PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Monday, April 13, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Ken Hughes, Chairperson
Davina Thurston, Vice-Chairperson

Vice-Chairperson Thurston called this Public Safety Committee to order at 9:30 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matthew Brassard, Timothy Follos, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, 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. Chris Clark and Kenneth Hughes were excused.

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

Also present: William Tansey, Michale LaVallie, Randi Swires, Jennifer Fifield and Jody Whitney.

THURSTON: Good morning. Would you all please join me in the pledge. Ken Hughes has been excused from the meeting today. We will start with the Veteran's office Supervisors Pierce and Menser.

PIERCE: I submitted a monthly report from the office. If anyone has any questions about that I would be glad to answer.

TYLER: I just want to say thank you. The first time in the eleven years I've been here that I can remember, seeing a detailed report. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

PIERCE: We had been doing them in the office when I was there from the beginning and it was reported to the state. The state eventually stopped this report but Sara and I kept it up in the event if someone asked for a report we were able to provide it.

TYLER: I appreciate it, thank you.

THURSTON: Any other questions? Thank you. Dan Woods, County Sealer.

WOODS: Good morning everyone. If you turn to the second page, you'll see my report for the month of March. If anybody has any questions I'd be happy to answer.

THURSTON: Anyone have any questions, comments or concerns?

REUSSER: Deckard, how's it going?

WOODS: It's going well. We've had quite a few online meetings, we do Zoom meetings and we're running through all of the programming, learning how to work it and trying to get things off the ground with that. Sending out notices to have everybody register online and it's going to be a slow-moving process with trying to get all 1500 to re-register the first couple months is what we're trying to get everyone to re-register for the first time and it's going to be once every two years everyone is going to have re-register online. It's going to be a process in trying to get ahold of everybody especially the people that have been doing this for fifteen years or people that have

zeros for eleven months out of the year and they only rent it out once or twice but we're asking everybody to file monthly now so they are going to have to get on and submit a monthly report of what they brought in for revenue.

REUSSER: When do you feel the board will get a report on this?

WOODS: I do not have that answer that would be a Mr. Diskin question on that one.

REUSSER: Thank you.

TYLER: I need to refresh my memory about twenty-five times a day but – if I have a property in Westport that I don't believe that they gone ahead and done this do I contact Mr. Diskin's office?

WOODS: What is the actual question?

THURSTON: Can you say that again please in the microphone, it's kind of hard to hear you.

TYLER: He's not paying their way into the system for the county to pay their taxes on Airbnb's and stuff like that.

THURSTON: So, you're asking how the Airbnb's can go into the county system and pay their taxes?

TYLER: No, I'm asking who do I report it to if I know they are not doing it?

THURSTON: Oh, to report it to.

WOODS: Report it to either any of us or Mr. Diskin's office.

TYLER: Property on Ledge Hill, go check it out.

WOODS: If you can send anything in an email I will gladly follow up.

TYLER: I will, thank you.

MASCARENAS: Just so everybody knows Dan gets the majority of his information from the Treasurer's department. Dan handles the enforcement side of occupancy tax collection so if anything in regard to collection of that tax contact Mr. Diskin and then Dan gets his marching orders from that department.

TYLER: The easiest process is probably going to Mr. Diskin first.

MASCARENAS: Right then you are not confused anything related to that just go there.

TYLER: Okay, thank you.

BARBER: Is there any chance that we can get an updated list of the ones that are registered in each town?

WOODS: Yes.

BARBER: I know the Town of Chesterfield sent a list with 20-25 people to have them send a letter out and we haven't gotten any feedback whether or not they actually have registered. An updated list would be nice. Thank you.

WOODS: Absolutely.

THURSTON: And along those lines, I would request if you can come up with some kind of a flyer so that we could post it on our social media to let folks know in our towns that this is a new system and they have register and re-register every two years and please make sure it is in Jpeg format and that might be a helpful way for all of us to be able to reach our residents.

TYLER: That should come out of the Treasurer's office probably right Mike?

MASCARENAS: Yes we will remind Mr. Diskin when he gets up here next week.

THURSTON: Okay thank you. Any other questions? Thank you. Okay Board of Elections.

MCGOWAN: Hello, good morning everyone. We've had a busy month with petitions coming in. We had over 100 that was quite the handful there other than that, you do have our report in your agendas.
Deputy Commissioner Fifield and I went to a secure election conference about cyber security and that was quite interesting so we are beefing up what we do in house now also.
Other events coming up are the independent petitions you can begin collecting your signatures on the 14th of this month and then your first day to file May 19 just a little bit over a month to collect those.

