

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Monday, January 12, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Ken Hughes, Chairperson
Davina Thurston, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Hughes called this Public Safety Committee to order at 9:30 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Chris Clark, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathleen Reusser, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Michael Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson and Meg Wood. Timothy Follos and Tracie McGill was absent.

Department Heads present: Jim Dougan, Emily Evatt, Judy Garrison, Miriam Hadden, Roy Holzer, Michael Langey, Mike Mascarenas, Mary McGowan, David Reynolds, Heather Sheehan and Dan Woods.

Also present: William Tansey, Wendy Sayward, Alexandria Crandall and Jim Monty.

HUGHES: Good morning everybody the time is 9:30 on January 12th I'd like to call this public safety committee to order. If you will please all rise to salute the flag. Good morning everybody and welcome to the first public safety committee meeting of the 2026 year before we call up department heads I do want to take a few moments and take up a few housekeeping items. We have a whole bunch of new people in the room and I want to make sure that it's understood and clear how the process works before I get to that I do want to thank Chairman McNally for the opportunity to continue as the public safety committee chairman. It's a committee I thoroughly enjoy and am pleased to continue to apply leadership to it for this up coming year. I would also like to welcome Davina Thurston as Vice Chair of this committee. So glad you're on board and thank you for stepping up in that role. I appreciate that. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome the new members to the committee, we have Supervisor O'Bryan, Supervisor Follos, Supervisor Pierce, Supervisor McGill, Supervisor Menser and Supervisor Lamphear welcome to this public safety committee. I think of all the committees we have, we have the largest turn over in membership so I'm looking forward to working with you and looking forward to your insights and perspectives and opinions on all the things that we have laid out in front of us, so welcome. So just to kind of level set and talk about process for committees because I just want to make sure we all understand how it all works for the new members. We have our committee list certainly all supervisors are encouraged to attend all committees so that you're in the loop of what's going on, so you are aware of what's happening and certainly at any point during the year or during the month if you have any individual questions for committee members or department heads you're encouraged to reach out to them either by phone or by email to ask questions and kind of get back ground if you need to so that you're prepared and ready for committee meetings that take place throughout the month. Three committees happen this week and then three committees will happen next week so you're all on different committees and received that listing just a few days ago. In terms of moving motions and seconding motions only committee members can do that if you're on the committee only you can make a motion, second that motion and vote on that motion. If you're not on the committee but have an interest in saying something you are absolutely are able to speak up during the meeting during that area just raise your hand and I will call on you and you will be able to speak and share your thoughts and you can do that you just can't vote on it if you're not on the committee and then a couple weeks later the magic of the Clerk's office both Dina or Judy that will provide the transcript of the meeting so you can check those out if you miss the meeting, verbatim transcript. Any questions on the process of how we do this? And we do it

every month for the next twelve months a lot of fun. Okay, so we are going to move onto Veterans. I don't know who the Veteran's liaison is? Mr. McNally do you know who is in charge of Veterans?

MCNALLY: There is two of them, Mr. Pierce and Mr. Menser.

HUGHES: Okay, perfect, great. So, is there any report from the Veterans office that you would like to enter into the record for today?

PIERCE: Nothing yet. I haven't had a chance to sit down with them and meet with them but certainly for next month.

HUGHES: Okay. Mr. Pierce and Mr. Menser you guys are going to be responsible for that. I'm thrilled to have you guys on board with that and I'm looking forward to any reports you have for the future so great. Thank you very much. Now moving on to the County Sealer, Dan Woods. Welcome.

WOODS: Good morning everyone. Everybody should have separate copies not in the agenda, you should have a separate printed out copy Judy had put on everybody's desk my report. I was late and I apologize for that.

HUGHES: So, we have Dan's report in front of you, single page document here. Any questions for Dan this morning?

STANLEY: Good morning Dan, how are you today?

WOODS: Doing well, thank you. How are you?

STANLEY: Well, it looks like short term rentals are going to be the conversation up in the Town of Jay. I know that last year we passed a resolution to work with Deckard Industries for tracking short term rentals. Is that something your office is going to use to start catching up on some of these short-term rentals that aren't registered or is that going to be the Treasurer's office?

