

Public Safety Committee
July 20, 2007
3 p.m.
Scott Heyman Conference Room

APPROVED

Present: L. McBean-Clairborne, M. Hattery, M. Koplinka-Loehr, M. Robertson
Excused: R. Booth
Staff: P. Younger, M. Lynch, County Administration; P. Meskill, Sheriff; L. Shurtleff, Department of
Emergency Response
Guests: D. Dietrich, Offender Aid and Restoration

Call to Order

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Public Comment

No member of the public was in attendance.

Changes to the Agenda

It was MOVED by Ms. Robertson, seconded by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to add an advisory board appointment to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes of June 15, 2007

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 June 15, 2007 as corrected. MINUTES APPROVED.

Sheriff

The Committee reviewed jail and boardout statistics for the month of June, 2007. Ms. Robertson distributed a graph showing boardout figures since January, 2006, and noted the numbers have dropped since February, 2007. The Sheriff was asked where he usually boards prisoners to and he said he commonly boards prisoners to Tioga County; however, Chenango County is currently offering at no charge, to pick up inmates and transport to their facility if there are two being transferred. Sheriff Meskill commented that the Office is busy and noted they are handling several child sexual abuse cases, burglaries, and larceny cases.

Offender Aid and Restoration – Update on Bail Fund and Re-Entry Program

Bail Fund

Ms. Dietrich, Executive Director, reported on the Bail Fund and how the \$10,000 provided this year by the County was used. She stated the current balance is approximately \$1,000. While she expects approximately \$2,500 back in the next couple of weeks they are very limited in terms of how many bails they can do at this time. She said the dollar amount saved by the Bail Fund in 2007 is calculated from January to June to be approximately \$600,000; however, there are many variables that are included in that number. Ms. Dietrich said the calculation is based on how long a person would have been in Jail until

sentencing or case disposition, multiplied by a cost of \$98 per day. Ms. Leinthall said there are parameters within the court system for moving a case more quickly when an individual is incarcerated. There was discussion but how the figures are calculated; it was stated there should be a notation of what the number actually is and that there be a clear understanding that there is no exact method by which to make this calculation. Ms. Leinthall said she could see more value in comparing numbers from year to year or month to month. That would provide information on whether efforts are working or not.

Ms. Dietrich said in 2006 OAR was able to do 48 bails; to date in 2007 they have done 43 bails. She said the County's appropriation of \$10,000 produced a dramatic savings as a result of the influx to the Bail Fund. She stated OAR is looking in many different areas to increase the Bail Fund, including a request to donors to make loans gifts instead, and they are also exploring many other fundraising ideas.

Ms. Robertson asked that Ms. Dietrich monitor this closely and let the Committee know if there comes a point where people are being left in Jail because of a shortage in the OAR Bail Fund.

Ms. Dietrich said she will track money and report to the Committee in August.

Re-Entry Program

Ms. Dietrich reported on the Re-entry initiative and said they have learned a lot since the project was first undertaken. She provided the Committee with a progress report, a proposed list of client responsibilities that has been developed, and a snapshot of Re-entry participants. She said because of OAR's experience so far with the program a list of Client Responsibilities has been developed. She said if the parties involved are going to be exhausting efforts to help an individual there needs to be a commitment on the part of the individual. She also noted the Community Reentry Team has not yet approved the document.

Ms. Dietrich said the program involves very intensive case management and includes a lot of one-on-one contact with participants. While it is too early to determine whether there will be a successful outcome, she noted the Program is entirely voluntary and that there are a lot of people wanting to participate. Ms. Dietrich noted they are also working closely with the Jail Coordinator on setting criteria for re-entry and would like to have re-entry work begin upon admission to the Jail. She and the Sheriff will be talking about this as well as in-Jail programming. She will continue to keep the Committee informed as the Program moves forward.

It was also noted that there are representatives of several agencies on the Community Reentry Team, including: Sheriff and Jail Coordinator, Department of Probation and Community Justice, Workforce Development, Mental Health, Department of Social Services, American Red Cross, OAR, Community Dispute Resolution Center, and the Community Faith Partnership. The Team meet weekly.

Community Justice Center – Old Library

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said she has received a complaint about leakage and mold at the Old Library building in which the Community Justice Center is located. Ms. Leinthall reported the air conditioner has been fixed and noted this is the first summer with air conditioning since they have occupied the building. She said there are existing building issues relating to technology as well as safety that need to be addressed.

Ms. Leinthall also updated the Committee on security issues at the Human Services Building that she reported on at the last meeting and said meetings are being held and she will provide the Committee with a report in August.

