from Jail Consultant Bill Garnos that provided further evidence that our detention center is overcrowded. The report concluded by summarizing that the Platte County Detention Center is "absolutely maxed out".

Here are some important facts about this situation.

1. The Sheriff's Department has zero control over inmate populations. They're tasked with housing the inmates entrusted to them, and they've done a tremendous job under very difficult circumstances.
2. The Commission also has no control over inmate populations. Think of us as a landlord with a tenant that needs more space. And it's our responsibility to make sure that our tenant, the Sheriff's Department, has the facilities they need to keep the public safe.
3. Population and crime trends are not working in our favor. Platte County is the fastest growing county in Missouri, but that growth is far outpaced by the increase in felonies. From 2015 to 2022, felony prosecutions increased 153%, for an average annual increase of 22% per year. Our current facilities simply cannot handle these annual increases any longer.

4. And finally, this is not a problem that's going to go away. In fact, it will just continue to get worse if nothing is done.

Local government's absolute number one responsibility is to keep the public safe. This Commission understands that, and we are committed to that responsibility.

And so today, we announce the formation of the Platte County Committee for Public Safety. This is an important committee whose work will have a significant impact on public safety in Platte County for many years to come. We look forward to moving this process forward and we hope to have widespread community support for this effort.

Those interested in serving on this committee will find a link to an online application on the homepage of the County's website at [www.co.platte.mo.us](http://www.co.platte.mo.us) and also on the County's Facebook page at Facebook.com/PlatteCountyMissouri. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions on this and all topics. You can find our phone numbers and email addresses on the County website, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you,

Scott Fricker  
Platte County Presiding Commissioner