

Latah County Latah County's juvenile detention moving to Hayden from Lewiston

County contracting with Kootenai, not Nez Perce, for juvenile detention services

Terri Harber/Moscow-Pullman Daily

The Latah County Commissioners on Monday approved a one-year contract with Kootenai County for juvenile detention services.

Cost was the primary factor, said Commission Chairman Dave McGraw.

"We made a sound fiscal decision," McGraw said of the change. "It'll leave us with money we can spend on other programs."

Latah's new contract with Kootenai in its Dalton Gardens facility north of Coeur d'Alene begins Oct. 1. The county's one-year contract with Nez Perce County and its Lewiston facility ends Sept. 30.

County officials aren't sure what the total cost will be for this service from Kootenai during the coming year, but Latah did a cost comparison using this year's housing needs and determined it would be \$29,000 for using the Kootenai facility versus \$109,000 in Nez Perce, McGraw said.

The price difference is a result of the flat fee being charged by Nez Perce. Kootenai will instead charge by the number of youth being sent there, said Commissioner Richard Walser. The trend has been to incarcerate fewer youths, not more, he also said.

Distance is the main drawback, McGraw noted. The detention center in Nez Perce County is about 35 miles away, and Dalton Gardens is about 85 miles from Moscow, where the sheriff's department and county jail are located in Latah County.

There will be a significant increase in travel costs, but overall there would still be a substantial cost savings, McGraw said.

"We toured the facility," McGraw said. "It's clean, neat, organized. We're very comfortable with the move."

McGraw and Walser said Nez Perce has provided a good facility for housing Latah youth but that price for the service has been a continuing concern.

Nez Perce takes in youths from Idaho, Lewis and Clearwater counties. In 2012, it was struggling with a nearly \$500,000 budget shortfall and considering sending its youths to nearby detention facilities in Washington state.

Kootenai also provides detention space to youths from Benewah, Boundary and Shoshone counties.

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