

Minutes

Public Safety Committee

March 17, 2021, 4:00 pm, Virtual Meeting via Zoom

Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Niebel, Bankoski, Pavlock, Hemmer, Whitford

Others: Tampio, Ames, Quattrone, Swan, Abdella

Chairman Niebel called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes (2/17/21)

MOVED by Legislator Bankoski, SECONDED by Legislator Whitford.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Clerk Tampio: It doesn't look like anyone is here for the privilege of the floor and we haven't received any communications either.

Proposed Resolution – Vehicle Loan Agreement – E2CCB

Sheriff Quattrone: This is an agreement we want to make between the Sheriff's office, the County, along with the Ashville BOCES in their Criminal Justice class. We would loan them one of our old patrol vehicles. Not anything that they would be taking out on the highway but they would be using it within their campus to work with their students and I'll say Explorer program with the Explorer program is now an in-house program. But it will be at no cost to them but yet they will take care of the maintenance on their car through their auto repair shop there at the campus.

Chairman Niebel: Any questions for the Sheriff on this proposed resolution?

Legislator Bankoski: No questions Terry but I just want to thank the Sheriff for trying to help out future criminal justice students who may be interested. I think this is a good use of the expended vehicle that we're no longer using.

Chairman Niebel: Jim, just one quick question. So we're not using the vehicle for road patrol, is it being used at all or is it just sitting in the parking lot as surplus?

Sheriff Quattrone: It was sitting in the parking lot that was going to either be auctioned off or scraped. Their request was to be able to use it for practical exercises within the campus area.

Chairman Niebel: So, it doesn't have much value?

Sheriff Quattrone: Unfortunately a very little value in that car.

Chairman Niebel: Any further questions of the Sheriff?

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Amend 2021 Budget for Grant Expenses – Office of the Sheriff

Mrs. Swan: I will speak to this one. As some of you may recall last month we made an amendment to the 2021 budget reflecting grant revenue that needed to roll from 2020 to 2021. There were outstanding purchase orders that were rolled into 2021 and the revenue needed to be moved as well. We realized after the fact that the expense budget also needed to be moved over to cover those purchase orders on the expense side so this simply amends the budget to include the expense budget that we need in order to cover those expenses.

Chairman Niebel: Committee, any questions of Jen or Jim?

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Amend 2021 Budget for Capital Project: Jail Upgrades

Mrs. Swan: As far as this resolution is concerned, we had a final Jail upgrade that we wanted to utilize the rest of our capital funding for. It was shy by a few thousand dollars and we were able to find that few thousand dollars in another capital project that we know will be coming in under budget so this simply amends that adjustment to cover the full expenditure that we need for the Jail repair.

Chairman Niebel: And this is something that you started back in 2017?

Mrs. Swan: Correct.

Chairman Niebel: Committee, any questions of Jen or Jim?

Legislator Bankoski: Jim, what are the repairs?

Sheriff Quattrone: The repairs are a water pump in the Jail that was because of the different chemicals from the water it ended up quitting on us and so that's to replace that.

Legislator Bankoski: Thank you.

Chairman Niebel: Any further questions?

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Adoption and Certification of New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Plan

Sheriff Quattrone: For those of you who aren't familiar and hopefully everybody is, back in June the Governor issued an executive order to have the police reform and reinvention so we've been working on it and in reality, we've been working on it before June. If you look at the plan, it shows you that we were doing things in May and there are many items that we were already working on. So, since June we've been specifically targeting community members and doing surveys throughout the County as well with separate groups. We got the results of the surveys back at several stakeholder meetings, via zoom, a couple of that were done in person, so I think that everybody had a copy of that and can access copy of the full plan but what we've found is, overall the majority of those respondents and people that we've talked to that didn't just respond to the survey, continue to be supportive of law enforcement and the Sheriff's office. We found that one of the things we had to review was racial disparity. As you look at our statistics, arrests and incarceration is in line with what the 2010 census percentages show as far as percentages of whites versus minorities of being arrested or being incarcerated.

Chairman Niebel: Or charged.

