PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Monday, May 11, 2026 - 9:30 AM

Ken Hughes, Chairperson
Davina Thurston, Vice-Chairperson

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

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

Also present: William Tansey, Michale LaVallie, Randi Swires and Eric Weyand.

HUGHES: Good morning. I'd like to call the public safety meeting to order. Please stand for the pledge. Good morning everybody. I'd like to call Veterans office for their report. Any report for the Veteran's office? I see we have a document before us.

PIERCE: Good morning. There's a document passed around from Sara's office. Sarah wanted to let you know that numbers are a little low this month because she was out for a week and she is the one who calculates them. Clayton, you had information on the medal?

MENSER: Yes, I spoke previously a couple of times and now we actually have the information here that anybody who served actually in Korea during the Korean War or if their ship supporting the Korean War they can apply for a medal for that time frame and if the service member has already passed a family member such as a spouse or a surviving child may submit on their parent's behalf. It is a very nice-looking medal, something long forgotten.

HUGHES: Terrific. Thank you for bringing that to our attention.

PIERCE: One last comment, we do every year hold a ceremony out at the Veteran's cemetery on Memorial Day and the timing for that is 9:30 a.m.

HUGHES: Thank you. I do want to reiterate that it has been many years since we've seen a nice in-size report like this so I applaud your efforts for bringing this to the committee's attention. I think it's really important and I thank you. Any questions for Veterans Affairs this morning?

THURSTON: I just have a quick question, regarding the medals, is it only residents of Essex County?

MENSER: No, this is nationwide.

THURSTON: Okay thank you.

MENSER: The one thing that I will reiterate which is says in the form is if the individual is still alive they take priority over deceased members and that's just the process through proper channels in

D.C.

THURSTON: Thank you.

HUGHES: Great, thank you. Any other questions for Veterans this morning? Nice to have these conversations thank you. Moving on to County Sealer, Mr. Woods good morning.

WOODS: Good morning everyone. If you look at the second page, you'll be able to see my report from last month. I'll give you a moment to look at it. If you have any questions I'd be happy to answer any.

HUGHES: Any questions for Mr. Woods this morning on his monthly report? It does not appear that we have any questions for you today.

WOODS: Perfect, thank you.

HUGHES: Moving onto Board of Elections – Roy Holzer and Mary McGowan.

MCGOWAN: Good morning everyone. You have our report. A couple highlights there designating petitions ended on April the 6th everybody did very well. Independent petitions will be starting next Tuesday, May 19th one of the highlights this month is we did an in-house training, usually we have to send out our information and have our ballots created for us and then they come back and we put them in our machines we've been training on how to create our own ballots in house and it was very informative so we will be starting that process for the primary. Our new hours are 8:00 to 4:00, thank you for that.

HOLZER: Okay for those of you that care, it's 43 days until the primary and 176 days until the general election. Like Mary said independent filing days start next Tuesday for filing independent petitions. We are open at the Board of Elections 9:00 to 5:00 every day and that goes from 5/19 – 5/26. Remember if you're running for office you have to do your notary acceptance form so if you could bring it in notarized. If you need a form contact our office and we'll be happy to help you. Last week Mary and I attended with several of you here the county career and employment expo. Mary and I actually had the opportunity to test out the county DPW excavator so we do have Jim tells us, other possibilities if this Commissioner's job doesn't work out. We have potential. We have pictures to prove it.
We mailed out yearly mail check letters last Friday they go to every single voter in the county it just verifies mailing address, party registration and like and finally we need to find a new polling site in Ticonderoga. As some of you may know they approved a new fire house in that community so we're actively looking for November polling site. We'll have the primary there at the old firehouse but for November we're actively looking for a new site.

HUGHES: Excellent. Can you give us a quick update on poll workers? I'm assuming it's an ongoing effort to recruit poll workers?