WOODS: Mike, why don't you take it? I know it's through the Treasurers but I will let Mike answer that.

MASCARENAS: The Treasurer's department will be utilizing the software to help assist Dan in needing what he needs to do. So, Dan is the enforcement wing of short-term rentals they will let him know and he'll do that piece but the other piece is really around finding some of these people and doing that work, verifying that our registrants are up to speed in all that. So, there's a lot more work with that software than just the enforcement wing but the enforcement wing is part of it and he will certainly be utilizing it maybe not directly but indirectly to get his marching orders on kind of where he has to go and make sure that we got them all because you can see the registrations here, 1485. I believe when Deckard did that presentation they were making an assumption that was over 2,000 in Essex County so if that's the case and were correct than that's approximately 800 that are missing or we don't know and I think the other legislation there Airbnb and VRBO those types of things that we don't always know where that comes from. It's probably somewhere in the middle is my guess of missing registrants but yeah, so he'll be using it but not necessarily directly.

STANLEY: The reason I ask the question is because it was brought up during our monthly

meeting at the Town of Jay we are probably going to develop a short term rental task force and start really trying to figure out how many are not on the registry because my assumption is we've got to make sure we enforce the county law before we really go at the town level and start looking at what added regulations we need so, I don't know if there is something the towns can do to help the enforcement process to make sure people are registered, not only for the occupancy tax collection but sales tax collection as well.

MASCARENAS: Towns very much indirectly help now just there's no formal process in order to do that. When homes are getting rented and somebody thinks that somebody is getting away with something it's usually a neighbor right? They are calling directly. They are putting us on notice of what kind of is going on around but yeah, I agree with you. I think this thing has gotten to a level that none of us could have expected in a short amount of time and government is always a little slow to the party in terms of reacting to what's happening in the real world and yeah, getting that under control is a big issue especially in your neck of the woods. Keene, Jay, North Elba. You actually have gotten a little further in North Elba in terms of developing some of your own rules and how you deal with that and maybe you would be willing to share some of that information with some other towns and maybe have? I don't know?

STANLEY: Thank you.

WOODS: Just to add onto that this year, at the bottom of the page you'll see, it says I believe there was 136 that were added this year that's about average since I started. In 2021 there was approximately 730 and now we are at 1450 I mean, it's grown 130-140 every single year and with this new law coming into place as well everyone is going to have to renew registration every single two years so this is also going to be a reoccurring thing, it's going to be a little difficult the first time. We have people that have been signed up for – since 2007 when it started so when you're going back that far you're now asking people to renew a registration that haven't done anything with registration wise in the last fifteen, twenty years. It's definitely a hurdle we are going to come to but we have somewhat of a plan right now trying to get everything together and have new people coming into the Treasurer's office that is going to be able to handle a lot of this workload and actually have the conversations and get more in depth.

STANLEY: Just don't be afraid to involve the towns too. We want to help assist and we have the resources locally to go out and help do that so I just want to make the process as easy for you and the Treasurer's office, it's just a symbolic relationship between the towns and the county.

WOODS: Absolutely. I don't want to speak over but I'm hoping that with Deckard we are going to have separate logins for towns to get on and look and have just a read only. You are going to have certain access on the that?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, we'll see how that shakes out but I do think the county purchasing that software made a lot more sense than individual towns having to go at it and the cost would have been much higher had you had to do that so, how it shakes out in the detail and the access and all that I'm not going to give you a definitive answer on but what I can tell you is if we can't do that towns will certainly be able to get the information from the county that was the whole intent.

