

Public Safety Committee
 Regular Meeting Minutes – Approved 6-15-17
 Thursday, May 18, 2017 3:30 PM
 Legislature Chambers

Attendance

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived	Departed
Rich John	Chair	Present		
Peter Stein	Vice Chair	Present		5:10 PM
James Dennis	Member	Present		
Anna Kelles	Member	Late	3:34 PM	
Martha Robertson	Member	Present		
Michael Sigler	Legislator	Present		
Kenneth Lansing	Sheriff	Present		
Joe Mareane	County Administrator	Present		
Patricia Buechel	Probation & Community Justice Director	Present		
Lee Shurtleff	Director, Department of Emergency Response	Present		
Matthew Van Houten	District Attorney	Present		
Ray Bunce	Jail Administrator	Present		
Marcia Lynch	Public Info. Officer, County Administration	Present		
Amy Guerri	Commissioner of Human Resources	Present		
Michelle Pottorff	Chief Deputy Clerk, Legislature	Present		

Guests: Sgt. Shawn Hogan, Corrections Officer, Matt Haney, and several other Corrections Officers from the Tompkins County Sheriff's Department

Call to Order

Mr. John, Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Changes to the Agenda

There were no changes made to the agenda at this time. Later in the meeting the items relating to the Assigned Counsel Program and the LEAD Program were withdrawn and deferred to the next meeting.

Ms. Kelles arrived at this time.

Privilege of the Floor

A member of the public wished to speak but was not granted permission due to refusing to follow the Legislature rules for members of the public speaking under Privilege of the Floor. Following a request that the individual leave Chambers, it was MOVED by Mr. John, seconded by Mr. Stein, and unanimously adopted by voice vote, to enter into recess at 3:38 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:42 p.m.

Comments from County Staff

Corrections Officers Issues and Concerns (ID #7043)

Sgt. Shawn Hogan introduced himself and Corrections Officer Matthew Haney of the Tompkins

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County Sheriff's Department, Corrections Division. Sgt. Hogan read and submitted the following statement:

"Thank you for taking the time to listen to a few of our concerns.

"I have seen many changes in my 18 ½ year career in Corrections. I have 8½ years as a New York State Corrections Officer and 10 years here at the Tompkins County jail, seven of those as a Corrections Sergeant.

"Our Corrections Team consists of 41 officers, six of which are Corrections Sergeants. I would like to introduce to you my corrections brothers and sisters by giving you a copy of our staff list with seniority dates next to their names. Many of them are here tonight, some in uniform, and some not.

"I recently read a very fitting and accurate article in Corrections One Magazine, it read "Historically, Corrections Officers have been viewed as guards, hacs, turnkeys, jailors, occupying isolated and misunderstood positions in prisons and jails. Within the past decade, the duties of the Corrections Officers have become increasingly complex and demanding. They are called upon to simultaneously fill supervisor roles, safety and security, custodial and counseling roles. The professionalism, dedication, and courage exhibited by these officers throughout the performance of these demanding and often conflicting roles deserve the utmost respect. The important work of a Corrections Officer often does not receive the recognition from the public that it deserves. The service that they provide is vital to creating and maintaining safe communities."

"Corrections Officers are the unseen Law Enforcement. If the public could experience the Corrections Officer's world, unrestricted from the dangers that wait, they would see firsthand that corrections have evolved. It is a noble and honest law enforcement profession.

"Presently we are housing 67 inmates at the Tompkins County Jail. Their crimes range in severity from the simplest of crimes to some of the most violent crimes including sex offences, rape, and murder. We consistently have people incarcerated who are detoxing off of drug and alcohol, searching to fill that void and willing to do anything to take away their pain, which brings up the issue of contraband. We are constantly on the front lines fighting the admission of illegal drugs into our facility; through visiting, mail, and any other mode of admission. Now add the negative environment, usually overcrowded, outdated, double bunked jail that is constantly breaking down. Just recently we had three broken main doors at the same time; one of those doors was our main entrance door causing the facility to shut down visiting, which is unfair to the inmates and their visitors. The other doors were the holding cell door and the rec yard door. The holding cell door was looked at by a representative that manufactured the door and stated "we don't even make these parts anymore." The rec yard door which is an emergency exit has been broken for almost a month. We definitely keep facilities busy trying to fix our building just with the plumbing and electrical issues alone.

"We play a role in assessing and taking care of all medical and mental health problems. Many of which have medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems occurring together, which makes a dangerous and toxic mix. When someone arrives to the jail, they are already not in their right state of mind, and we must protect them and ourselves with our IPC skills (interpersonal communication skills), and the equipment on our duty belt...handcuffs, jail keys, a radio, flashlight and rubber gloves. Supervisors also carry pepper spray.

