



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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From: Michael Terry
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Re: Housing of Inmates from other Jurisdictions Saves Hernando County
Taxpayers Millions

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Housing inmates from other jurisdictions at the Hernando County Detention Center continues to pay dividends to the county's taxpayers.

Since 2014, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office has maintained a revenue-generating agreement with the U.S. Marshals Service to house federal detainees. Utilizing that agreement, the Sheriff's Office also began holding Bureau of Prison inmates in 2015. In 2019, the Sheriff's Office entered into a similar agreement with the Pasco Sheriff's Office to hold some of its inmates.

To date, the agreements have helped generate over \$9 million in revenue that directly benefits Hernando County taxpayers.

"It is important to remember this \$9 million is money that comes into Hernando County's economy from other areas," said Sheriff Al Nienhuis. "This money also allows us to offset the cost to house Hernando County inmates, which results in lower taxes for our local citizens."

The use of this revenue by the Sheriff's Office is restricted through an interlocal agreement with the Board of County Commissioners. Per the agreement, the Sheriff is only permitted to utilize these funds for personnel and operating costs associated with the inmate revenue program and capital repair/enhancement projects at the detention center.

There is no requirement to spend the funds within a given fiscal year or time period. Funds leftover at the end of a fiscal year remain available for use on future projects/operations at the detention center.

Those revenues, which are accounted for in the Inmate Revenue Fund, have been utilized in a variety of ways over the years to help offset the county's financial responsibility for funding much-needed repairs, maintenance, and facility enhancements at the detention center.

Currently, the funds generated not only pay for the cost of operating the federal inmate program, which includes funding for 23 program-related positions, but this year alone, has already saved taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars by funding much-needed repairs at the detention center.

Some of those repairs include the replacement of 21 roof air conditioning units at a cost of \$405,000 and plans to seal and repaint the exterior of the facility at a cost of \$253,000.

“In 2014, I challenged the men and women of the Hernando County Detention Center to embrace this revenue generating program,” Sheriff Nienhuis said. “They took the challenge to heart, and the program has allowed us to address critical and expensive maintenance issues at the jail, all at zero cost to local taxpayers.”

“I do get to work with some very dedicated and professional people,” the Sheriff added.

With additional projects scheduled for completion by year’s end, the total projects cost covered by the Inmate Revenue Fund since its implementation will exceed \$1.8 million.

Some projects completed since 2019 include replacing the roof over the Charlie Housing Unit -- \$170,000, replacing two internal air conditioners -- \$23,000, replacing obsolete/malfunctioning security locks -- \$116,000, updating the surveillance camera and DVR system -- \$98,000, replacing pipe chase plumbing -- \$118,000, and replacing 20 high-security cell doors -- \$65,000.

If not for the Inmate Revenue Fund, the Board of County Commissioners, which owns the detention center, would be responsible for funding the repairs, using local taxpayers’ dollars.

Some detention capital projects planned for 2021 include a sally port extension, a new generator to operate air conditioning units during a power outage, and a new roof over one of the housing units. The total cost of these projects, along with several smaller projects, is estimated at more than \$2.8 million, which will be paid for out of the Inmate Revenue Fund. Additional capital projects planned for 2022 include building a Mental Health Unit, construction of a warehouse, and resurfacing the parking lot. The total estimated costs of these projects is more than \$3 million.

All of these much-needed repairs, maintenance and facility enhancements are being completed at no direct cost to Hernando County taxpayers, as they are paid for out of the Inmate Revenue Fund.

While housing inmates from other jurisdictions is voluntary, the Sheriff’s Office remains committed to continuing a program that is beneficial to all parties involved, most importantly Hernando County taxpayers.

“This program is a true win for Hernando County taxpayers. I am, as Sheriff, committed to keeping the program viable and making sure that the money generated from this program goes toward correcting the disrepair that was allowed to occur before the Sheriff took on the responsibility of running the detention center,” Sheriff Nienhuis said.