

APPROVED 2-15-08

**Public Safety Committee
January 18, 2008
2 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: T. Joseph, M. Robertson, M. Hattery, G. Stevenson, J. Dennis
Staff: S. Whicher, P. Younger, M. Lynch, County Administration; K. Leinthall, Department of Probation and Community Justice; P. Meskill, Sheriff; L. Shurtleff, Department of Emergency Response; J. Hughes, Assigned Counsel; S. Cook, County Attorney's Office; D. Bradac, Workforce Development; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office
Guests: J. Barber, S. Garin, P. Tyler, E. Vallely, Ithaca Police Department

Call to Order

Mr. Joseph called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Presentation by Ithaca Police Department on SWAT Mobile Command Vehicle

Sheriff Meskill said the Ithaca Police Department has put together a presentation and request for funding for the SWAT Mobile Command Vehicle. He said they have been working on this for the last six months and the Sheriff's Office would like the County to assist the IPD in the purchase of a new bus. He said police administrators have met and agreed to use Homeland Security money to this purpose as they have worked together for several years and the current arrangement has worked out very well. The proposal will provide the City with some additional personnel resources and gives the County the ability to have a full-fledged SWAT team to respond to emergency situations. The estimated cost of the bus is \$470,000. At the present time they have \$70,000 in Homeland Security funds and \$100,000 from a private donor. They will also be seeking funds from the City of Ithaca and Cornell University. In addition, they will be asking the County to contribute one-time funding in the amount of \$100,000 towards the purchase of this bus.

It was noted that they have never had to fire a lethal round at any of its operations, and that the SWAT Team's goal is to provide safe outcomes in all situations.

At this time Mr. Garin narrated a Powerpoint presentation concerning the history and development of this proposal. Highlights from that presentation are as follows:

History

The Ithaca Police Department has had its Mobile Command Vehicle for ten years. In 1998, they received a donation of a 1987 Ford van. The van had poor structure, no generator, no air conditioning and was small. It presented difficulties as essential mission equipment had to be selected and then loaded for each mission. This was time consuming, offered room for error, inability to adapt to dynamic situations, inconvenient, and it was not conducive to incident command, nor could it do transport operations.

Development

In 2002, a retired 1983 Orion TCAT bus was converted to a mobile command vehicle – cost was \$1,000. Over an eight-month period members of the IPD rebuilt the bus and it still operates as the mobile command vehicle today. This bus was rebuilt in a manner that would provide members of the team with all of their equipment and personnel on-board.

Functions

The bus houses a library of documents, receives information from a variety of sources: cable, internet telephone, radio communications with multiple agencies, serves as a command center, houses separate compartments to allow for multiple areas of planning, provides shelter, and acts as a barrier.

Made possible by:

Officers agreed to work outside of the scope of their union contract to perform labor needed for the bus to be rebuilt, materials and equipment needed were donated from outside sources, and they solicited financing from the community with many individuals and businesses providing support to the project. Some contributors included Cornell University, All-Mode Communications, Fraternal Order of the Eagles, Wildware, Weitzmans, Holley's Welco, and Target. The total cost of this project to the City of Ithaca was \$2,000. To purchase this type of vehicle the cost would have been upwards of \$.25 million.

How we gave back to the Community:

They have conducted training exercises at area schools; participated in GIAC festival; grand opening of Home Depot, Ithaca Festival; Pud's Run, Lakeside Nursing Home Safety Fair, National Night Out, Dick's Sporting Goods Safety Fair, Nascar Day on the Commons, Juneteenth celebration. The bus is used five times per month for public relations events.

Condition of the Present Vehicle

The present vehicle was originally purchased off Ebay and has exceeded its second life expectancy; the engine has already been replaced. Maintenance is getting very difficult as the vehicle has several failing systems and components that are failing; it also has a great deal of rust and body decay.

Environmental Impact

Carbon emissions from the bus are extreme. Currently, the bus averages three miles per gallon of gasoline and generates an extreme amount of noise. On a recent trip to Auburn, New York, one case of oil (24 qts.) were used.

New Bus

The new bus will address all of the current issues related to the old bus. Mr. Garin said they did specifications for a new and environmentally sound bus that would provide service to both police and fire agencies. The new bus could also be converted to bio-diesel.