"We are trained and retrained annually on suicide prevention and play a vital role in the safety of these inmates. We are the ones to intervene when an inmate threatens or makes an attempt to self-harm.

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We are the first one to respond to any situation within the jail and are the ones who talk inmates through their crisis. I have been there when an Officer found an inmate hanging from his bed sheet, lifted him to release the pressure from his neck while another Officer cut the inmate down, I watched an Officer apply pressure to the bleeding wound after an inmate had cut his own wrists. There have also been situations where the Officers recognized an inmate having a stroke and got EMS there within minutes, and when an inmate stopped breathing, the Officers recognized it and initiated rescue breathing and used the AED. In all of these situations the inmates survived because we were there and did what we were trained to do. We also have to recognize the emotional toll it takes on the Officer to see these things happen to people, not just these emergent situations but watching the same people who are addicted to drugs and who suffer from mental illness, continually come in and out of the jail, not getting the help they need and watch them fall through the cracks.

“Tompkins County does not have 24 hour or even 7 day a week medical staff. Our ONE nurse does an amazing job. Works 40 hours a week, but that leaves 16 hours a day and 2 full days a week when there is no medical staff on site. The majority of the medication is dispensed by Officers, which holds a huge margin for error and liability for the Officers and this County. In State Corrections, Officers handling medications is forbidden. Mental Health is almost nonexistent, even though there has been recent approval to increase mental health hours at the jail, this still leaves large gaps of time where the Officers have to fill in the place of medical and mental health professionals. Please notice I didn't mention substance abuse counseling because outside of volunteer groups such as AA & NA, there is no substance abuse counseling at the jail. It is not uncommon for the help you are trying to give an inmate is unwelcome. In some cases we are the enemy and we are the ones that are physically assaulted. The media only publishes negative things about Corrections Officers, none of the good we do.

“Being a Corrections Officer is both very physically and emotionally demanding. It takes a substantial amount of over time to operate our facility. In 2016, \$243,000 was spent in just over-time pay. Officers are constantly forced to work extra hours. Sixteen hour days are not uncommon. Depending on circumstances an Officer can be mandated to work 8-40 hours of overtime in a single week. This puts severe strain on the Corrections Staff. To accomplish our mission safely and to the public's expectation, we need more full-time Corrections Officers. We have not had a staffing analysis completed in 15 years (since 2002), even though it has been requested many times. With these forced overtime hours come the hardships of missing quality family time, missing holidays, birthdays, and many other cherished memories. Our duties are not limited to only run the jail, but also include inmate transport for medical appointments, mental health, rehabilitation, and court appearances. I would like to invite those of you who have never been to the jail to come for a tour, stay for a while or even observe a shift.

“In the past two years we have seen 27 new hires, 10 in 2015, 13 in 2016, and 4 so far this year-2017. Each new hire is assigned a field training officer for an intense 3-4 weeks of on the job training, then an additional 9 weeks at Corrections Academy. The Officer's spot is back filled with overtime. This rate of turnover has cost the County many thousands of dollars in officer staffing alone. This loss of good, well-trained officers ends up benefiting other agencies because they transfer out for better pay and benefits. When I came to the Tompkins County Jail in 2007, the pay rate was incomparable. During the past 10 years the pay has not been able to keep up with our surrounding counties and we no longer can compete with them to retain or transfer in competent, well-trained officers. Shortly thereafter our pay began to stagnate. Other counties were making strides in bringing their facilities up to date and brought their Officers' pay up along with it. Tompkins County Corrections Officers pay fell further and further behind. We have tried several times to negotiate a pay increase to entice officers to stay at the Tompkins County Jail without success. In an attempt to get better pay for our career Officers, in 2012 we proposed and negotiated a step system that would give career Corrections Officers more and save the County

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money by reducing turnover. We had hoped we could build from this, but that was not the case. Tompkins County must upgrade and expand the Public Safety Building and pay what other surrounding counties know is a reasonable rate of pay. The starting rate of a Corrections Officers is \$35,484.80/\$17.06 an hour, which is only \$2 more an hour than the proposed minimum wage. This means there is no incentive for a new officer to stay with Tompkins County, after they compare what they get to what surrounding counties make.