WOOD: Magic word, enforcement. We in Schroon have had a short-term rental local law for three years and we are about to have a moratorium to shape it up a little bit but the enforcement is the main issue. Our codes person is already more than full time and he also works for the Town of North Hudson so I think maybe before we start our moratorium we need to know exactly or have

a sense of what the county is doing so that we're not across purposes so I don't know how to get all this information in a timely way but I think the idea of towns working with the county with that enforcement – it's not always neighbors it's people who can't go down a street because of the number of cars parked so it's not always just a disgruntle neighbor but I would have to guess that we have at least 500 in our town and more than 25% are registered but we started with this permit and it's time to renew them but we're going to have a two year permit with the county I don't know it started to digress a little bit but I think we need to get our stuff synchronized.

MASCARENAS: I don't think you are actually. I think you are bringing up a good point. Local laws you are seeing pop up across the United States. Who enforces those local laws is always the question right and they are only as good as the enforcement on the back end and who is responsible for the enforcement of these? So, we'll have to speak to Dan Manning about that and get a little more clarity in terms of law and who does that. So, Dan does our law so if we start getting into 18 different towns with 18 different laws it's going to get a little weird in terms of that enforcement piece and who performs that action.

WOOD: Right, we are willing to totally, I mean we were really in the weeds and we need to get out of the weeds but I don't want to start the six-to-twelve-month process if it's going to take that long before we know the county's thinking because we can't do this alone probably.

REUSSER: With all the agencies in the area, Adirondack Roots, Adirondack Action encouraging the movement from short term to long term rental is also some of our housing issues I find it important to also keep data on not only people who aren't registered but who falls off that registry that we have an actual number, a factual number and I'm not sure how we do that?

MENSER: Do campgrounds or camper trailer fall into that tax purpose?

WOODS: The campgrounds if they have a permanent structure on that is rented out they do. If it's on wheels I don't believe it is if it's a movable – there's certain things that fall into that. Is that what you're asking?

MASCARENAS: Typically, no but there are some times where that is true.

STANLEY: I just want to circle back on Ms. Wood's comment, I'm sort of hesitating moving forward with any legislation in the town of Jay because I think the county really needs to look at a standardizing model that way we are not doubling. Enforcement is a tough thing. We can sit here and make more ordinances or laws but it doesn't do any good if you don't have enforcement so if we can start to make sure to enforce this county law then we can start to see how the towns can help assist that so we're just doing one thing not 18 different things.

HUGHES: Short term rentals is a rabbit hole. We've got a long list of things to talk about today so anything else for Mr. Woods this morning on his report? Great. Dan, thanks a lot and see you next month. Appreciate you. Board of Elections, Mary McGowan and Roy Holzer come on down.

MCGOWAN: Good morning everyone and welcome to the new supervisors and I just wanted to thank the supervisors that come back here every year for your service. Essex County appreciates it. You have our report. It wasn't included in your packet but we dropped it off earlier. Basically, for the month of December it was report month reports coming out of our ears from the State. We have done testing on all of our equipment, machines, voting machines etc. so if there's any questions on our report?

HUGHES: Any questions for Mary or Roy on this report?

MCGOWAN: We just came back from the Election Convention in Albany and it was quite enlightening. One of the big topics of conversation was about the post office and how it's being post marked. Everything is all united so it might be turned it at the post office but it might take a couple of days before it gets post marked because it has to go to a regional area and be stamped. So that will effect voting by mail so what we will be doing is encouraging people to on election day if they can, if they are around drop the ballot off their mail in ballot off at our office, at a voting site or go into the post office and have them hand stamp it right there because if we receive it, we have seven days to receive the mail after election day if it's not post marked by then or post marked after that we can't accept their ballots.

HUGHES: Good advice. Thank you Mary.

PIERCE: In regard to that answer because it is now a requirement now to be all sent from regional offices is that local hand stamp going to be valid?

HOLZER: It's supposed to be. I spoke with one of our local postmasters about the change how it's going to effect bill paying, voting things like that and they said as long as you go to the window and ask postmaster or postal worker to stamp it it's supposed to be the same as its always been.

WILSON: And sorry to take this off track to Board of Elections but this is going to effect property tax collection so we should encourage all our residents to do what you're saying, get it hand stamped or make sure they drop their tax payment in the mail with a few days buffer.