Sheriff Quattrone: Or charged, correct, thank you. What we did do was examine ways that we can continue to improve and towards the end of the report, we have a list of objectives and trainings to be obtained. Again, many of were things that we've been wanting to do and just kind of putting them on a schedule now. Some of them have started already and we'll be (*inaudible*) within the next couple of years. Of course, I also listed some of the impediments to these changes. A lot of that has to do with time restrains as well as fiscal restraints. So we're trying to get creative, we're working with Community Foundation, community groups to help fund some of these trainings and initiatives that will help us to improve law enforcement in the County.

Chairman Niebel: Jim, thank you. Committee, any question for Jim on this certification plan? Just a comment. I did look at Data USA in that gives a demographic breakdown by race in Chautauqua County. If you look at that you'll see that 92% of the people in Chautauqua County identify as white and then when I read through your report and look, it was a pretty lengthy report. I didn't read through the whole thing but read through most of it, your CCSO arrest by race, 91% white, o.k., so demographics breakdown, 92% white, arrests by race, 91% white so look, from these statistics there is no systematic racism in policing in Chautauqua County. I mean, it's just not there as far as statistics. So, I want to compliment you and the Sheriff's Department and actually all the police departments in Chautauqua County because this report sustains what a lot of us had thought that there is no systemic racism and this more or less proves it. So thank you.

Sheriff Quattrone: Thank you. I did want to add that through this process, it was something that we worked together throughout the County with all the police agencies. We had many meetings, the police chiefs and I and the ironic thing was that, no State agency was required to do this so the State Police, the Parks Police, the State University Police, were not required to do this and this is some of the push back and we would see at the beginning. But, it's been a pleasure to work with all the Police Chiefs and while we all did our own individual plans, we did a lot of the work together so we could not have to duplicate the surveys and *(inaudible)*... Mr. Abdella had suggested having some more public opportunity to input so we put copies in every public library in the County and had five additional meetings via zoom and Facebook live where we could present the reformed plan to the public. *(Inaudible)* any constructive criticism. The only real criticism is people who *(cross talk)* to get rid of policing.

Chairman Niebel: Jim, besides the zoom meetings, you had a lot of personal meetings too. An awful lot of time and effort went into this and you should be complimented because it was a lengthy process and you did a very good job.

Sheriff Quattrone: Thank you.

Chairman Niebel: Committee, anything else on this? So, we need to adopt this certification so if there are no more questions, those in favor?

Unanimously Carried

Other

Chairman Niebel: I have asked Jim to discuss, you probably saw in the paper recently that inmates in the Jail did receive COVID vaccinations so I've asked Jim to highlight that and tell us a little bit about the thought process that went into that. So while he's doing that, please think if any questions that you might want to ask.

Sheriff Quattrone: Last Tuesday there was a vaccination clinic, I'll say, and roughly 110 inmates received the Johnson & Johnson vaccine. They were administered by our Jail nursing staff. The vaccines, as I stated, were the Johnson & Johnson, the County had received them on Friday or Monday and they administered them on Tuesday. They had 7 days to administer them. I know Public Health, once upon receiving, I'm trying to figure out – they were designated to go to home bound individuals so the Health Department or Public Health tried to find a way to get all the vaccines distributed in a timely manner so they did not lose them. They get penalized if they don't use all of the vaccines. They chose and decided that the Jail would be the appropriate place. I was supportive of having inmates vaccinated for several reasons. Perhaps the biggest reason was when we had the outbreak back in December, inmates, several of our staff also, struggled through and were quarantined and it costs tens of thousands of dollars to staff the Jail with overtime and forced overtime and *(inaudible)* that there is such a congregate *(inaudible)* setting that it was appropriate use of that vaccine.

Chairman Niebel: Committee, do you have any questions of the Sheriff on this?

Legislator Bankoski: No, continue the good work Jim.

Sheriff Quattrone: Thank you Mr. Bankoski.

Chairman Niebel: Jim, I'm going to make a quick comment. We received 600 doses, I guess 500 went to the elderly and people with comorbidity but what is kind of concerning to me is that we still have an awful lot of frail elderly in Chautauqua County. I mean, of our population in the County, there's 100,000 people over the age of 18. Of those 100,000 about a quarter of them or more, 25,000 are 65 and over. Of the people that actually die of COVID, it's about 94% and those are mainly people over 65. So, I'm a little bit concerned that when we have only a limited number of doses of vaccinations and this is just my own personal opinion, but, I would like to see those doses go to senior citizens and the people that are most vulnerable as far as getting COVID. Again, look, you've made a very good argument as far as the Jail population and the cost if there's a COVID outbreak in the Jail but, I do think this was – and I don't care who made the decision, it doesn't matter, the decision was made and it's done, but, this is a policy decision and I think going forward, I would like to see input from the Legislature Chairman and the Democratic and Republican legislative leaders if we do anything further as far as vaccinations in the Jail.

