



# Onondaga County Legislature

**JAMIE McNAMARA**  
Clerk

**JAMES J. ROWLEY**  
Chairman

**TAMMY BARBER**  
Deputy Clerk

401 Montgomery Street • Court House • Room 407 • Syracuse, New York 13202  
Phone: 315.435.2070 • Fax: 315.435.8434 • [www.ongov.net/legislature](http://www.ongov.net/legislature)

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES – APRIL 19, 2023** **MARK A. OLSON, CHAIR**

**MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McCarron, Mr. Ryan, Mr. Bush, Mr. Kinne**  
**ALSO ATTENDING: Ms. Kuhn, Mrs. Ervin; also see attached**

Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 11:34 a.m.

*The minutes of the previous meeting had been distributed, and there were no objections to waiving the reading. There were no corrections to the minutes, and the minutes were approved.*

**1. DISTRICT ATTORNEY: Joseph Coolican, Deputy District Attorney**  
a. Personnel Resolution

- Catastrophic loss of personnel has taken place in 2022
- 2020 crime rates soared as a result of the criminal justice reform
- From an administrative standpoint, crime has crippled the DA's office
- Cases backed up during pandemic, log jam broke in 2022
- Currently in process of recruiting DA's from other counties
  - Other counties starting pay is \$86k
  - Onondaga County starting pay is \$64k
- Losing experienced people to do less work for more money
- Employees leaving to go to Attorney General office, smaller DA offices, private practice
- Cannot compete, recruit or retain employees
- Not asking for more money, redistribute money to recruit, retain, and compensate for additional workload
- Discovery Reform was manageable during the COVID shutdown
  - Reopening of courts in 2022 have brought trials, hearings, daily calendars
  - Asking for a tremendous amount of work from employees who cannot receive overtime
- The only way to protect public safety is to make this profession more attractive

**Questions/Comments from Committee:**

- Talented group of people, one of the most respected District Attorney's offices in the state
- Agree 100% there is a need to recruit and retain the talented lawyers in the DA's office; pay their worth
- Is there a data sheet you have provided with positions of who left and where you stand?
  - Yes, there is a list of who have left in 2022

**Request: District Attorney's office to provide a list of employees who resigned in 2022**

- What funded, unfilled positions do you have?
  - Doing away with 8 entry level positions, passing the savings upstream
  - Still unfunded positions; may come a time those unfunded will need to be funded again

**Questions from Committee to Ms. Smiley**

- How many current funded vacancies are in the DA's office?
  - 21
- How many ADA positions in last year's budget are approved, vacant funded?
  - 115 authorized 2023 positions, 103 funded; 21 vacant

- Talking about long-term, not grant funded positions
- **Additional Questions/Comments from Committee to Mr. Coolican:**
- Is it possible to have employees repay percentage of training costs if resign within a certain period of time from hire?
  - DA's office asks for a 3 year commitment during interview process, however, it is legally unenforceable
  - Impossible to do because people are not sent to school to learn, they learn through experience
- How many ADA's do you currently have in the office?
  - Currently have 35; should have 51
  - It is a fluid number; have 2 slated to start next month
- If this is approved, 35 people get raises?
  - Yes, that is the plan
- What happens when there is too much work for office to handle?
  - That remains to be seen; currently asking to come up to funded programs for the ADA I, II, III
  - Each felony bureau is operating at least 1 person down (DWI, trial, narcotics, municipal court)
    - These positions are first priority; if filled, department can carry weight with funded positions at new salary
  - New salary allows to ask more of people; if not up to standards, can terminate with confidence to replace
- My concern is, if we get to the point where you need more than 35 employees, you will be caught behind and need a healthy increase on your line
  - Not eliminating down to 35 ADA's, there is room to add

**Question from Committee to Ms. Smiley:**

- If approved, how many vacant funded does that leave at the new salary rate?
  - Have 19 positions; can fill 10; cannot fill 8 or 9

**Additional Questions/Comments from Committee:**

- How long have you been in the DA's office?
  - 23 years
- Always been told the county has a better benefit package than private sector. Has that changed?
  - No, most people see dollars and cents and leave
  - Attorney General's office offers the same salary structure
  - Some leave for state courts; similar benefit package
  - Smaller counties are paying more with similar benefit package
- You will be giving people a raise and increase the workload?
  - Hard to predict the future when it comes to crime trends
  - City of Syracuse had record homicide years in 2020 and 2021
  - Violent gun crime in 2020, 2021 and 2022 were in excess of any other year to date
    - 2023 stats are starting to come down
  - In a constant state of trying to reduce violent crime, difficult to predict
    - ie: Had 68 felony trials in 2018; 12 in 2020, 22 in 2021, 38 in 2022
  - Have special calendars in county court to try and reduce the back log
  - Hopeful to have workload stabilized
- If change is not made, will never have capacity to compete to fill positions
  - Exactly
- Who is the county losing people to and what are the salary schedules?
  - ADA from Oswego County makes \$86k (with 1 to 2 years of experience)
  - ADA III going to Attorney General at \$164k (experienced felony; not supervisor)
  - ADA III typically making \$95k (depending on step) going to Attorney General for \$120k to \$130k
    - These are the people competing to keep
  - Difficult to compare DA offices surrounding the thruway
    - ie: Erie county does not handle Traffic; Onondaga County does
    - Crime patterns are different
    - Office organization; payroll is different

