ASHLAND COUNTY COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

Probate and Juvenile Division

Karen DeSanto Kellogg, Judge

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November 18, 2026

Commissioner Michael Welch
Commissioner J.E. Justice
Commissioner Denny Bittle

Ashland County Commissioners
110 Cottage Street #8
Ashland, Ohio 44805

Re: Jail Roof Project and the Need for Comprehensive County Facilities Planning

Dear Board of Commissioners:

My concerns are not about opposing the Sheriff, the review committee, or the need to maintain the jail. They are about the Board of Commissioners' decision to plan and advance a multimillion-dollar capital project without meaningfully involving the elected officials whose operations and facilities will be affected, and then seek the approval required by law at the last minute without presenting a comprehensive plan for the County's overall facility needs.

I have three fundamental concerns:

1. **No demonstrated emergency requiring immediate action on the jail roof has been presented.** I have not received a professional engineering opinion establishing that waiting will cause additional meaningful structural deterioration or operational problems.
2. **There is no comprehensive capital facilities plan.** The County continues to commit substantial public funds to individual projects without a coordinated plan addressing the jail, courthouse, administration building, and other long-term facility needs.
3. **Opportunities for meaningful participation have not been provided.** The jail roof project was advanced without adequately including those of us whose responsibilities and facilities are directly affected, followed by a request for approval at the eleventh hour.

I want to be clear that these are concerns about the Board's planning and decision-making process, not criticisms of the Sheriff or the individuals serving on the review committee. The

responsibility for countywide capital planning, financial priorities, and coordination rests with the Board of Commissioners.

Regarding the roof, I am not convinced there is an immediate urgency requiring this project to move forward before the County has fully evaluated its options. To date, I have not received a professional assessment establishing that delaying the project will result in additional structural or operational problems. Before committing several million dollars, I believe we are entitled to that information.

My greater concern is the absence of a comprehensive capital facilities improvement and management plan that includes the courthouse.

The County has now constructed an over $6 million administration building to relocate four offices. Yet there remains no concrete plan or financing strategy for accomplishing the Board's broader goal of moving nonjudicial functions out of the courthouse and addressing the courthouse's long-term needs. A concrete plan and financial strategy are part of fiscal responsibility. We cannot continue to call something a priority without developing and committing to a plan to accomplish it.

And let me emphasize: The Courthouse is a County responsibility not a personal preference. It is about responsible management of County facilities, preserving a historic public building, providing appropriate space for the offices and functions that must remain there, and making sure the County's long-term operational needs are considered before millions more are committed elsewhere. The courthouse is a County asset and its future should be part of every serious capital facilities discussion.

The Board has demonstrated that it can undertake a major construction project. What remains missing is a comprehensive strategy for what comes next. The Board cannot continue to run a County by chasing problems with money as they arise. The Board must be forecasting, prioritizing, evaluating available resources, establishing realistic timelines, and committing to plans that accomplish our goals. Having money identified to pay for a particular project does not necessarily mean that project is the right priority at the right time.

I also find the manner in which the recent meeting and vote were conducted troubling. The Board proceeded knowing in advance that I could not be present because I had a court docket scheduled to begin. Calling for a vote under those circumstances deprived me of the opportunity to hear the discussion, ask questions in real time, and have meaningful input before a decision was made. I believe that was unfortunate and raises legitimate questions about the fairness and appropriateness of the process, including whether the action taken was procedurally valid.

Major capital decisions affecting the entire County should not be developed behind closed doors between selected participants and then presented to other elected officials for last-minute approval. Collaboration must occur at the beginning of the planning process, not after the direction has already been established.

I am not asking the Board to abandon the jail roof project. I am asking the Board to exercise its responsibility for the County as a whole.

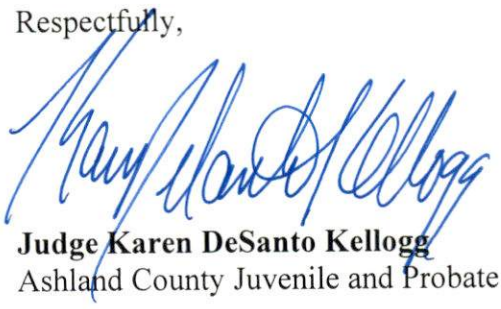
We cannot continue to build, repair, and spend one project at a time without knowing how those decisions fit into the County's long-term financial and operational future.

Before moving forward with another major capital commitment, I am asking the Board to develop and present a comprehensive, financially grounded capital facilities improvement and

management plan that includes the jail, courthouse, administration building, and the County's other facility needs.

Our responsibility is not simply to find money for the next project. It is to make sound decisions today that protect the County's ability to meet its obligations tomorrow.

Respectfully,



Judge Karen DeSanto Kellogg
Ashland County Juvenile and Probate Court