HOLZER: As Mary said, we processed over 100 designating petitions of course not all of them are local offices a lot of them are committeemen both on democrat, republican and conservative lines but there was quite a few petitions and as always our staff did a great job.
So, 71 days until the primary. It appears right now that we have five towns that are going to have primaries actually all towns will probably have primaries because of congressional races but there's some town offices in five towns Crown Point, Elizabethtown, Newcomb and Willsboro that will have primaries as well as the congressional races. June 23 is the primary and final, 204 days until general election and with that we do have a resolution we are asking for on changing our office hours.

THURSTON: Changing your office hours?

HOLZER: Yeah, you should have a copy of the resolution.

MASCARENAS: Resolution authorizing to change the Board of Election hours to 8:00 a.m. to 4;00 p.m. beginning May 1, 2026 – September 18, 2026, with the exception that the office will be open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on any days designated by Executive Order of the Governor or by action of the State BOE for the filing of independent petitions.

MENSER: That's May 11th.

MASCARENAS: What did I say? Yes, I read it wrong. It's a typo.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING TO CHANGE THE BOARD OF ELECTION HOURS TO 8:00

A.M. TO 4;00 P.M. BEGINNING MAY 11, 2026 – SEPTEMBER 18, 2026, WITH THE EXCEPTION THAT THE OFFICE WILL BE OPEN FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 5:00 P.M. ON ANY DAYS DESIGNATED BY EXECUTIVE ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR OR BY ACTION OF THE STATE BOARD OF ELECTION FOR THE FILING OF INDEPENDENT PETITIONS. Tyler, Stanley

THURSTON: Any questions, comments, concerns? All in favor aye, any opposed motion carries.

HOLZER: Thank you.

THURSTON: Any questions for Board of Elections?

TYLER: I think I know the answer to this question but anyways is the lawsuit that's been put out there about independent signatures being a lot more than with respective republican, democrat. Do you know anything about that and where that may go?

HOLZER: No updates on it yet so we're just going with existing law. Same thing with the even year election, that's still in the courts so anything can happen. You know New York State anything can happen.

TYLER: I wish I didn't.

THURSTON: Any other questions? Thank you. District Attorney's office.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY LANGEY: Good morning everybody. The main update that I have for my office is we're going to lose an employee at the end of the month. We are going to start advertising for that as a Crime Victim's Advocate hopefully that won't take too long to fill. I guess the other thing effecting our office is the Town of Moriah is losing their police department. They have been valuable to the Essex County District Attorney's office. They do a lot of work, it's a big town. They do have a pretty good case load I just would like to acknowledge that is coming to an end and we regret not having it. We have the supervisor here but I just wanted to acknowledge Art Brassard. He has worked I think as long as I've been at the DA's office almost 30 years as a police officer in the town of Moriah. He saw the department go from three or four officers down to himself the last several years. He has put in a lot of time and effort to bring good criminal cases, he does work hard, tries to get everything right and I will miss having him there and I just wanted to acknowledge him at the county level that the Town of Moriah won't have a police department or officers very soon so I just wanted to make that public and thank him. Any questions.

TYLER: I would like to move a resolution of appreciation to Mr. Brassard.

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION AND CONGRATULATIONS TO ARTHUR BRASSARD UPON HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE TOWN OF MORIAH POLICE DEPARTMENT. Tyler, unanimous.

THURSTON: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you. Emergency Services.

FAVRO: Good morning. You have our report, are there any questions on that?

THURSTON: Any questions?

FAVRO: I do have a few resolutions, number one a resolution to contract with ProComm Systems for tower site, generator and antenna maintenance and inspection. They are a state contract company and the cost will not exceed $40,000 with the money to come from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH PROCOMM SYSTEMS INC. IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $40,000.00, FOR TOWER SITE, GENERATOR AND ANTENNA MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTION IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Stanley, Pierce

THURSTON: All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carried.

FAVRO: My second resolution to authorize ProComm systems to replace antennas at both Belfry for $26,695.77, and Gore Mountain for $27,255.68 and this is also coming from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO AWARD A PURCHASE ORDER TO PROCOMM SYSTEMS INC. TO REPLACE ANTENNAS AT BELFRY AND GORE MOUNTAIN IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF $$53,951.45, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Menser, McGill

THURSTON: All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carried.

