

MINUTES

Approved

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 17, 2008 2:00 P.M. SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM

Present: G. Stevenson, Chair; W. Burbank (arrived at 2:52 p.m.); J. Dennis; M. Hattery, M. Robertson
Staff: S. Cook, County Attorney's Office; P. Younger, M. Lynch, County Administration; R. Stolp, Assigned Counsel; J. Hughes, Assigned Counsel; L. Shurtleff, Emergency Response Director; M. Pottorff, Legislature Office; P. Meskill, Sheriff
Guests: K. Damm, D. Bruns, S. Peacock, Advisory Board on Indigent Representation; D. Dietrich, S. Hess, OAR

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m.

Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

Report from the Chair

Mr. Stevenson announced the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Communications System will be October 24th at 11 a.m. at Ithaca College. He is unable to attend, however, Mr. Dennis, Vice Chair, will represent the Public Safety Committee.

Mr. Stevenson said it had been his intention to appoint a task force to study the Assigned Counsel/Public Defender feasibility at this meeting. He reported he, Chairman Koplinka-Loehr, and Mr. Dennis have been meeting with representatives of the Advisory Board on Indigent Representation to address this concept and work towards appointing a group. Discussions are continuing to see if there can be on a mutually agreed-upon result. He asked members to think about what they would like to see such a group look at and to communicate those ideas to him. He circulated copies of a second draft of a charge to the task force.

Ms. Hughes reported a special ABIR meeting has been scheduled on October 22nd at noon to discuss this. Mr. Stevenson said he is unable to attend but would like to hear of the outcome of that meeting.

Mr. Dennis spoke of yesterday's meeting and said he left with the understanding that those in attendance representing ABIR were going to report back on those discussions and have a larger discussion with the board. He said the County has a responsibility to examine opportunities to improve services or to reduce taxpayer costs and he thinks it will be helpful to have ABIR be a part of this process.

Ms. Robertson said she has copies of files from previous reports and minutes of a special committee on this topic chaired by Thomas Todd in 1990, that were done and can provide them upon request. She spoke of some changes that have occurred with the Assigned Counsel Program, particularly with fees, and said it is worthwhile to look at this again because of changes. Ms. Hughes said while the reports may be useful she noted there are many differences in today's program; one of note is there are now five major specialty courts the Assigned Counsel Program works with.

Ms. Damm spoke of a recent news article involving one of the local judges who is not able to preside over particular cases. She said the Assigned Counsel budget could be greatly impacted if attorneys have to travel out of town for court.

OAR

**RESOLUTION NO. 214 – APPROPRIATION FROM CONTINGENT FUND – EXPANDED
TRANSITION PROGRAM (RE-ENTRY INITIATIVE) –
OPPORTUNITIES, ALTERNATIVES, AND RESOURCES (OAR)**

MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Dennis. Ms. Robertson said originally there was a mixture of justifications for this money that include the case management work on the Re-entry program before DSS picked up that leadership and the funding for the contract OAR has with the State. This resolution addresses only the work performed under the Re-entry program prior to DSS taking over. Mr. Hattery said he is troubled by actions in which the Committee is overseeing contracts. He believes if there is important work to be done that meets the County’s purposes, a department can be found to oversee such a contract. He does not believe a Legislature committee should be considering proposals for funding where there is an expected performance outcome. Ms. Robertson suggested the Public Safety Cabinet could discuss and possibly offer an idea for oversight of OAR. The Sheriff Meskill said the Cabinet is not an oversight group and did not think that would be appropriate.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes – 3, Noes – 1 (Hattery), Excused – 1 (Burbank).
MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources (OAR) work in assisting clients with transitioning back into the community has always been a part of OAR’s mission but has increased substantially over the past two years in a cooperative effort with County agencies and other non-profits, and

WHEREAS, OAR’s services have expanded from jail visitation to include a wide range of support and advocacy services for former and current prisoners, as well as for their families and friends, and

WHEREAS, OAR has participated in the re-entry process for 17 individuals and, using lessons learned through this collaboration, has expanded its intensive transition work to serve an additional 28 clients since January, 2008, and

WHEREAS, originally \$35,000 was earmarked in the 2008 Contingent Fund for OAR’s work in assisting inmates of the Tompkins County Jail who are returning to the community, it is now determined that \$16,500 more appropriately represents the portion of the re-entry work done in 2008 by OAR, and

WHEREAS, OAR proposes using a portion of these funds for programming to continue expanding the number of clients assisted in transitioning into the community, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Public Safety Committee, That the Director of Finance be authorized to make the following budget appropriation:

FROM: A1990.54400 Contingent Fund	\$16,500
(targeted for Re-entry Initiative)	
TO: A6316.54400 Program Expense	\$16,500

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Sheriff

The Sheriff reported on personnel, including new hires, academy training and various other training opportunities, and Civil Service examinations. He reported on call volume and said the road patrol has received approximately 800 calls more than it had at this point last year. To date, there have been over 10,000 calls.

Ms. Robertson asked the Sheriff if he had information on a new law about inmates losing Medicaid before a conviction or plea. The Sheriff said he has not received any notice of change. Mr.

Hattery asked what the Sheriff's sense was to jail bed capacity within the region. Mr. Meskill said several counties have constructed jail facilities within the last few years; therefore, finding beds has not been a problem and he thinks there is sufficient jail space within the region at this time. He primarily boards inmates to Chenango County because they will transport when there is more than one inmate.

Sheriff Meskill reported the accreditation assessors will be coming in on November 18 and 19; he anticipates receiving accreditation some time in the next year. Mr. Dennis reported arbitration will take place on October 27th.

Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives-to-Incarceration Board

Ms. Cook reported a memorandum of understanding has been signed between the Sheriff's Department and the CJA/ATI Board that outlines the use of NYSID numbers on the tracking logs. This allows funding to move forward for the two involved agencies.

Ms. Robertson recalled a few months ago there had been discussion of using the District Attorney's Office as a repository for data, and asked that there be further discussion. Mr. Dennis said he would like see data that will show how many people have been in a County program, what happened to them, and did they come back. Mr. Hattery said when meeting with the Director of Probation and Community Justice, he would find it helpful to see the number of people involved in both "traditional" and "non-traditional" Probation programs.

Mr. Burbank arrived at 2:52 p.m.

Appointment

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Robertson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to appoint Tom Boyce to the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives-to-Incarceration Board as a local police agency representative for a term expiring December 31, 2009.

Liaison Reports

There were no liaison reports.

Approval of Minutes of September 19, 2008

It was MOVED by Mr. Dennis, seconded by Ms. Robertson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the minutes of September 19, 2008 as corrected. MINUTES APPROVED.

Department of Emergency Response

Mr. Shurtleff, Director, reported there may be a possibility of receiving Homeland Security grant funds to replace equipment in vehicles. He will be collaborating with the Sheriff and other agencies and will report back next month.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office