HOLZER: Always and in fact that was one of the reasons we always attend the career expo to try and get them. We are really trying to find younger high school, college students to help fill the void and they are less intimidated by the whole poll worker pad, you know the little computer when you're signing in and they understand it and are not intimidated by pushing buttons and things like that so we're really trying, we do have a training class starting in June and I think we are training 23 new potential poll workers. Now, mind you it's 23 but by the time they complete the

training and see some of the things that are involved with working the polls they say, thanks but no thanks.

HUGHES: So, ongoing recruiting for us to help support your departments effort.

PIERCE: When specifically is that training and how long is that?

HOLZER: So the poll worker training is four hours and if you have any people that are interested in it we always assign them with seasoned poll workers so we don't just put four people on a site that are all new we always try to combine it with people that have experience and know the process so you know, that's the process. If we get a new poll worker they are assigned to people that have done it in the past.

PIERCE: The specific date in June? Do you have that?

HOLZER: We will be doing them separately so have the individual contact our office and we're even willing to do smaller training classes just to get people certified.

MCGOWAN: And we do pay them for the training.

HUGHES: Excellent. Any other questions?

MENSER: Sometimes we have to put referendums on ballots for things we want done in the towns for laws, when is the cut off for that?

HOLZER: I will have to let you know but it's coming up soon. I'll get back to you later this week with the actual information.

HUGHES: That's a very fair question. Excellent question. Any other questions for the Board of Elections Commissioners this morning?

REUSSER: Would you share all that to all the supervisors?

HOLZER: For referendums?

REUSSER: Yes.

HOLZER: Yes.

HUGHES: Thank you. Any other questions? Excellent report, thank you very much. Next up I welcome Michael Langey District Attorney.

DA LANGEY: Good morning everybody. The update for this month for the DA's office, we do have a vacancy this month. We lost our victim advocate which was Carol Hayes. She worked at the DA's office for the last ten years. She was retired Lake Placid PD and now she's taken the opportunity to be a local court Judge so I wish her the best but we are looking for someone to fill that spot. We do have an Intern for the summer starting this week which is hopeful, it's good. We've have two the other one will start later on. The murder trial in Ticonderoga has been put off until July 20 so it will be good to have some people in the office that pick up some slack and when that starts that will be busy and should last a couple weeks. We've also started the new grand

jury term for the last two weeks. Any questions?

HUGHES: Any questions for the District Attorney this morning on his report? Advertising for that vacancy is through the normal channels?

DA LANGEY: Yes.

HUGHES: Thank you sir. Emergency Services – Mr. Favro is unable to join us this morning but we are welcoming Mr. Lavallie.

LAVALLIE: Good morning everybody. You all have our report. If you have any questions I'd be happy to answer them.

HUGHES: Before resolutions, any questions for Mr. LaVallie on his report from emergency management? Looks like not right now so let's go right onto resolutions sir.

LAVALLIE: A resolution to enter a contract with RS Telecom Inc. for maintenance on the County microwave site at the Monkton site not to exceed $6500.00, with money to come from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH RS TELCOM, INC. IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $6500.00, FOR MAINTENANCE ON THE COUNTY MICROWAVE SITE AT MONKTON WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Pierce, Menser

HUGHES: Discussion? Questions or concerns on this? All in favor, signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries. Thank you.

LAVALLIE: Second resolution I have to apply for state fiscal year 2025 and state fiscal year 2026 PSAP Operations grant in the amount of $405,532.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE STATE FISCAL YEAR 2025 AND STATE FISCAL YEAR 2026 OPERATIONS GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF $405,532.00. Stanley, Menser

HUGHES: Discussion? I'm curious, do you know how these numbers are calculated? The award amount is calculated?

MASCARENAS: It's a formula.

HUGHES: Is it formula driven? Okay, thank you. Any other questions? All in favor, signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries. Next.

LAVALLIE: A resolution to purchase replacement radio parts on state contract from Motorola Solutions in the amount of $30,879.08, with money to come from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO PURCHASE REPLACEMENT RADIO PARTS ON STATE CONTRACT FROM MOTOROLA SOLUTIONS IN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES DEPARTMENT, IN THE AMOUNT OF $30,879.08, WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. O'Bryan, Stanley

HUGHES: Discussion?

