

**Public Safety Committee
May 5, 2005 - 2 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room**

Present: M. Robertson, P. Penniman, M. Koplinka-Loehr
Staff: S. Cook, Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives to Incarceration Board; K. Leinthall, Department of Probation and Community Justice; N. Jayne, S. Whicher, County Administration; L. Shurtleff, Department of Emergency Response; A. Fitzpatrick, Personnel Department; P. Meskill, Sheriff; M. Pottorff, TC Legislature Office
Legislators: N. Schuler, T. Joseph
Guests: A. Tutino, Ithaca Journal, P. Mackesy, Legislature candidate

Called to Order

Mr. Penniman called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of April 7, 2005

It was MOVED by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, seconded by Ms. Robertson, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of April 7, 2005 as corrected. MINUTES APPROVED.

Changes to the Agenda

A report from Lee Shurtleff, Director of Emergency Response, was added to the agenda.

District Attorney

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve a request to fill one full-time position of Assistant District Attorney at a salary of \$68,452; 100% local funding.

Mr. Dentes provided the Committee with the following updated statistics for the full year of 2004:

Cases opened - 2,525
Charged crimes - 1,835
Indictments - 120

Sheriff's Office

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve one full-time position of Civil Account and Permit Clerk at a salary of \$34,786; 100% local funding.

The Committee reviewed Sheriff Meskill's proposed recruitment strategy and requested that the Diversity Consortium be added to the potential posting locations.

Jail Statistics

Ms. Robertson referred to the document contained in the agenda showing boardout, medical, mileage, and labor costs for each month and asked that an additional column be added to show monthly

totals. She also asked how figures were calculated and said she found some minor discrepancies. Mr. Meskill said he would check with Jail staff who manually prepared the information, and will provide the Committee with copies of information if it is revised.

Ms. Robertson said the boardout numbers appear to be low and thanked Sheriff Meskill for his management of Jail operations and making things work as well as they have so far.

Mr. Meskill informed the Committee that the Department has cancelled a contract for automobile maintenance and has put that item out for rebid.

Mr. Meskill said they are also working towards accreditation on both the Jail and road patrol sides of the department. He said this is a process of moving through each policy and procedure of the Department to ensure that there are policy and procedures and that they are articulate to the point where it lays out what is expected of the employees in relation to it. The State Department of Criminal Justice Services will bring in an assessment team and walk through the Department for approximately three days. In 1989 the Department was accredited through the Sheriff's Association; this is the first time through the Division of Criminal Justice Services.

Data Analysis

Mr. Whicher said in response to a request by this Committee for the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives to Incarceration Board do some data analysis, Norma Jayne has prepared some information which he then distributed.

Ms. Robertson asked what the "violation" category included. Ms. Leinthall said some crimes do not rise to the level of a misdemeanor and those persons are sentenced to minimal days of jail. If a person is on probation or parole, they have conditions by which they must abide. An example of a technical violation might be failure to report to Probation or pay restitution. She said another thing that can happen is an individual can be arrested on another charge and without being convicted they can be charged with a violation of probation. She said in most of these instances the courts wait until disposition of the case. Ms. Leinthall said when someone is violated, the only time the Department requests a warrant is when they pose a risk to themselves or others or are a flight risk.

Ms. Robertson said she would like to know how many individuals are in jail under that condition and how many people on Probation commit violations. Ms. Leinthall said when you can identify the people in the community who are not being successful, you are making progress because you are now able to identify them. She said individuals may not be rehabilitated the first or second time of being incarcerated and may end up spending some amount of time in Jail and being released to a higher level of Probation upon release.

The Committee reviewed the information and discussed how it could be analyzed in a useful way. Mr. Whicher stated that that if the ultimate goal is to find out what the impact of alternatives-to-incarceration and the Day Reporting Program is on courts and the jail population, one suggestion would be to look by court at how much the Day Reporting Program has influenced the court and suggested looking at it by charge. Sheriff Meskill said in order to see the entire picture, a look also needs to be taken at how many officers are on the street, how many prosecutors are out there, what the charges are, and what the courts are doing with those charges. He said only one part of a very complicated puzzle data is being analyzed .

Mr. Joseph noted these documents are only two examples of what data can be pulled together and was meant to be a demonstration to the Committee of that.

Ms. Robertson said a more comprehensive group needs to do this work. She agreed with Sheriff Meskill that there are other areas that are not being taken into consideration.