REUSSER: I sat in on a supervisor's round table on Thursday with Katie Hodgdon Association of Towns and it was evolving around taxing because at the end of this month our levy of interest and penalty as long as that is hand stamped, it is supposed to be accepted.

HUGHES: Thank you.

HOLZER: I had a couple things as well. As Mary mentioned we attended last week the NYS Association of Commissioners in Albany last week. A lot of information, great networking, the postal issue was spoken about and I am happy to announce that we did not bring shame to the Essex County family while we were there so that's a relief. We're currently working on our annual reports and should be presented to this committee at our February meeting. This year to get to the postal thing and some other issues, this year we are going to be collectively working on more community outreach just educating people on the election process, mailing in your ballots, trying to get more poll workers. We did develop a pdf and I believe Jen is getting ready to send that out to all to share on your websites and things of that nature. Also, we did learn that the Association meeting that the even year election a lot of you guys that were just elected a few months ago, you're going to have to start circulating petitions in February. Right now, there is a federal lawsuit challenging that the even year election legislation however, smarter minds than me are telling us it's not going to win and you should just plan on another round of elections.

PIERCE: Just a clarification, that's for the two-year position right? The four year is three years out?

HOLZER: That's right. So, if you're elected to a two-year it's one-year, four-year is three-years we are going to have some county positions all remain the same. One of the other issues I found

interesting at the Association meeting is a lot of counties are going to be looking at two- and three-page ballots because of this even year election. It's just absolutely crazy and I think they did a real disservice to the voters of this state by enacting this.

HUGHES: But it is supposed to save money.

HOLZER: My guess Mr. Chairman is you're going to find people cherry picking who they want to vote for and people down ballot won't have the benefit of their constituents' votes.

MCGOWAN: Some of the new machines can take up to a 36-inch ballot that's a yard.

TYLER: It's not saving money because you are going to have an election anyway for the Judges and things like that, it's not saving money.

HOLZER: No, not at all.

HUGHES: Any further questions for Mary or Roy this morning Board of Elections? Who attended that? The two of you?

HOLZER: Our whole staff.

MCGOWAN: And our election inspectors.

HUGHES: Great, terrific. Thank you both very much. See you next month. District Attorney's office, Mr. Langey.

DA LANGEY: Good morning everyone. For the new members on the committee, I'm Michael Langey. I just was elected as most of you were last November. As far as the DA's office updates we've been short three attorneys last year, we hired an attorney in October. We've hired an attorney that is going to be admitted in New York hopefully within the next month and then in February we have another attorney coming so hopefully by March we will be back to full staff that will be almost a year and a half since we've been like that. That will be a welcoming for the attorneys in my office a lot of the attorneys have worked a lot of extra hours handled a lot of other duties that they normally wouldn't so that will be good for my staff and moral and myself to get back to full staff.

As far as what's trending in the county as far as crime this last year the drug problem is still there. I know a lot of the supervisors give us a lot of information on who they think are the drug dealers. It's a very frustrating thing to live in a town and have people tell you who they are and law enforcement unfortunately has to follow a lot of rules that, you know some former supervisors would call and just say why don't we just go kick the door in? We do need people that are willing to give sworn statements and there's a process where we get into a house it's a lot more complicated than supervisors think but we do welcome that information. I know the Sheriff's department has really put a lot of man power into identifying these homes in trying to find out who is selling them unfortunately a lot of the people selling are not from our county they are from other towns that just are living upstairs. That seems to be the business model here in Essex county for the more larger scale drug sales are people from Schenectady, Brooklyn, Massachusetts that move into a house, no one knows their real name, they come once or twice a week to bring drugs and then the locals are the ones that I guess are having them stay there usually because they are drug addicts not usually for financial gain but usually they are just given drugs in exchange for using their house that's a big trend that's been going on for three or four years. We have hit a lot

of houses in Ti I know those people have moved up to Crown Point, they've moved to Willsboro from Etown so I know the Sheriff and the State Police are trying to deal with that other the trends are the same just alcohol is still a problem in the county for a variety of reasons but if there's any questions I'll take them now but hopefully we will be back up to staff that has been a problem Mike has been a huge help. Attracting attorneys was a lot harder than we thought it took years. I know DSS is still down two attorneys hopefully that is resolved and we get some young attorneys in here that want to stay and want to work and that will definitely help the members of this committee and help my office out as far as tackling some of the problems we have.

