

Jail deficiency solutions eyed

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Deficiencies at the White County Jail dominated Monday's meetings of the White County Board of Commissioners and the White County Council.

Sheriff Reg Shireman — armed with several cost estimates — attended the commissioner's meeting at 8 a.m. and the county council's meeting at 9:30 a.m.

Shireman was asked at a meeting two weeks ago to obtain informal quotations on the costs of correcting five deficiencies. The deficiencies were noted by a Department of Correction jail inspector on Jan. 31.

Although overcrowding was cited in the semi-annual inspection report as the most chronic problem, the commissioners have ruled out building a

new jail or expanding the existing facility any time soon.

Instead, the commissioners hope to buy several more years of service for the jail by correcting its less costly deficiencies.

Monday's discussions centered on three major areas of concern — an indoor/outdoor exercise facility, two or three more jailers and kitchen modifications.

Insufficient audio-video monitoring equipment also is a major deficiency listed in the report. However, the sheriff said quotations for closed-circuit television and camera units will not be available until April.

Quotations on an interconnected 504-square-foot indoor and 1,050-square-foot outdoor exercise area range from \$54,483 to \$110,000, Shireman said.

Salaries and full benefits for three more jailers with a base pay of \$16,874 were estimated at \$91,531 or \$30,510 each.

Kitchen modifications, including a garbage disposal unit, totaled an estimated \$7,900.

Shireman said the indoor exercise room would require an addition to the jail and would not increase the number of cells for inmates.

However, he was not certain whether the exercise room addition would require the entire jail to be updated to comply with current Louisiana fire and building code specifications.

The commissioners and the council asked Shireman to return in April with a priority list, including target dates for completion of recommended projects and staffing.

Shireman advised the council

Monday his first priority will be jail security, which includes at least two more jailers and more interior monitoring equipment.

He told the council of his reservations about investing tax dollars in a costly exercise area project until ways are found to reduce overcrowded conditions.

Under consideration is a county-funded Community Corrections Program, which must be coordinated with and approved by the county's two judges and the prosecutor, he said.

The community corrections plan differs from the current work release program in that certain inmates would live and work outside the jail under constant police supervision.

Inmates sentenced to the work release program return daily to the jail after work, thereby increasing the adminis-

trative entry and exit workload for the jailers, Shireman said.

County funding for the Community Corrections Program would initially be required, Shireman observed, because no state funds are currently available for new programs.

Costs would include leasing a dormitory, since these prisoners are not allowed to return home. Salaries for additional police supervisors also would have to be appropriated.

However, the program would provide some additional revenue because these prisoners must pay the county special fees associated with their court sentences, Shireman said.

The sheriff also informed the council that a "volunteer representative" of the American Civil