Response History

The emergency response vehicle has been called to critical incidents over 130 times over the last nine years with 30 percent of the calls have been outside the City of Ithaca. There has been 100 percent success on its missions and they never have experienced a serious injury or fatality

Use of Vehicle

In 1993, the bus was critical in saving the lives of five teens when the vehicle they were in careened over a 150' embankment on Sandbank Road. Members of the response team repelled down to the victims and provided essential first responder, life-saving care.

The response team has responded to numerous instances where individuals have barricaded themselves. They responded to the Walmart bomb incident in 2005 where the bus was crucial and used to house a number of department heads, City officials, and other representatives of other agencies as the mobile command center was deployed.

In 2005, the bus was deployed to the Prospect Street to initiate a new approach to dealing with the last day of college at Ithaca College. The bus was also scheduled to be used if needed in the search for Ralph "Bucky" Phillips; and has been used for dignitary protection.

The Ithaca Fire Department, Police Department and the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office have all worked together to define the replacement for this bus in a manner that would meet the needs of both departments and would conform with the National Fire Protection Association. The bus is organized in a way that would house tools and equipment and would also provide necessary resources. Design concepts include upgrades to the communications system that would allow it to act as a replacement 911 facility and other dispatching services. Other systems included in the bus would be a long-range camera and the addition of a weather station. The uses of this bus would be endless. It would enable them to perform large scale operations, attend to large structure fires, gorge rescues, crime scene processing, respond to natural disasters, tactical operations, and continue providing support to the community.

The life expectancy for the proposed bus would be 15 to 20 years. Mr. Garin stated this is the time to make this purchase as prices for these buses have gone up by 20 percent over the last two years. This presentation was recently given to Assemblywoman Lifton and a letter has been produced and signed by many parties that will be sent to other State representatives.

Key Points

The City of Ithaca has had a mobile command center for the last nine years. Donations and commitments from department members have allowed this concept, which has been developed through trial and experience, to grow. Municipalities would benefit both economically and in principle by upgrading this vehicle to one that is consistent with the mission. This bus would provide a potential for opening the door to mutual aid agreements with neighboring jurisdictions.

The command vehicle being proposed is already outfitted with equipment. It is an actual designed mobile command vehicle that would be designed based on the actual request. It would take 8 to 12 months to build and deliverintenance.

Questions from the Committee

Mr. Joseph asked why this is coming to the County outside of the budget process.

Mr. Meskill said there have been many things needed to be worked out. In this case, the project has been gathering momentum over the last six to eight months looking for outside funding sources.

Mr. Stevenson said one of the compelling reasons for a vehicle like this is because of the extraordinary situations that are occurring in educational institutions across the country.

The presenters were asked what other entities have been approached for funding. Mr. Tyler said discussions are taking place with Cornell; however, they have not approached schools with funding requests up to this point. Sheriff Meskill said he thinks they would not receive financial support from school districts and does not recommend going in that direction for a variety of reasons. Mr. Barber said Cornell has been presented with a funding request of \$50,000 and they are aware of how many times Cornell receives services.

Ms. Robertson asked if there is any problem with the equipment in the current bus and was told the proposal does not include the replacement of any equipment that is presently functional. She also asked if funding requests had been made to Ithaca College or the Town of Ithaca. Mr. Garin responded that the Ithaca Fire Department would be donating some equipment to this as this bus would alleviate a need by them to purchase equipment. He said since the Ithaca Fire Department receives funding from the Town of Ithaca the Town would be indirectly making a contribution.

When asked what other localities had a command vehicle similar to the one being proposed, the Committee was informed that Syracuse, Rochester, and Broome County have a similar model bus; Onondaga County has a trailer, Buffalo does not have one.

Mr. Whicher asked if the purchase of this bus would mean the Sheriff's Office would not need the bus it presently has. Sheriff Meskill said the bus used by his Department could be used in tandem with the proposed bus, his does have a different use. Mr. Tyler said the Sheriff's bus suffers from many of the same problems as the current City bus.

Mr. Joseph said he does not question that the bus would be useful, but he would be more comfortable talking about priorities during the formal budget request time.

Sheriff Meskill said he will prepare a formal funding request and present to the Committee at the next meeting.

Ms. Robertson requested the Committee receive a one-page list of where incidents have taken place over the last nine years.

Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Meskill updated the Committee on the status of training efforts underway with deputies. He also reported on the use of tasers and said they have been used a couple of times and there has been no trouble or injuries with their use.