FAVRO: My third resolution is to accept the bid for T&M maintenance contract and material for JPJ with funds to come from budgeted funds this is to take care of our low band radio paging system.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO AWARD AND ACCEPT THE BID FOR TOWER TIME & MATERIALS CONTRACT WITH JPJ, IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Pierce, O'Bryan

THURSTON: Any questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carried.

FAVRO: My fourth resolution is to amend the 2026 budget to increase appropriations in equipment repair A3020 in the amount of $17,365.48, from the appropriated funds balance A359900. The funds are coming from revenue overage and tower rentals from 2025.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF $17,365.48, REVENUE OVERAGE AND TOWER RENTALS FROM 2025. Menser, Tyler

THURSTON: All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carried.

FAVRO: And the last resolution I have is recognizing National EMS week as May 17- 23, 2026.

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE WEEK OF MAY 17-23, 2026 AS NATIONAL EMS WEEK. Stanley, unanimous

THURSTON: Thank you.

FAVRO: That's all I have today.

THURSTON: Any questions?

MENSER: A lot of us are hearing a lot about the battery energy storage systems that the power companies are wanting to put in place in different communities. Most everything I have read about at this point is not applicable. How would emergency services be able to deal with one of these if it has a fire started?

FAVRO: So, two weeks ago we actually had a meeting in Ticonderoga with the company that is hoping to put a system in. We would work very close with them to come up with a plan to handle any such emergency that may happen with that storage system. We also are starting to train our departments more on batteries in general anything from the battery that is in your drill at home to your EV to these battery storage systems and charging stations so we're actively working on and gaining knowledge. If one gets put into a town we most definitely are going to have a plan in place in case something does happen.

MENSER: My understanding is that these batteries, when an electrical automobile catches on fire all you can do is hope to contain it, you really can't put it out. We are talking about putting hundreds of these same types of batteries in a location that could burn up to 5,000 degrees and my understanding is we don't have emergency services in the county that could deal with one of those if it blows up.

FAVRO: So we were told in Ti and if you want to add you can, these systems are – I'm not saying it's never going to happen because it has happened recently multiple times but they are supposedly designed to try and keep the battery packs in one compartment instead of having, you EV's you have one compartment that has all your batteries so one goes thermal runaway it takes all of them out so you have two choices, you can either let it burn which like we had an incident on the Northway you can't really let it sit there and burn a hole in the interstate so, we put water on it to cool it which slowed the process up but we would handle this the same way as far there's a 24-hour contact for these companies, they are supposed to respond in a certain amount of time.

O'BRYAN: Josh, hate to be put you on the spot we don't know enough yet neither one of us. He asked these questions in Ticonderoga. The best strategy at this point is that you protect code of defense firefighting, you protect equipment buildings while it's burning once it is burning at 5,000 degrees you aren't going to touch it. I was just telling Clayton, the astronauts that came back Friday from outer space came into the atmosphere you saw it was just a fireball they were coming through 3,000-degree temperature these fires they say can be 5,000 degrees very, very serious. Not only that, I don't know if you have on the Northway is there going to be environmental, are they going to look back at some point environmental and take samples out of there because you put water on these fires they can generate other chemicals and I always thought hydrochloric acid is probably one of the worse ones they can generate you and you do not want to get hydrochloric acid on your body that's for sure.
So, we have more work on these. The APA just approved the first battery site in the Adirondacks it's on Sacandaga they just did that a week and half, two weeks ago. This is getting a lot of attention from Albany. I've had calls from Senator Stec's office asking me you know what my position was because they were being contacted by the company that wants to come into Ticonderoga. I told him I have no position at this point. We're still doing research and I've got a binder about three inches thick already on my desk of things that I've put together and there has

been some major, major fires across not only this country but across the world so we're looking at this and figuring it out. I've got a hospital a half mile of that site less than half a mile plus I've got two elderly housing units in that same vicinity so a lot more to come.

THURSTON: I would like to suggest, recently St. Armand was approached by a company Parson Power that wants to install one at the substation on Trudeau Road in the Town of St. Armand and we did a one-year moratorium so that it would give us enough time to study the issue. We don't have a building permit for these types of systems also, it's in a residential area the residents up there do not want it. They did do a petition, they did submit it to our town board so it's a very serious concern and I recommend if one of these is coming into your towns consider doing a one year moratorium to kind of slow things down so that you do have time to move forward if that's what you want to do but at least having a moratorium in place you can slow it down.

