Adult Detention Center faces funding shortfall

Written by By Babette Herrmann Sun Editor
Friday, 15 May 2015 08:38



The Bureau of Indian Affairs decision to send prisoners to Yuma, AZ instead of McKinley County Adult Detention Center has left the city and McKinley County in a projected financial bind moving into fiscal year 2016.

McKinley County Finance Director Sara Keeler presented the news to the City Council May 12. She said the total deficit is about $1.3 million.

And the city's share is 30 percent of the deficit, which equates to more than $3 million.

"This is a disaster," said Mayor Jackie McKinney.

County Manager Bill Lee said the jail houses an average of 180 to 190 inmates per day and has a capacity to hold 326.

There's no extra compensation for housing inmates from the area, but contracts can bring in extra money to help offset the $80 it cost to care for inmates.

Councilors discussed the possibility of introducing diversion programs to cutting back on jail staff.

Councilor Allan Landavazo questioned the future of the facility.

“At what point do we drop to before we say it’s not affordable anymore?”

Even Councilor Fran Palochak expressed doubt about the jail’s sustainability.

“Maybe this is a business we cannot sustain,” she said.

There were no clear answers, except to explore other avenues. Lee had said the motivating factor for BIA moving their inmates to Yuma is the rehabilitation programs they offer to inmates.

“That request to visit and learn about the facility was denied,” Lee said.

But, he explained that the Yuma jail offers anger management, 12-step meetings, counseling and job training so the inmates can go straight into a job upon release from jail.

Another revenue enhancing concept was to bring in and house high-risk offenders.

Lee said that the Jail Authority Board doesn’t want to accept dangerous inmates to the area.

Meanwhile, the county will explore other options to draw in revenue.