AED's (Automatic External Defibrillator)

Mr. Stevenson said has raised the issue of access to AED's in the past and asked the Sheriff where they are now located in the Courthouse. Sheriff Meskill said he was not aware of whether the State placed AEDs in the Courthouse when it took over responsibility for court security.

Ms. Hughes reported on activity in the Assigned Counsel Program and said related expenses are up. There were 18 major felonies in 18 days and all have high bails. She said this is why the Jail population has increased and subsequently, the boardouts. There are also a lot of high profile cases. Sheriff Meskill said there are 18 or 19 boarded out right now and one hospitalized at Cayuga Medical Center and one is hospitalized in Chenango County.

Ms. Robertson asked when members would receive updated figures on boardouts; Sheriff Meskill said that information will be distributed prior to the next meeting.

**RESOLUTION NO. – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND AND INCREASE
HOURS FOR TRANSITION WORKFORCE SPECIALIST POSITION – -
DEPARTMENT OF PROBATION AND COMMUNITY JUSTICE**

MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Robertson. Ms. Leinthall distributed a memo to the Committee containing the following information:

“Since 2003, the Probation Department, with WFNY and Lansing School District has funded a full-time Workforce Transition Specialist, Probation picking up 50% of the funding and Lansing WFNY splitting the remaining 50%. This position works half-time in the Jail and half-time at the Day Reporting Program assessing client needs, assisting in goal setting, and engaging in numerous activities designed to teach and to prepare clients for life, work and independence in a law-abiding community. Instruction includes a myriad of areas: financial basics, job applications, computer training, interviewing skills, housing, support services, skill development, etc.

“50% of the position is included in the target budget under the Probation Department’s Day Reporting Program. However, Lansing School District reports that they have no funding for the position, which means that 5% of the position, or ten hours per week, is no longer covered. Also, there is the possibility that the remaining 25% funding will be in jeopardy come June as WFNY relies on soft funding for the position; funding that may be reduced or eliminated.

“Probation views this position as crucial to the work of the Day Reporting Program, especially in light of our recent efforts to develop the Re-entry Program for inmates and parolees, in addition to the efforts directed to Probation clients and Day Reporting participants.

“Following preparation of the resolution presently before the Committee, Deputy County Administrator Paula Younger informed me that she and Committee Chair Tim Joseph had concluded that this request should be paid out of the Probation Department’s rollover (uncertified, amount unknown), rather than from the Contingency Fund. That is an option the Committee might pursue and an option that Probation could support if the additional 25% of this position is made part of the Department’s target budget.

“NOTE: Given that the remaining 25% of the position funded by WFNY may be in jeopardy in June, the Committee should be prepared to see another request come forward at that time”.

Ms. Younger asked if Ms. Leinthall knew of anything in the “pipeline” that could bridge this gap; Ms. Leinthall said she did not. She said the Jail is in the Lansing School District and by law they are required to provide education to the youth until the age of 21 whether or not they are residents of Lansing.

Mr. Joseph said he thinks this position is important and has value and he wants to keep it functioning. He said this would have to come as a request before the Committee in June. He said such a request could be to use Rollover money or a target funding request for funds, but one that will resolve the entire issue.

At this time the resolution was withdrawn, with the understanding that the Committee will likely be seeing a funding request in June. MOTION WITHDRAWN.

WHEREAS, the Lansing Central School District, the Department of Probation and Community Justice and the Workforce Development Center have shared one position of Transition Workforce Specialist at the Tompkins County Jail and the Day Reporting Program, and

Whereas, funding that was previously available through Workforce New York and the Lansing Central School District has been discontinued and efforts to obtain other funding have failed, and

Whereas, the position of Transition Workforce Specialist is critical to the ongoing work at the Day Reporting Center, especially with the extra effort in the Re-Entry programming, now therefore be it

Resolved, on recommendation of the Public Safety and Budget and Capital Committees, That 25% of the Transition Workforce Specialist position previously funded by the Workforce New York and the Lansing Central School District for ten hours of work be moved to the Department of Probation and Community Justice effective immediately,

Resolved, That the Director of Finance is hereby authorized and directed to make the following budget appropriation for 2008:

FROM: A1 990.54400	ATI Contingent Fund	\$16,260
TO: A3141.51000783	Transition Workforce Specialist	11,233
A3141.58800	Fringes	4,269
A3141.54414	Local Mileage	758

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

Ms. Leinthall said three women in the Department of Probation and Community Justice will be taking a maternity leave this year and the Department will have to hire some part-time employees to fill the gap. She said she wanted to give the Committee advance notice of this and that they Department may end the year being a “budget buster”.

