

16 New Employees OK'd At County Jail

No byline

Hamilton County Jail personnel can expect help soon in guarding and serving inmates at the downtown facility. On Wednesday, the Hamilton County Commission approved money to hire 16 new employees -- two classification counselors, 13 corrections personnel and one second-shift nurse. The new employees will be hired in November, Sheriff John Cupp said. According to Sheriff Cupp, this is just the start of a four-part plan to bring the jail up to par for the 21st century. Within a year, he hopes to have 150 employees working there, up from the present figure of 100, he said. "That would be sufficient for the next five years," he said, adding that he hopes to bring in more workers after the others are sufficiently trained. "It's not a pipe dream or a wish list, it's bare bones," he added. Sheriff Cupp said the next three steps would include hiring 13 employees at one time and 10 employees at two other times for a total of 33 more personnel in addition to the 16 that will be brought on in November. Being able to show the County Commission documentation of manpower shortages helped in getting funding for the new employees. His previous request for 41 additional jail employees was turned down last summer, Sheriff Cupp said. "From December 1994 to August 1995, of 822 shifts worked, 255, or 32 percent of them, were understaffed," he said, adding that such conditions create unsafe situations for jail employees. "I would find as many as 97 inmates with one corrections officer" who had less than three months experience on the job, the sheriff said, adding that in another case, he saw one officer watching over 84 inmates. Sheriff's officials based their request on three studies by the Tennessee Corrections Institute and by Capt. Mike Griffin and Deputy Chief Ron Gilbert of the Sheriff's Department. Jail C2