HUGHES: You may have been recently elected but how long have you've been with Essex County?

DA LANGEY: This is my 28th year, all at the DA's office.

HUGHES: Any questions for DA Langey this morning? Thank you for your report. Have a good month. Moving onto Emergency Services, I don't see Josh but I do see Wendy.

SAYWARD: There's a fire in Willsboro so that's where everybody is at the nursing home so I think they are going to be evacuating.

HUGHES: Thank you for stepping up in the short notice.

SAYWARD: Everybody has our report.

HUGHES: Can you introduce yourself.

SAYWARD: I'm Wendy Sayward for those of you that don't know me most of you do. I've been with the county for 31 years.

We do have two resolutions our first resolution is to purchase radio equipment for Mt. Defiance base station for the Ticonderoga Police Department frequency with funds to come from our State Interoperable communications grant '23, not to exceed \$10,000.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO PURCHASE RADIO EQUIPMENT FROM BEARCOM FOR THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO USE FOR MT. DEFIANCE BASE STATION IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$10,000.00, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM SICG 23 GRANT. Thurston, Stanley

HUGHES: Discussion? Questions, concerns on this resolution?

O'BRYAN: When will they make that change over end of this year?

SAYWARD: Yes as soon as it goes through the board they will make the change over.

O'BRYAN: Thank you.

HUGHES: Thank you any other questions on this resolution? All in favor aye, opposed – motion carried.

SAYWARD: And we have a second resolution for permission to go out to bid for a maintenance contract for the low band radio system with funding to be paid for with budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO GO OUT TO BID FOR A MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR THE LOW BAND RADIO SYSTEM IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Pierce, Menser

HUGHES: Discussion?

PIERCE: I just had one question when I read Josh's email he sent around, he indicated that they used this vendor for years? Can you get any sense of a comparable program that does this at a lesser price?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, so over the last year and a half many of you haven't been part of the meetings that I've been fortunate to sit on between our DPW and our Emergency services office the last year and a half we've been able to develop over time a level of technical support in the county that really is simply amazing. We've been doing a lot of work together to try to figure out not only how our system operates but how do we put together a long-term ONM schedules that were really never developed? I kind of sent a follow up to that email when you do a water system or a sewer system long-term you're going to have a certain amount of money that hopefully budgeting to pay for that ONM and we've never really done that so what this does is we have a couple of individuals that really understand the technical nature of the system at a high level and we're able to develop an RFP that really crafts what we need instead of being solely reliant on the vendor to tell us such. You're never in a strong position when you are over relying on a vendor that is able to make money by telling you what you need so that's where we are at right now. You have a certain amount budgeted I prefer not to say what that amount is in terms of that because that's what the number we get will be so I prefer to just have it go out and see where the chips fall where they may and then we will bring it back to the board for award so this is just giving permission to go out to bid, if we get a few bidders we'll be able to make a recommendation to the board on who is likely going to meet our need and at what cost and you'll get another crack at his item within probably a month or so when we get it back.

PIERCE: Thank you.

HUGHES: Thank you, good question. Any other questions on this? All in favor on this resolution signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carried. Anything else Wendy?

SAYWARD: That's it.

HUGHES: Okay, great thanks a lot. Moving onto the Sheriff's office, Sheriff Reynolds good morning.

SHERIFF REYNOLDS: So, you have my report. For the new supervisors if there is anything you think you want to be educated on, need more information in the report reach out we can change it up anything I can share we are willing to share from the Sheriff's office and to touch on what the DA was talking about we know a lot about the drug issues in all of your communities but keep sharing. Our deputies are very active this weekend alone we had five separate drug arrests and that's from the activity they are doing plus the information that's being shared to us. Do you have any questions?

