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Jefferson County gets ICE detainees

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MT. VERNON — After years of negotiations with the U.S. Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the first 25 ICE detainees are being housed at the Jefferson County Justice Center.

“We got the word late (two weeks ago) that it had come to fruition, that everything was signed off on and approved,” Jefferson County Sheriff Roger Mulch said. “The plan is to pick up detainees on Monday and Tuesday.”

The first 25 detainees were picked up in Broadview and transported to Jefferson County today, arriving at about 5 p.m. County corrections officers will be making the trip again today to get another 25 detainees to bring the total up to 50 ICE detainees at the facility.

Mulch has previously said although the county won't begin holding 100 detainees, it would work up to that number. Mulch said in October 2008 his office would ramp up operations using one van and purchase the second transport vehicle the next quarter.

The intergovernmental agreement approved by the county that has recently been signed by ICE is to pay Jefferson County \$60.30 per day per inmate with a \$25.97 per hour hourly stationary guard service and \$26 per hour for transportation plus the mileage rate for transport, which is currently set at 55 cnts per mile.

“Every penny of the transport officer salary will be reimbursed as well as any overtime,” Mulch said. “The federal government appropriates money one quarter at a time. I now have a service order in hand ... for the amount of \$317,000. ... That's money that has already been appropriated.”

County officials have been waiting on word from ICE, as cash flow problems for the county have been exacerbated by not having the ICE detainees — as the fees for holding them was budgeted this year as income. The county approved its portion of the one-year agreement with ICE in October, but has been waiting on the intergovernmental agreement to be approved by the federal government.