

Aroostook County Continues to Explore Options for New Jail [PONI – Planning of New Institutions October 2024]

Caribou – Aroostook County Commissioners, staff, and members of the Aroostook County Jail Study Commission participated in an intensive three day training this week sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC). The NIC’s Jail Center offers two programs, Planning of New Institutions (PONI) and How to Open a New Institution (HONI), to help plan and open new jails. This week, Aroostook County participated in the PONI training. This training comes a few months after NIC consultants Karen Albert and Roger Lichtman concluded a Jail and Justice System Assessment for Aroostook County.



The PONI program has three phases: consultants conduct a 3-day training session that helps develop skills for the long-range planning process; and a seminar is held to train teams composed of the sheriff, jail administrator, and others from beginning to end. Topics covered in the seminar include communicating with architects, project management, the facility transition process, and life cycle costing. Upon the conclusion of the three day training, Aroostook is now in a position to begin a comprehensive Needs Assessment to help determine the size of the jail, programs that should be considered, location options and staffing needs.

The Aroostook County Jail was originally constructed in the 1850s and has had some modifications and additions to it in the 1950s and most recently in the 1980s. The original building design was for 65 inmates and today, the total number housed in the ACJ is around 100 and has been as high as 120 in recent years.

“Everyone agrees that the Aroostook Jail has lived its useful life, and we need to look at a new jail. How big of a jail and what types of programs and services the jail will provide are some of the topics that we hope to get answered with a needs assessment,” said Peter Johnson, Aroostook County Sheriff.

County Administration has reached out to NIC for further guidance on developing an RFP to use to receive proposals from qualified individuals and firms to conduct the next phase and complete a comprehensive Needs Assessment.