Department of Emergency Response

Mr. Shurtleff reported on dispatch operations and stated they are doing 6-8 regular call reviews each month; half of the reviews are investigative in nature and most of the others deal with personnel or internal matters. He said these have pretty much leveled off in recent months, which is good because the Department has a strong focus on the Communications System transition planning. He said they are on schedule and went through site inspections for the civil part of the project last week. The microwave is still scheduled to be turned on in mid-August with full acceptance testing scheduled for September. Mr. Shurtleff reported the Subscriber Committee is meeting on a weekly basis to develop policies and procedures for how the system will operate.

Mr. Shurtleff announced the Central New York EMS Council has presented the following awards to Tompkins County:

Dryden Ambulance – Regional Agency of the year;
Beth Harrington, Assistance EMS Director for Tompkins County, was named Educator of Excellence and will be nominated for a State Award;
Julie Ferris, Dispatcher for Tompkins County, was nominated Regional Communications Specialist of the Year

He said he hopes this recognition is an indication of the quality programs and employees that are at work in Tompkins County.

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne asked for a status report on discussions that have taken place with the City of Ithaca with regard to past issues that were raised. Mr. Shurtleff said he is working closely with Deputy Chiefs at the Ithaca Police Department and they have regular interaction with the County's Dispatch Center management.

Mr. Shurtleff updated the Committee on the status of hiring for the position of Deputy Director of Emergency Response. He said interviews of candidates began in December, however, due to some concerns expressed about the recruitment procedure the process was stopped. At the same time Personnel scheduled a Civil Service test for the position. He said had anyone been hired at that time they would have had to accept the position on a provisional basis because the test had not yet been given. Since that time the test was given in March to 15 individuals, nine of whom passed. He noted the six individuals who did not pass the test were some of the more likely candidates so he is glad the test was given and results received before the process began again. Mr. Shurtleff said they are now in the process of interviewing candidates and expects to hire someone soon.

Mr. Hattery asked if any changes have been made to the subscriber equipment that was approved. Mr. Shurtleff said there have been no major changes to the equipment approved.

Mr. Shurtleff briefly reported on backup capabilities for the 911 Center and said many opportunities are being explored.

Appointment

It was MOVED by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, seconded by Mr. Hatter, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to approve the appointment of Jason Fulton to the Emergency Communications Review and Oversight Committee as a West Side/Fire & EMS representative for a term expiring December 31, 2010. APPOINTMENT CARRIED.

Status of Transportation Service Agreement

Sheriff Meskill said the contract for Airport security is between the County and TSA. He provided background information on funding and said in the first year the TSA reimbursed the County for the total of all expenses and in the second year the TSA provided \$20,000-\$40,000 reimbursement. Currently, the TSA has not honored the three percent increase that was negotiated and now has a nationwide cap for all payments at \$25/hour when the current rate is over \$35/hour. He noted the current contract does not cover payroll costs, however, the Airport is at risk of closing if this security is not provided.

PUBLIC SAFETY STANDING COMMITTEE GOALS FOR 2007

At this time Committee reviewed goals for 2007, with the following comments being made during the discussion:

Ms. Robertson said while she is interested in knowing about the physical Jail facility and what issues exist with regard to that, she thinks a lot of time has already gone into the remainder of Goal 4 and there are other areas that need the Committee's attention. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said the space needs and the physical facility of the Jail are very important to continue to monitor. Mr. Hattery said this Committee will always have to examine how the jail population and the cost and condition of the Jail are moving relative to alternative-to-incarceration programs. He said it is important that this Committee always look at the Jail's serviceability and condition in conjunction with those programs.

Ms. Robertson referred to a previous set of goals she had proposed and said she would like to see these included in the list of goals; however, the Committee felt these areas are steps that are likely to take place in the execution of goal number three (now one).

- Hear from DA, Sheriff, Probation and others on trends in crime and arrests, functioning of courts, and recidivism.
- Examine what happens to drug court/CJC participants: Do they stay out of trouble (and jail) or not?
- With CJA Board, plan for and implement new initiatives that promise to reduce incarceration.
- With OAR, make sure that resources needed to bail out qualified inmates are available.
- Hear from Youth Services, DSS and Family Court about trends that might affect incarceration rates.

She specifically spoke of the need for data and hearing from the DA, Sheriff, Probation, and others on the functioning of courts and recidivism. Mrs. McBean-Clairborne said request for information is reasonable and asked if there is any information members would like to have, a request for inclusion on the agenda should be made in advance to the appropriate department or agency.

Ms. Younger said one of the resources that is available is the criminal justice data sharing project. Right now the data is being collected; however, there is no guidance for managing that data. *The Committee requested an update on this project that was approved with the understanding that the governance structure would be put into place.*

Ms. Younger agreed to speak with Mr. Whicher and ask that this be included in the next agenda for this Committee. She will also ask Greg Potter, Director of ITS, what the user compliment looks like in terms of user categories (i.e. law enforcement, judges).