Mr. Penniman said it appears to him that the overall goal is to look at the data and determine if there is a better way of collecting information that will inform decisions about resources. He said part of it has to do with people going in and out of the Jail and part of it is much larger than that. He stated those professionals involved in those areas need to be involved in the discussion.

Mr. Joseph said the professionals in the criminal justice arena are concerned about data being misused and misinterpreted. Ms. Leinthall said staff needs to know what the questions are and what the Legislature wants answered and then staff may be able to help answer those questions. She stressed that when data are created more questions are also created.

Mr. Whicher said it may not be clear why, but we do know that the number of Jail days have decreased in contrast to what the Commission of Correction anticipated and to what is going on in other New York State counties. Sheriff Meskill said the Legislature needs to look at the number of full-time equivalent law enforcement officers on the roads now versus five years ago. Ms. Robertson said she has requested this information in the past but has not received it.

Ms. Robertson said the first step in this process was to determine who is in the Jail. She said her intention was to find out why jail days have been declining and if that trend can continue. She would also like to know if there has been a reduction in crime and an increase in public safety. Ms. Leinthall said it would also be useful to determine if those people who leave the system, come back into the system and at what level - whether it is higher or lower.

Mr. Whicher pointed out that two-thirds of the people in the Jail are not convicted. Discussion on this topic will continue at the next meeting.

**RESOLUTION NO. - DIRECTING THE COLLECTION AND COMPILATION OF
CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA**

MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr. Mr. Joseph stated the process of collecting data began a long time ago; however, there was no resolution from the Committee directing that to be done. He said he, along with Mrs. McBean-Clairborne and the Sheriff drafted this resolution.

Ms. Robertson asked that additional language be added to the resolution to make it clear that all individuals' specific identity would be protected.

Mr. Whicher said the City of Ithaca has volunteered three interns from Cornell University to perform data analysis and work with some of the judges on what their findings are.

Additional language was also added to the resolution encouraging staff to work with the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives to Incarceration Board.

A voice vote resulted as follows: Ayes - 3, Noes - 0, Excused - 2 (Legislators Totman and McBean-Clairborne). MOTION CARRIED.

WHEREAS, the Tompkins County Legislature wishes to track the flow of individuals through the criminal justice system, and

WHEREAS, data on how people interact with the system and how those interactions change over time is critical to evaluating criminal justice programs, and

WHEREAS, a better understanding of how people move through the system can identify problem area or opportunities for positive intervention, and

WHEREAS, it is a goal of the Legislature to maximize the effectiveness of public funds spent on criminal justice programs by ensuring that each individual is treated in the least costly manner that will still ensure justice and public safety, and

WHEREAS, the experience and expertise of our professional staff in criminal justice matters is an invaluable resource for understanding and improving the functioning of the system, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, on recommendation of the Public Safety Committee, That the County Administrator and his staff are directed to compile the publicly available statistical data on individuals in the criminal justice system, preserving anonymity of specific individuals by deleting personal information, and to keep that compilation current so that changes over time can be observed,

RESOLVED, further, That the heads of departments and agencies that work in criminal justice are requested to work with County Administration to gather and interpret data and to offer guidance and advice about what policy or program changes might be suggested by the data,

RESOLVED, further, That Administration staff is encouraged to work closely with the Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives to Incarceration Board, municipalities, and courts on this project.

SEQR ACTION: TYPE II-20

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Public Safety Communications System

Mr. Shurtleff reported on the Public Safety Communications System and asked if the Committee would like to do more public information about it as the project is now at the end of phase one. He said he has spoken with Wendy Skinner, Public Information Coordinator, and will be working with her to summarize the project for the public and to let them know what the new Center and the system mean in the long term.

Mr. Shurtleff reported the County will be getting a wireless 911 grant that adds the other element so they can expand the mapping; he will be bringing resolutions to the Committee next month.

Report from the County Administrator

Mr. Whicher reported that after four years the crime records system project is up and running. He said at this time they may not be able to provide legislators with the reports they have been asking for but in time that should be possible once systems are converted over. He said it has been rumored that the City and other municipalities will be staying with the current SJS (Spectrum Justice System) and not going to the CRIMES system. He said if this is true it is very disappointing.

Mr. Koplinka-Loehr thanked those who participated in bringing Judge Kruger to town and said it is very valuable to Tompkins County for her to visit and observe our program modes.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office