O'BRYAN: We have a moratorium we passed last Thursday night by resolution and what happened was we went into changing the zoning laws for solar farms this also got put in with those and so you should look back if you have zoning laws already for solar farms go back and look at them but we did the same thing. One thing about these things when we talk about them they are all different sizes you figure every one of them is at least five-megawatts, five-megawatts is a tractor trailer, that's the size of it a tractor trailer in Ticonderoga want to put 50 megawatts so they want ten tractor trailer size units on a ten-acre space and that's what we are looking at. Right now, in Vergennes, Vermont if you drive through Vergennes you're going to see big red signs with slashes through that say, BESS they don't want them there. They want to put a five-megawatt unit in only and it is being fought by the family that lives right next to it wants to be able to use their property and it is too close so a lot more to come.

MCNALLY: I'm not on this committee. Do we actually know the benefit of having these storage units? Are we going to save money?

O'BRYAN: I've been told what happened was the state closed down some power generation systems in the state, they didn't have a good plan on how to replace that energy on their end so the energy grid has been running for several years in a deficit and New York City being the place they are really concerned about the most and took care of that. In Essex County we have lines that run right past Westport, right past down through Port Henry, Ti, Crown Point going down to New York City it is now connected so the City has got the power they need upstate is lacking so what we want from New York State is that we will put these units around the state when there is excess load and excess electricity on the line the battery systems will pull that energy in and store it and then when we get into a period when there is additional energy that is needed brown out period especially it will start to release that energy back into the grid. If there is a total failure of the grid the back feed, what they want from us is to back feed the grid for five hours in our area so that's what it is meant to do help solve some of this problem with these faults and need for power.

MCNALLY: In my travels throughout New York the problem we have in New York State is we don't produce enough electricity. You know they are talking about nuclear if you think battery storage is bad for your towns wait until they start putting in nuclear. Because of low manufacturing actually and we are probably never going to see this but there's parts of the state that the southern tier has always had manufacturing and they have companies that want to come here and they can't come here because they have no power so our problem isn't with the storage our problem is we don't produce enough electricity they are talking these mini nuclear plants with five to ten years.

O'BRYAN: It's a real problem.

MCNALLY: It will be a real problem if we didn't allow manufacturing in the north country it would be a real problem because we don't enough electricity.

THURSTON: Any other questions, comments? Thank you. Sheriff David Reynolds.

SHERIFF REYNOLDS: I have nothing as spectacular as that but you do have my report so if you have any questions?

THURSTON: Does anyone have any questions for the Sheriff? Thank you. Probation – Heather has been excused. Public Defender.

EVATT: If you turn to the last page you'll see my report. As I indicated last month we are understaffed we are actually losing another employee this Friday another attorney so we'll be down to three attorneys including myself and I will be out starting in June so we'll be down to two attorneys. We did have an interested person who was qualified but they found the salary to be unacceptable and that's where we are at.

THURSTON: Can you please tell us what the salary is right now?

EVATT: The salary that we were able to offer that person is $95,000.

THURSTON: Ninety-five plus benefits?

EVATT: Yes.

THURSTON: Mike?

MASCARENAS: Emily sent me a nice report last week. I've actually looked at it. She has some really good thoughts in there on how we can maybe get through the issue she's having some of the problems with it, can we get people to fill those rolls still. Looks like the answer is probably yes in some areas and maybe in other areas. So, Emily and I will be meeting soon. I'm not so concerned about ILS and the payments but hopefully we maybe backfilling some of these larger courts whether they are overflow attorneys or contract attorneys is probably the way to go to keep the burden off her office and maybe end up in a position where we lose more because of it. We had a real similar issue with the DA's office last year. Emily was in a good place and now she's not and we were just fortunate in the DA's office that we didn't lose additional people by them having to double down on the activity that we are asking them to do. So, I think she has some really good thoughts there in terms of how to meet the need and I think we can present something maybe even by full board this month and I'd like to get it out there just so everybody knows. I know that we want to talk about this at committee and not just bring it to ways and means and/or full board but understand that this is an issue that we've got to deal with and I think she would rather deal with it sooner rather than later so that she can reassure the people that remain that help is on the way or we are at least looking at everything.

EVATT: And not only helping my staff but the people that we're trying to serve. If we aren't serving the aging population of Essex County with attorneys, the whole reason ILS exists is because of lawsuits so if we do not serve them there will be some backlash, they have rights that need to be protected whether my office is staffed or not so we need to fill those.

STANLEY: So, there is money from the State to support the public defender's office but it's the problem of going with salaries and increasing the salaries in the public defender's office that we risk losing other department lawyers because you may not walk that fine line of and this probably for you more Mike?