It was MOVED by Mr. Hattery, seconded by Mr. Koplinka-Loehr, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the following goals for 2007:

Goal 1: Establish a reliable method for routinely analyzing public safety operations and program data to better guide policy, budget, and funding decisions/recommendations regarding the County's jail population and recidivism rates, and improving alternative-to-incarceration services.

Need Statement: The County has been challenged with establishing a good method for routinely analyzing current data to determine the effectiveness of the current array of public safety programming in minimizing jail crowding and reducing recidivism. Additionally, there are no clear criteria for defining the data needed (e.g., differences in perceptions, concerns, and program intent) to support and guide program effectiveness. Recently, the CJ/ATI Advisory Board established a "data subcommittee," to look at jail data and trends as they relate to the Board's 2007 strategic action plan and to the Board's annual service plan, which is required by NYS DPCA. The Public Safety Committee should consider the approach and progress of this data subcommittee to help establish a reliable method for routinely analyzing public safety operations and program data in order to better guide Committee policy and funding recommendations.

Goal 2: Establish a process and timeline for routinely monitoring the progress of the Emergency Management Strategic Group (EMSG) and begin implementation of the monitoring process on or before August 2007. In effect the monitoring process will provide the Committee timely and consistent updates on the County's workforce and operational readiness regarding response and recovery in the event of an emergency or disaster; progress in developing a comprehensive County readiness plan; and issues or challenges that need attention or resolution.

Need Statement: In 2006, the EMSG was created to facilitate the development of an emergency response and recovery plan specific to County government operations. Recognizing the importance of County services and programs to the citizens of Tompkins County, the Group is looking to ensure a protocol that will support time-critical, essential services an alternative infrastructures and resources for any County department or division in the event of an emergency or total loss. Undoubtedly, the County's workforce and operational readiness is a public safety concern as much as it is a general management concern. To this end, the Public Safety Committee needs to be kept abreast of EMSG activities and any related issues or challenges that require the Committee's guidance and support.

Goal 3: Establish a routine system for receiving and analyzing information and monitoring progress and effectiveness of the County's communication system, including the communications capital project and the centralized dispatch operation.

Need Statement: With a multi-million dollar communication system being developed and a collaborative dispatch service, the County needs to establish a routine reporting system to ensure that money is being spent responsibly and that the system is working well. This will help the County to perhaps be able to explore better collaborations with NYS around communication systems thus exposing the County to continuous resources for maintenance and upgrades. Additionally, it is essential to continue to perfect the dispatch operations so that it remains centralized as this is of benefit to County taxpayers.

Goal 4: Develop a plan for conducting a needs assessment of the jail – including operations, staffing, and program and service delivery systems – to determine short-term and long-term space needs, formulate options, and if needed, alternative sites to meet future operational requirements. The needs assessment study should be completed by December 2008.

Need Statement: Given the challenge of jail overcrowding and 2006 board-out costs in excess of \$700k, there is a need for a realistic plan to provide additional space to meet future population projections, while accommodating in-jail programming to help reduce jail overcrowding and recidivism. The former *LaBella Study* is five years old, and includes data as far back as 1998. Current demographics and crime trends suggest that it is time to revisit the need for a new public safety facility.

Goal 5: With the assistance of the County Public Information Officer, develop guidelines for (a) maintaining advantageous media and public relations, and (b) encouraging orderly, consistent management and delivery of Public Safety Committee-related information released to the media.

Need Statement: Currently, there is no coordinated approach to release of information to the media regarding public safety initiatives, and no active outreach to effectively communicate with the public and taxpayers regarding the activities of this committee. Although all Legislative standing committee meetings are open to the public, it cannot be assumed that all members of the public are able to access or attend these meetings. An organized approach to increase the public awareness of this Committee's activities, including but not limited to, enhanced media relations, will help to better demonstrate this Committee's work and its understanding of citizen concerns regarding the safety of our community.

Chair's Report

Mrs. McBean-Clairborne reported the Emergency Communications Review and Oversight Committee has changed its meeting schedule to Wednesdays at 9 a.m. and said this presents a scheduling conflict for her. Mr. Hattery agreed to act as Mrs. McBean-Clairborne's alternate representative to this Committee.

Liaison Reports

Ms. Robertson reported on the Out-of-School Suspension Program run by TST BOCES and said Dryden, Groton and Ithaca school districts have all signed on to this; she is hopeful for success in this program in the upcoming school year.

Meeting Rescheduled

Due to scheduling conflicts, the Committee asked staff to work on rescheduling the August 17 Public Safety Committee meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, TC Legislature Office