“A prime example of income in-equality just within the Sheriff’s Department is the Road Division's salaries VS the Corrections Officer’s salaries. The hire rate for a Road Deputy is \$28.80 per hour vs. a Corrections Officer hire rate of \$17.06 per hour. The difference is \$11.74 per hour. That's a difference of \$15,787.20 per year. A Road Sgt. hire rate is \$34.84 per hour vs. a Corrections Sgt. hire rate at \$25.57 per hour ... That's a difference of \$15,038.40 per year. The Sgt. of the Road Division has 7 salary steps and a Corrections Supervisor does not have any salary steps. Even the jail cook has salary steps. A Road Sgt. at step 7 makes \$38.46 per hour - work rate for a Corrections Sgt. is \$27.61 per hour. That's a difference of \$10.85 per hr. That's a difference of \$22,568 per year. A new Road Deputy with zero experience makes more than a Correction Sgt. with 25 years on the job. The Captain of the Corrections Division makes \$86,902.40 per year. That's \$29,473.60 more than the Correction Supervisors. To save the County money, the administration decided to eliminate the top two positions in the Correction Supervisors - the Chief and the Lieutenant and create one position - A Corrections Captain. Most of the Lieutenants work got pushed down to the Sergeants.

“In closing, I respectfully ask that you seriously consider what we are asking so we all can accomplish the same mission, the same goals, and the same vision safely together. Upgrades to the jail, better wages for the Corrections Officers, more full-time officers (staffing assessment), another nurse, and better mental health services. Our community needs this to happen...

“Even though Corrections Officers may stand unrecognized by those who remain outside, we still do our mission by our sworn duty to protect and serve with Honor, Pride, and Integrity.”

Mr. Stein said the presentation by Sgt. Hogan was very good although he was aware of many of the issues he mentioned and the one thing he found the most interesting was his comments about when a new employee is hired and trained and then ends up going to work elsewhere for someone else. He suggested that the Legislature be given data on this and Sgt. Hogan agreed to provide that information.

Mr. John thanked Sgt. Hogan and Mr. Haney for speaking to the Committee and said he would appreciate having them come back to speak about the facility at a future meeting of the Jail Study Committee.

Minutes Approval

April 20, 2017

RESULT:	ACCEPTED [UNANIMOUS]
MOVER:	Martha Robertson, Member
SECONDER:	Anna Kelles, Member
AYES:	John, Stein, Dennis, Kelles, Robertson

Chair's Report

Memo from Senator Seward - Prepaid Cell Phones (ID #7052)

Mr. Shurtleff was asked to provide a more detailed report so the Legislature knows how to respond to Senator Seward's memo and to prepare a resolution for the Committee to consider as soon as possible.

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County Administration

Mr. Mareane said there are many significant changes coming for the Assigned Counsel Program and indigent defense and suggested the Committee take time at a future meeting to discuss those changes and their financial implications.

Sheriff's Office and Jail Report

Ms. Robertson said she would like to put Access to URO (Ultimate Re-entry Opportunity) on a future agenda for discussion.

Mr. John said the Legislature received a presentation about Safe Places. There will likely be a discussion of this at a future meeting as there were questions as to how this would apply to law enforcement.

Department of Probation and Community Justice

Presentation on Program Overview: Probation and Community Justice (ID #7039)

Ms. Kelles expressed interest in learning more about the drug courts. Ms. Buechel said she would provide Ms. Kelles with information on both programs.

Mr. Stein was excused at this time

In response to being asked why only 18 adults are in the Electronic Monitoring Program Ms. Buechel responded that when the program, is recommended and the judge orders it they are always able to get it. The Department does not limit the number of units because of budgetary reasons and recommends it whenever it is needed and appropriate. Mr. John asked if there are some town courts that the Department receives orders for this and whether there are others that they do not receive orders from. Ms. Buechel said she would need to look into this.

Mr. John said at a recent Criminal Justice Advisory/Alternatives-to-Incarceration Board meeting there was discussion of how they lose people and he would like the topic of re-entry to be discussed at a future meeting and for the Committee to discuss how the County could do a better job of moving people through. Ms. Robertson said she would like to hear ideas from Ms. Buechel as the Jail Study Committee works through its process; she also commented that she would like to look at demographic information of those who are in the Jail and in ATI programs.

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Changes to Agenda

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At this time the Report from Lance Salisbury, Supervising Attorney for the Assigned Counsel Program, on the Jail and RoR statistics (ID #7053) was withdrawn and deferred to the next meeting.

Assigned Counsel

Jail and RoR Statistics (ID #7053)

RESULT:	DEFERRED	Next: 6/15/2017 3:30 PM
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LEAD Program

Continued Discussion of LEAD (Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion) Program (ID #7007)

Mr. Mareane reported on a conversation he had with Ms. Wilkinson who was going to follow-up with the City Mayor but has not heard back as of this time.

RESULT:	DEFERRED	Next: 6/15/2017 3:30 PM
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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.