HUGHES: Any questions for the Sheriff?

STANLEY: Not a question, just a shout out to your department for some extra patrols for a controversial event we had in the Town of Jay so I want to thank you guys for being diligent.

SHERIFF REYNOLDS: So, for the new supervisors I think the guys and girls that have been here know that I'm available 24/7 you're welcome to call me no matter how big or small your problem is I will always, if I don't answer I will get back to you pretty quickly.

HUGHES: Any questions for the Sheriff this morning. Thank you Sir. I don't see any coroners in the audience so we'll move onto probation. Heather Sheehan good morning.

SHEEHAN: Good morning everyone. My name is Heather Sheehan I am the Director at Probation and I'm happy to answer any questions you have regarding my report and also I prepared a little something for the new supervisor's orientation on the 22nd and I'm available any time that you would like to reach out or come visit us to learn a little bit more about probation. Some days it's uneventful and boring other days there's a lot going on so if you have any questions I'm always here and available to answer anything you may have.

HUGHES: Any questions for Heather on her report this morning? Okay, have a great month, thank you. Public Defender, Emily Evatt.

EVATT: Good morning everyone. I'm Emily Evatt I'm the Essex County Public Defender. I did not submit a formal report but I'm here to answer any questions that you have. I would just add that we are also down an attorney so if you know anyone that needs a job, please have them give me a call.

HUGHES: Anyone qualified.

EVATT: Qualified would be good.

HUGHES: Any questions for Emily this morning? Thank you Emily. And Conflict Defender, Miriam Hadden.

HADDEN: Good morning everybody. I circulated a report hopefully you've seen it and had a chance to review it. I'm happy to answer any questions.

HUGHES: Any questions for Miriam this morning on her report that is on your desks? Thank you for that, I appreciate it. Looks like not, thank you.

Okay before we close this committee we do need to enter into executive session. Good morning sir, would you like to state the reason for the executive session?

TANSEY: Legal advice and direction.

HUGHES: I need a motion Mr. Brassard, second Mr. Stanley. We are in executive session at 10:03 a.m.

THE COMMITTEE MOVED INTO AN EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 10:03 A.M. TO DISCUSS LEGAL ADVICE AND DIRECTION AND MOVED BACK INTO OPEN SESSION AT 10:15 A.M.

HUGHES: Okay the time is 10:15 and we are out of executive session. No decisions, votes were cast. We are now back in the regular meeting just one quick thing for the good of the order. I want

to just let the new supervisors know and veteran supervisors that I'm going to be working to organize visits to the departments that you have listed on here. A couple of years ago I took it upon the direction of Supervisor Monty to go visit the departments and it's the best way you can learn about what the staff of Essex County are actually doing on the ground on a daily basis and that was a wonderful opportunity. I think several of you have done that already. I know new supervisors are probably feeling like they are drinking water out of a fire hose right now and that's to be expected so I'm going to take the lead in the next couple of months organize visits to some of the departments so you can see what's going on on the ground and anybody would be welcome to join but we are trying to do a critical mass so look for that from me in the coming months. I would love to get you out to those places and see them first hand it's an eye-opening wonderful experience.

MASCARENAS: I did ask each department to organize an open house as part of the orientation but I love the idea of having the Chairman of each individual committee join them on that and I think that makes a lot of sense. Judy is kind of making a schedule. I think we are going to try and do them mostly on Mondays while you are already here so you are not having to make an extra trip here. I don't I know who you've heard from Judy?

GARRISON: Public Health so far.

MASCARENAS: We'll get another notice out and hopefully by next Thursday we'll kind of have a concrete schedule of when the departments will be doing that and any supervisors are welcome to attend.

HUGHES: I like that plan.

REUSSER: I was just going to mention when you're going to be absent for a meeting and you know in advance certainly email Judy Garrison at Essex County.gov but if you know in advance that's great.

HUGHES: Yeah, that's good advice. When you know you're not going to be here, let people know for the record. Anything else for this committee? Okay, we're adjourned. Thank you.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Public Safety Committee, it was adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors