



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

DAVID H. KNAPP
Chairman

MELANIE VILARDI
Deputy Clerk

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES – SEPTEMBER 13, 2021 CHRISTOPHER J. RYAN, CHAIRMAN

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. Rowley, Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Holmquist, Mr. McBride

ALSO ATTENDING: Ms. Lesniak, Ms. Vilardi, Ms. Velasco, Mr. Spraker, Ms. Corn, Mr. Rinaldi, Ms. Miller-Martens, Ms. Dougherty, Ms. Murphy, Ms. Rooney

Chairman Ryan called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. *A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Mr. McBride to waive the reading of the previous committee meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.*
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1. **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS:** Julie Kolakowski Corn, Commissioner
 - a. INFORMATIONAL: 2021 Budget update

Ms. Corn:

- Attending with Ben Rinaldi and Kevin Spraker
- 2021 doing well overall – last hire was in 2019 by the end of 2021 will hire 8 – still lack 22 – not in a red zone – results in overtime and moral issues – summer is busiest – people are on vacation – caused an increase in overtime
- Talking a lot about technology

Mr Spraker:

- Answered Mr. Ryan’s question regarding capital improvement projects - update of software went well – moved over all police vehicles to same system – allows them internet access and they can stay in the field – Syracuse fire is complete – now working on volunteer fire departments – waiting on modems – kick off meeting for 911 system – process will be ongoing until spring 2022 – fluid upgrade will replace as time permits – on time and under budget
- Answered Mr. McBride’s request to explain the 30 positions – call takers, supervisors, dispatchers – start as a call taker then move to dispatcher – entry level – learning two jobs instead of one – attrition will show in the next 2 years will have 40 people over the age of 50 – will lose 40 people in the next three years
- End of 2019 vs now – lost 9 in 2019, 4 in 2020 and 6 in 2021 – majority from retirement – never been fully staffed – about to hit a major group that will hit retirement – have asked for those missing 22 people in the budget
- Answered Dr. Chase’s question about recruiting - COVID has made it difficult to recruit – not enough people on the list – all positions are civil service except for 3\three management and administrative
- The state cancelled the test last year – OC is trying to get us a test in January – can hire with the understanding that they take the test – provisional – can do this if there isn’t a current list – have to go through this list first then reach out
- Answered Ms. Kuhn’s question regarding opportunities to do training with Broome county – Ben has been the lead – making some inroads – not reinventing the wheel

2. **ASSIGNED COUNSEL:** Kathleen M. Dougherty, Executive Director, Onondaga County Bar Assoc
 - a. INFORMATIONAL: Program update

Ms. Dougherty:

- Have a budget of \$14m between State and county - 150 attorneys handling 150 cases – spread thin – have a settlement agreement to comply with – attorneys have a case load limit so they don’t take on to many cases – we have guidelines

to include social workers, mediators, a lot of expert requests – everything is data base driven – started in 2020 so everything is electronic – cases are input – train attorneys to use the database – they voucher through the system

- Answered Mr. McBride’s question about the significance of the backlog – office never shut down – database capabilities allowed for electronic access – trails shut down – bigger backlog with no systematic plan is in family court – those are the cases that have problems with resolutions – attorneys are overwhelmed
- Criminal cases – thousands of tickets have been cleared up so there is no backlog – trials are still backed up – especially in county court – only 4 judges – still have 50 homicide trials pending – if COVID picks up could cause some real hardships – access to clients in the jail remains difficult – sheriffs are wonderful to assist but COVID limitations make it difficult
- Current rates of \$60 for misdemeanors and \$75 are for family court – can’t change the rates – still struggle to find attorneys
- Was talking to an attorney that has been practicing - \$200-\$250 per hour – OC pays \$75 which has to cover all the expenses – not sustainable – attorneys are leaving or cutting back – refuse to take family court because rate isn’t competitive – statewide family court cases have increased – balancing act – real limitations
- Recruit from law schools and into other counties – rates last changed in 2003 – no increases in 18 years
- State legislators have the authority to change it – been on task force for 3-4 years – wouldn’t go in to effect until the following year – biggest sticking point is the state must pay – cannot be an unfunded mandate – lawsuit downstate – assigned counsel of NY city – amended the lawsuit to sue the state – same rate for NYC – statewide rate
- Only have 10 attorneys that do only family court work – full panel is 147 attorneys –
- Cases are assigned by the judges – processing of payments is timely –
- Criminal courts have different panels based on experience is provided to courts and they use it as a guide
- Sometime have to interject so that a judge doesn’t give an attorney to much work
- Vouchering is done electronically – 2 people review – transmitted to court for electronic signature – issue checks within two weeks of submittal
- Answered Mr. Ryan’s question about how much are in process and how many not processed within 30 days – if review person has question it gets returned to the attorney – if there is question they meet with ms Dougherty – 95% resolved – 5% is sent to court to make the final determination
- Answered Dr. Chase’s question about who handles the trial advocacy program – this is through Hiscock legal aid
- Mr. Ryan asked about the lawsuit against OC - decision was 2016 – 5 year at first and then extended - OC was sued with 4 other counties because weren’t providing quality representation – different bench marks OC has to meet – extended so that all counties are on board - assigned counsel has to have the same standards

Ms. Dougherty

- Implemented centralized arraignment program in December 2017 – all arraignments are held in the public safety building or city court in the morning – reduces phone calls to judges – assures people are arraigned within 12 hours – that’s the standard – not holding people in the jail unnecessarily – has a great impact on how many people are held in the jail

Mr. Ryan:

- Can’t understate how much work goes into that

Mrs. Ervin:

- So client doesn’t meet the attorney in front of the judge

Ms. Dougherty

- All paperwork is electronic so attorneys have all the information to represent and not just a mouthpiece
- Trying to do something similar for preliminary hearings – short staff so trying to arrange with court to centralize preliminary hearings

3. INFORMATIONAL: Evidence Storage

Mr. Ryan:

- Asked if the OC had any facility that would meet our needs – city and OC could share – more of a flowchart vs a fork in the road – do we build, lease – working with Deb Cody in facilities – doing nothing is not an option – number of different partners

- Will keep this item on the agenda each month so it moves forward

A motion was made by Ms. Kuhn, seconded by Mr. McBride, to adjourn the meeting. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



MELANIE VILARDI, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2021

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Kevin Spraker	911
Julie Com	911
Ben Rinaldi	911
Sandy McDonald	911
Kathleen Dougherty	Onondaga ACP
Tenesha Murphy	County Exec Off
Ann Rooney	CE