STANLEY: I would just like to take a moment on this resolution to thank the forward thinking of our emergency services for going out and getting these parts because it will keep our services down for a lower amount of time so I thank you guys for your forward thinking to go out and get these parts now.

HUGHES: Yes, thank you for that. The productivity on behalf of this department, working with DPW and other counties agreed.

THURSTON: I just have a question and I'm not opposed to this idea but something occurs to me if we're purchasing parts that we might not need are we risking a warranty issue? So, what I'm saying is for example, you buy a box of parts you don't need a part for two years, you go to use it the part doesn't function, is not working correctly what is the process then you know if this has been in the box for two years, is it out of warranty? This has happened to me and my concern is this might happen to us especially if the parts are quite expensive.

LAVALLIE: Nope the understanding of the shelf life on that I definitely understand your concern with that. We've worked close with Motorola Inc. and they have advised us that this is a good replacement to have on the shelf for our units that are out in the field.

MASCARENAS: I think too the bigger issue isn't necessarily, the warranties a concern it's really some of our parts anybody that who's dealt in the computer world knows that when Microsoft 7 is gone it's no longer supportive and if you don't have the ability to stay up and running you're going to be stuck buying a whole new computer system you've got to switch to Microsoft 10 in order to do that that's really the position we're in, in terms of our radio system so, we have a system that was built what are we now on? Fifteen? Sixteen years ago? When we turned on that switch so a lot of these things are coming to end of life and we need to be able to extend that end of life in order to properly plan for the financial stability of the system long term. Mr. Stanley and I have had some conversations about that, Mr. Hughes and I have. What I've asked DPW, Personnel and Emergency services personnel to be prepared to do is report to you and I'm hoping that presentation was ready by ways and means. I'd like them to be able to do it at the conclusion of the ways and means meeting so we can go through the meeting and on the back end do that presentation for the whole board so you can see kind of the history of the system, kind of the game plan for where we are, where we're going and how we are going to be able to get there with a plan of finance that's responsible to the people that count on an ambulance coming or a fire truck coming or a police officer coming every time they dial 911 so it all kind of goes hand in hand. We're at a critical point right now, we are at the point of break and fix and these specific items are something that you want to have on the shelf to make sure you can get if they break because they are becoming obsolete. A lot of things that are happening now, a part breaks we send it back, you're not getting new, you're getting refurbished because they are not supporting those types of products anymore as they move onto new products. So we're going to have a lot of decisions to make over the next handful of years in terms of where we're going with this system you will be much more informed following that presentation. It's been about two years' worth of a lot of work. You haven't saw a lot of costs associated with that because we've had the expertise in house to really do that and not spend a lot of money on consultants to come up with plans, in the past we would of have to so I really applaud the work these guys have done and I think you will too once you see that presentation and like I said, my plan would be to ask if we could do it at the conclusion of ways and means two weeks from now.

HUGHES: Thank you.

THURSTON: I'm not opposed to this I'm just want to know if there is anything we can do to mitigate that risk of buying a part, having it sit in a box and then have that part not work. I don't know what that would look like. I have a few ideas and we can talk about it later but I just, I'm not opposed to this. I'm just a little concerned.

HUGHES: Thanks for raising that concern.

STANLEY: I feel like this is sort of like make sure you get your rain coat before you go out in the potential rain. If you have the coat it's probably not going to rain. If you don't have it, it's going to pour and you're going to get soaked. We had a similar instance in the Town of Jay when one of our plow trucks got into an accident, blew the airbag the truck was ready to go back in service but we couldn't buy the airbag for it or get the airbag for it. We had to go out and buy a brand new $192,000 five-ton to replace that truck because of a part they couldn't get so that's why I'm in full support of this is because this system needs to run. Thank you.