MASCARENAS: So, the answer is yes on both, I think you got it. The issue with DA and Public Defender is while they are apples and oranges in some ways they're not so ying and yang in other ways but they essentially have slots of attorneys that we can look at and if you're the low man on that totem pole or low woman on that totem pole you're going to make a lower amount. I think when slots become available on a higher level in a different department they may jump ship and/or kind of play that game in terms of getting to a position that benefits them and for me, as the County Manager as long as I retain that individual I kind of don't care. My goal is to retain all of the attorneys that we can retain regardless of whether they are working at any given time I just don't want to lose them to the outside but what it does is it creates holes in what we are looking at. Now with that being said, if you we were to get an applicant that had a lot of experience and Emily came to me and said, hey, this person is a ten year public defender we would come back to this board and say, we are willing to offer a little more money to do that job whether it is somebody just out of law school or somebody with a little more experience we can make that decision and bring that back to the board but yes, ILS will support it if you're losing the salary it's really a break even thing for us if there's three holes that means we now have approximately $150,000 for a position when you're talking about a salary and benefit to kind of jockey around budget wise to be able to meet the need financially I'm not worried about the financial need being met as much as I am the physical need of having people in the positions to do the job.

STANLEY: I'm sorry. I guess my point is we could raise the salary of the public defender office to attract people but we risk losing some of our own employees going into that position because of the job having essentially even pay across our grades.

MASCARENAS: Correct. We have four different departments that have attorneys is really where you're at and that comparison between them there's county attorney, district attorney, DSS has two and then our public defender, conflict defender they are kind of working hand in hand but they're opposite right in terms of that and then we have our ATB panel which is kind of our las resort when we conflict out of cases or case load becomes unbearable but panel really doesn't have a lot of individuals on it either so that's where – and our revenue back on that is less than what we get from ILS so we do get some back, we get half the increase that was approved by the State Legislator but not the amount we get back if we hired them directly through her.

EVATT: To Mr. Stanley's question, the person who applied cited the District Attorney's salary as being more for a starting position. I'm not in charge of that obviously but we did a great job last year raising all shifts right but the person in my office is getting just slightly more to go over to DSS so if we can standardize it across the board you'll get less hopping, you'll get hopping people change jobs but we can't even draw someone to apply for the bottom position in our office.

MCNALLY: There's apples and oranges with the DA compared to the Public Defender. The DA's office has to handle 100% of their cases every crime in the county but the public defender's office doesn't handle 100% some of the conflict defender's office I'm sure handles some and there is a lot of outside counsel too so those two departments are different. I have seen the salaries of all the attorneys that work at the county and they are low, they are low. I have friend who worked twenty years as a social services attorney for another county who just resigned or quit and now is working per diem as hired for outside counsel. Is it $168?

EVATT: $158.00 an hour.

MCNALLY: $158.00. She was at the other county for twenty years and she was making about $50 an hour working forty hours a week so now she's picking and choosing working from home in multiple counties making much money at $158.00 an hour and that's another thing compete with.

MASCARENAS: Even at that rate we are not getting those attorneys either so that tells me we have an attorney shortage issue as well that they just don't exist.

O'BRYAN: Emily, it says here the applicant was interested/qualified but thought salary was too low. Did they give you an idea what they thought the salary should be?

EVATT: They indicated to me because they applied at the DA's office last for $102,000, that they would be able to accept $101,000 here for us and I didn't speak to Mike about yet because I'm not sure if we want this person but I do want to talk about it.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, and any changes or recommendations to salary we do have the ability to do it in my office because she has money available so that's just a conversation that her and I have to have, that's all.

THURSTON: Any other questions? Thank you. Conflict defender, Miriam is not here. Anything else?

MASCARENAS: Yes, I do have a resolution from the Assigned Counsel office to accept a grant for quality improvement for Family Court representation from Office of Indigent Legal Services for three years (2026-2028) for $250,000 per year totaling $750,000.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ASSIGNED COUNSEL OFFICE TO ACCEPT YEAR ONE (1) OF A THREE (3) YEAR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GRANT (2026-2028) FROM THE OFFICE OF INDIGENT LEGAL SERVICES, IN THE AMOUNT OF $250,000.00 PER YEAR FOR FAMILY COURT REPRESENTATION. Pierce, Tyler

THURSTON: Any questions? All in favor aye, any opposed – motion carries.

MASCARENAS: That's it.

THURSTON: We are adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this public safety committee it was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors