

**PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

**(REMOTELY)
THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021
3:30 P.M.**

PRESENT: Kevin W. Hines, Chairman
Thomas Faggione, **Kevindaryán Luján**, Kathy A. Stegenga, John S. Vero

ALSO

PRESENT: L. Stephen Brescia, Chairman
Katie Bonelli, Majority Leader
Betsy N. Abraham, Legislative Counsel
Harold J. Porr, III., Deputy County Executive
Carl E. DuBois, Sheriff
Kenneth T. Jones, Undersheriff
Anthony Mele, Corrections Administrator
Lawrence Catletti, Jail Administrator
Craig Cherry, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Emergency Services/Police Services
Kerry Gallagher, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Finance
Gretchen Riordan, Budget Analyst

Chairman Hines opened the meeting at 3:32 p.m. and asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. All committee members were present with the exception of Legislators Sassi and Sierra who were absent.

Mr. Luján moved to approve the request to accept
and appropriate Federal funds from the State of New
York Governor's Traffic Safety Committee for the 2022
Traffic Safety Program grant, \$65,870.00, seconded
by Ms. Stegenga.

Mr. Cherry explained this is a grant from the State of New York Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, \$55,000.00 is dedicated for hiring consultant educators and the remainder will be used for information regarding traffic safety.

Motion carried. All in favor.

Mr. Luján moved to discuss the Corrections
Report, seconded by Mr. Vero.

Mr. Mele stated that as of this morning the facility headcount is 387 of that 92 are ICE detainees, 59 are Marshals and the total boarder is \$4,175,309.00. He then asked the Chairman if he can briefly discuss the jail's manpower shortage. Currently, they are down 26 bodies. During the pandemic all current employees have come to work and performed incredibly, but they are tired and burnt out due to the overtime. To put this in perspective, on the 13th pay period, they have reached

their allotted overtime for the year. He stated that they need to get "up to speed" with the minimum staffing to give the current employees a break. The bottom line is this a safety and health issue, so he asks that the committee take this into consideration.

Mr. Hines commented that the legislature has already created and approved the positions Mr. Mele is discussing, so it would be best to speak to the County Executive and Deputy County Executive about filling the vacancies. He then asked Mr. Mele how long it would take after someone is hired to help decrease the manpower.

Mr. Mele replied the issue is it is a substantial amount of time. If they were to hire someone today, the canvas, medical, and background check would take 60 days. The academy itself is 14 weeks long, so it would take a total of 22 weeks for that one person to make a difference.

Mr. Hines asked Mr. Mele if he put in a request for more correctional officers and it was denied or has it been pending.

Mr. Mele replied that it has been pending for a while.

Chairman Brescia stated that this was discussed at yesterday's Round Table meeting where the County Executive was in concurrence to hire 15 correctional officers and the legislators mentioned that it should be 25. The positions are funded, and he believes the County Executive is going to fill them. He then asked that Mr. Porr give the committee some clarity.

Mr. Porr indicated that he and the County Executive are completely supportive of hiring new positions. He stated there is a meeting on Tuesday regarding the requirements for correctional officers because there are physical challenges that are not required in every department, so they will be looking into this at the meeting. He reiterated that they are supportive of giving the jail whatever it needs to function properly.

Chairman Brescia mentioned this is not only a safety issue, but also a morale issue, legal issue, and a potential lawsuit issue. The County Executive also spoke about agility tests being very demanding which can be eased as well as transfers. Orange County pays higher than most within the Hudson Valley.

Regarding physicals, Mr. Porr stated that in Ulster County and Sullivan County, it is impossible to have laterals. In Orange County, we pay more because the requirements are higher than the other counties. Furthermore, that will be reconsidered so there are more people eligible for the job.

Undersheriff Jones pointed out that this has little to do with vacancies. They need to fill 25 vacancies and only 15 were approved. He then stated that they are not advocates for lowering the standards for initial hiring as they increase the standards to have a better work force. These vacancies have lasted for two years and stem from the governor who had assured county legislators and people around the county that their costs would be reduced due to bail reformation due to a lower inmate population in the jails. Although to some degree that is true, simultaneously classification was increased. The jail has asked for variances to allow cross population, but they were denied. He reiterated this is a matter of getting the vacancies approved.

Mr. Mele added that the hiring requests were not submitted a couple of weeks ago, they were submitted a long time ago.

Ms. Stegenga asked if the transfers change the timeline for when they are allowed to start working since they have been on the job.

Mr. Mele replied no, it would cutdown five or six weeks of training as opposed to fourteen.

Mr. Hines stated it sounds like they are moving in the right direction with the County Executive's Office and the committee will stay on top of this.

Sheriff DuBois emphasized that the overtime allotted for the year is up, therefore, he would like that to be documented now, so it is not a surprise come budget time.

Mr. Faggione moved to discuss the Sheriff's Report, seconded by Mr. Luján.

Undersheriff Jones stated it has been an average month and everything is up and running, so there is an increase in activity as well as police presence at public events. Pistol permit applications are overwhelming which means fingerprinting appointments are booked until January.

Mr. Hines asked if the boat is back in the river.

Undersheriff Jones replied yes.

Sheriff Jones mentioned that the Sheriff's Office submitted a grant for a new boat because the current one is 17 or 18 years old and needs to be replaced. He will update the committee when he hears more.

The meeting adjourned at 3:49 p.m.