- Difficult to compare apples to apples
- Can only compare what people are making now to what they are making after resigning
- There is talk about Assigned Council rate doubling throughout NYS
  - Felony Defense Attorney's through Assigned Council are making \$200k
- How many have we lost to Assigned Counsel?
  - In the past year, most private attorneys have left for civil firms, other DA offices or Attorney General
  - One left for the US Attorney's office
- Monroe County has seen an increase in crime
- Does Monroe County have a Public Defender's Office?
  - Yes, believe they start in the \$75k - \$76k range

***A motion was made by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Mr. Kinne, to approve this item. Ayes 4 (Olson, McCarron, Ryan, Bush) Abstain: 1 (Kinne); MOTION CARRIED.***

**2. SHERIFF'S OFFICE:** Maureen Murphy, Chief Deputy Administration

a. Personnel Resolution

- Requesting to add Director of Grants Management position to roster
- Title is necessary to move position of securing, managing, and seeking reimbursement for grants from a sworn position to a position that has financial background

***A motion was made by Mr. Kinne, seconded by Mr. Bush, to approve this item.***

**Questions/Comments from Committee:**

- Long overdue, had deputies in position that were underqualified to perform duties of role
- Somebody with a grant background opens the opportunity to get more funding for Sheriff's office
- Frees up Deputy Sheriff to do Deputy Sheriff duties

***Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**3. SECOND CHANCE CANINE ADOPTION SHELTER:** Benjamin Yaus, First Chief Deputy County Attorney

a. Authorizing Execution of Intermunicipal Agreements with the City of Syracuse for use, Occupancy and Operation of a Dog Shelter and Adoption Facility on the Grounds of the Jamesville Correctional Facility

- Presenting on behalf of City of Syracuse
- City has need of a space for animal control and adoption program
- Current city contracted shelters are at maximum capacity; having trouble finding suitable shelter within city limits
- Reaching out for an immediate need; if it works out maybe something longer term
- This is a license to use current facility on a short term basis
  - Part of original Resolution 20-2014
    - Allows to enter into agreement with the Friends Organization to run shelter; which is currently unused
    - Friends Organization will work with city on this partnership
- City will be responsible for utility expense, routine maintenance, damage
- Mayor reached out to Sheriff's office and has general consent to proceed

**Question/Comment from Committee:**

- Will this be overflow when other shelters are full or primary location?
  - Overflow, pre-adoption space

**Questions to Sheriff from Committee:**

- Sheriff will not have any problem with this; will it cost Sheriff any money?
  - Have not had discussions with County Executive or Ben Yaus

- 12/21/22 met with Second Chance; good service to community
- Contact with Mayor Walsh; fully supports
- Only question is to make sure there will be no liability to Sheriff
- Facility in great shape
- Sheriff not contacted by anyone in administration?
  - No

**Additional Comment from Mr. Yaus:**

- City already passed an ordinance

*(Aerial view of Jamesville Correctional Facility including Shelter is on file with the Clerk)*

***A motion was made by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Mr. Ryan, to approve this item.***

**Additional Comment from Committee:**

- This is a really good idea
  - Second Chance does a wonderful job on behalf of the kennel and the dogs

**Mr. Ryan stated for the Record:** “Sheriff controls the jail and he controls the correctional facility. ...It’s a little bothersome to me, as a member of the Public Safety Committee, that these discussions were going on between legal City, not City because he did reach out to the mayor, but it is...troublesome. Troublesome that the County Executive’s office did not reach out to the Sheriff’s department prior to...me just finding that out. I guess I would have assumed there was some communication between them. That is not ok. It’s not ok but I am going to support this 150%.”

**Additional Comments from Mr. Yaus:**

- It came as a proposal from the City
- County already had a prior resolution constructing the shelter, authorizing the general purpose
- This is a new IMA with the City
- Informed at the outset that there was direct communication between the requester (City) and Sheriff’s office
- Point taken

***Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.***

**Additional Comment from Chair:**

- Would like to read a statement from this morning’s 911 Awards Ceremony :
  - “Just because you don’t see my face, doesn’t mean I’m not saving your life. Behind every hero, there is a guardian looking out for you and I am the heroes’ guardian. **I am a 911 dispatcher.**”
  - Great statement, nice ceremony

ATTENDANCE

The meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

COMMITTEE: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE  
DATE: APRIL 19, 2023

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Joe Padrican	DA's Office
Bruce Veriss	DA's Office
Michelle Robbins	DA's Office
Maureen Murphy	Sheriff's
Tobias Sholley	
Jaffrey Passino	
Kristi Smila	Finance
Carl Hummel	Personnel
Ben Yaus	Law
Jim Beube	Leg
Darcie Lesniak	
John DeSantis	

# Jamesville Correctional Facility