Ms. Leinthall also reported there were some issues raised previously about building security. She reported last week employees attending a workplace violence training where they observed a video in which it was strongly recommended that bullet proof glass and some other things be provided in County buildings. Ms. Leinthall said since the County has endorsed this video it may start seeing a lot of requests for bullet-proof glass. The Committee suggested she speak with Ms. Fitzpatrick, Personnel Commissioner, about this video.

Committee Goals

Mr. Joseph said not everything the Committee does has to be a goal or in pursuit of a goal. There are many things that are routine business. Goals are things that a Committee want to accomplish and often that means the Committee is trying to get something ready for Legislative approval. The Communications System was a Committee goal at one point; once approved it stopped being this Committee’s goal and became a departmental goal. We monitor that but it is not necessary to make it one of our goals. He said the goals should be those things where we will take initiative and we want to see something happen differently than it has been happening. He also said goals do not have to be annual, nor do goals have to be established at the beginning of the year; and that when the Committee decides upon a goal it should assign a timeline. Mr. Joseph said he will not be pushing for this Committee to have a list of items as goals, however, the Committee can discuss suggestions as they are brought forward.

Some of the items suggested and/or discussed as goals were as follows:

CJDCS (Criminal Justice Data Communications Sharing)

Ms. Younger she can continue moving the CJDCS project forward with the involved parties but there would be a need from time-to-time for the Committee to review the status and provide support for the work moving forward. Sheriff Meskill said he is a part of that management group that includes representatives of local law enforcement agencies and ITS staff and they are meeting and starting to make progress. Once a user agreement is approved all local law enforcement agencies with the exception of the State Police, will be signing on to share information. Sheriff Meskill said it would be better if that can be

kept as an operational issue within the management Committee and not a Committee goal. He suggested a goal of the Committee be to continue to support ITS and their staff to move this type of issue forward. He said Mr. Potter, Director of ITS, and his staff have been great to work with.

Ms. Robertson said this and the Re-entry program are examples of where there is no clear line. She sees these both as items where the Committee has a monitoring role.

Transitional Housing for Ex-offenders – recognition that this does not exist; possible goal that within x number of months that information will be gathered. Ms. Robertson said transitional housing is a goal of the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives-to-Incarceration Board, as it attention to juvenile offenders/youth in crisis. She suggested the Committee learn more about transitional housing and the state of our youth.

Automatic External Defibrillators – Explore whether it would be feasible to place on in each County building.

Mr. Joseph said anyone who would like an item listed as a possible Committee goal on the next agenda to let him know.

Mr. Shurtleff said he is looking for guidance relative to performing to meet the Committee's or the public's expectations. He said he would like to know what the Committee is looking to achieve with the information it requests for the Departments. Mr. Meskill said he has not observed enough collaboration between staff, the Committee, and County Administration. He said there is a need for everyone to work together on their respective responsibilities.

Approval of Minutes of December 21, 2007

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Hattery, and unanimously adopted by voice vote to approve the minutes of December 21, 2007 as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

Appointments

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Stevenson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote to recommend the appointment Tim Joseph, Public Safety Committee Chair, to the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives-to-Incarceration Board for a term expiring December 31, 2009

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Hattery, and unanimously adopted by voice vote to recommend the appointment Greg Stevenson, Public Safety Committee member, to the Emergency Communications Review and Oversight Committee for a term expiring December 31, 2008.

It was MOVED by Mr. Stevenson, seconded by Mr. Hattery, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to recommend the appointment of James Dennis, Public Safety Committee member, to the STOP-DWI Advisory Board for a term expiring December 31, 2009.

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Hattery, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to recommend the appointment of Tim Joseph, Public Safety Committee Chair, to the Local Emergency Planning Committee with no set term.

The Committee established the following liaisons:

Family Court Advisory Council - Martha Robertson
Fire, Disaster, and EMS Advisory Board - Michael Hattery

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Offender Aid and Restoration – Martha Robertson
Local Emergency Planning Committee – Greg Stevenson

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office