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MDOC considers next step in response to Issaquena County's demand about housing state inmates

JACKSON –The Mississippi Department of Corrections is considering its next step regarding the housing of state inmates at the Issaquena County Regional Correctional Facility after receiving a demand today from the Issaquena County Board of Supervisors.

The MDOC learned from media reports that the board voted Monday to close the regional facility effective Dec. 17. On Wednesday, Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall told supervisors and Sheriff Richard Jones in a letter that the decision had been unilaterally made, and the MDOC did not receive any written notice before, nor had it received any after, as required under the current Inmate Housing Agreement.

“If the county moves forward to shut down the regional operation as it relates to the housing of state inmates, the county will have defaulted on said Inmate Housing Agreement,” Commissioner Hall said in the letter. “As such, the MDOC will take the appropriate action.”

In two letters dated Wednesday, the county is demanding a lump sum payment of \$312,270, a higher per diem of \$29.74 per inmate and 350 inmates, an increase over the current maximum 334.

Commissioner Hall told the county that the demand will not be met because it is outside the terms of the existing contract signed by the board president, Sheriff Jones, and the MDOC. Also, she said, there is no requirement under state law that the MDOC meet the demand.

The current contract, dated July 1, 2016, sets the per diem at \$23.92 per inmate, with a 2 percent increase each year. The current per diem is \$25.61 per inmate.

The MDOC is fulfilling its obligation under the current contract and is current on all payments to Issaquena County.

Commissioner Hall said should the county proceed as planned, it will be in breach of the contract. “And, the MDOC will exercise any available remedies under the law to address the breach,” she told the county.

“It is a threat to public safety for you to cease operation of the facility and supervision of the state inmates without preparations being made for security and housing of those inmates,” she said.

The regional facility has 321 state inmates today.