Sheriff Quattrone: I do want to add a comment. County Executive Wendel has (*inaudible*) a COVID team that we meet Monday, Wednesday's and Friday's and I don't want to speak for the whole team but my understanding is and I think we all agree that we would like to be able to – we wish the local Health Department would be able to determine where those vaccines are going as they seem to be doing a great job in Chautauqua County in getting the vaccines out there.

Chairman Niebel: I agree.

Sheriff Quattrone: But the State dictates where those vaccines are going to be used. So, I think Public Health wants to make sure that they use every one of the vaccines and don't have to return any of them and that was a big part of the decision making process in that.

Chairman Niebel: Jim, I agree but when the category is home bound individuals, I think we have a lot of elderly, 65 and over, people that are home bound. In checking with the Office for the Aging, we have 2,700 elderly people on the list to get the COVID vaccinations so if it's a question of – I mean, if we had a lot of vaccinations, I wouldn't even be bringing this up but because we only have a limited number, I do think those should be directed to our most vulnerable and I do believe those to be our senior citizens.

Legislator Bankoski: I don't think the Sheriff has control over who gets it. He's allotted "x" and he has to do what his job description requires him to do. I don't think he has the authority to say I don't want the inmates to get them and we should give them to the people at Heritage Village, so to speak. I don't think that he has that control over that.

Chairman Niebel: Bob, I don't think he does but I'm just saying that, well, the Health Department does and I think somebody made the decision that the word home bound applies to

inmates in the County Jail. Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't but I'm just saying, in my opinion, the most vulnerable people are the people over 65. They are not necessarily the people in the County Jail.

Legislator Bankoski: I agree with what you are saying, but I don't think that Jim has control over that situation. I think we're talking to the wrong guy.

Chairman Niebel: Any other comments from the committee?

Legislator Whitford: I appreciate your comments Mr. Chairman, the Sheriff was clear that the County Executive set up a COVID team and I think those questions need to be addressed to that team rather than in this format. The designation of home bound, well, you can't dismiss the individuals that are exposed to that day in and day out and risk their health dealing with the inmates. So, it really is a delicate balance and you are right, it took me a long time to get scheduled. I finally went through the VA but, there are a lot of seniors out there but, trust me, for the most part they are being cautious. They are staying at home and they are working on getting vaccinated.

Chairman Niebel: Paul, is that you that just made those comments?

Legislator Whitford: Yes.

Chairman Niebel: Paul, I agree with a lot that you said but as far as the folks in the County Jail, our Jail Guards and our Officers and stuff in the Sheriff's Department, Jim, correct me if I'm wrong but, haven't most of your people, including the Correction Officers, received the vaccine?

Sheriff Quattrone: As of Thursday or Friday of last week, where there was enough vaccines that they could hold a clinic here in Mayville up at Emergency Services to reach out to them.

Chairman Niebel: So most of your people have received the vaccines under 1A or 1B categories?

Sheriff Quattrone: It would be under the 1B where they received them.

Chairman Niebel: Any other discussion or comments?

Legislator Pavlock: I have a comment. I think Mr. Chairman you do have a valid ask and yes, there is a County committee that is tasked with this but also the Sheriff is the manager at the Jail, he directly oversees the Supervisors so it's not an illegitimate ask, I don't think, on his behalf. I know we all are on the fence with this one so I think the questioning is in line and I think we've asked him some questions and he's answered them and I can see both sides of it for sure. I guess at this point, moving forward, hopefully we'll get more vaccines and more people can get vaccinated.

Chairman Niebel: O.k., Dan, it was a question that has come up, we've discussed it and if there is no more questions of either Jim or Jen, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

MOVED by Legislator Bankoski, SECONDED by Legislator Whitford to adjourn.

Unanimously Carried (4:25 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Kathy Tampio, Clerk/Olivia Ames, Deputy Clerk/Lori J. Foster, Sr. Stenographer