O'BRYAN: I just would like to say I actually worked on this project with emergency services many years ago with International Paper. We are at the same point we were then and I can remember it was critical to us in what we needed and they did a good job with it. They bought state of the art and unfortunately state of the art goes by the way side. One thing I do know that Motorola dealing with them they are very good to deal with and they back their products so I don't think you will have a problem with them especially when selling a new system. I'm glad to hear you guys are working on it.

HUGHES: Thank you sir. Any other comments, questions on this resolution? We have a motion and a second on the floor. Being none, all in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries.

LAVALLIE: Thank you. Another one, resolution to go out to bid and accept the bid for Emergency Management Resources LLC to provide EMS billing services with the money to come from budgeted funds.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASING AGENT TO GO OUT TO BID AND ACCEPT BID FROM EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT RESOURCES LLC, TO PROVIDE EMS BILLING SERVICES WITH FUNDS TO COME FROM BUDGETED FUNDS. Pierce, Menser

HUGHES: Discussion? Questions or concerns on this resolution? Being none, all in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries.

LAVALLIE: One final one that was an addition in at the last minute here, requesting board approval to complete the second amendment to the lease agreement between Essex County and Verizon Wireless for the Belfry Mountain Tower site amending the lease agreement to modify the description of the premises and replace the current exhibit A and exhibit B with an updated exhibit A and exhibit B and it's my understanding that you've been provided that?

HUGHES: We have the resolution, yes that was a separate piece of paper that was on your desks.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A SECOND AMENDMENT TO LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ESSEX COUNTY

AS LESSOR AND NEW YORK RSA 2 CELLULAR PARTNERSHIP D/B/A VERIZON WIRELESS FOR THE BELFRY MOUNTAIN TOWER SITE AMENDING THE LEASE AGREEMENT TO MODIFY THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PREMISES AND REPLACE THE CURRENT EXHIBIT A AND EXHIBIT B WITH AN UPDATED EXHIBIT A AND EXHIBIT B. Stanley, Tyler

HUGHES: Questions, discussion?

STANLEY: Is this exhibit A and exhibit B going to be in the resolution for regular board?

MASCARENAS: What is the change Michael?

LAVALLIE: I believe it's an antenna. I'm not 100% sure.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, we'll get you the specific information of what the physical change actually is.

STANLEY: Thank you.

LAVALLIE: I apologize for that.

HUGHES: Mr. Tansey please come up sir. We like information at times of lack of information so you're time is good.

TANSEY: Good morning the actual description we've given them space for their antenna operating machinery, we've given them space to run wires up to the site from Dalton Hill they are now requesting the ability to put the wires underground they are also requesting the easement we have which comes from Dalton Hill up to the tower site we own an easement, we have an easement on servient properties Verizon wants us to grant an easement on our easement as opposed to just giving them access to the property. It makes it very, very specific. In the grant world of easements and deeds you can only give what you have. We only have an easement so we can only give an easement and that's what they are asking for.

HUGHES: Thank you for that clarification. Thank you sir I appreciate it very much. I have a motion and a second on the floor. We've had some good discussion on this and clarification. Any other questions? All in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries. Thank you very much. Anything else from your department? Thank you very much. Moving on to Sheriff Reynolds.

SHERIFF REYNOLDS: You have my report and I have one resolution but on my report, I did want to correct something. I think I fat fingered my revenue, so it's only $40,000 not $400,000 sorry. If you have any questions on my report I can answer them.

HUGHES: Questions on the report before we do the resolution?

SHERIFF REYNOLDS: I have one resolution and it is to authorize the purchasing agent to award a contract to Omni Care for pharmaceutical services in the Essex County Correctional Facility and further authorizing the County Chairman or County Manager to execute that contract.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH OMNI CARE FOR PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES IN THE

ESSEX COUNTY CORRECTIONAL FACILITY. Pierce, Stanley

HUGHES: Discussion on this motion? Any questions on the resolution? Being none, all in favor signify by saying aye, opposed – motion carries. Anything for the Sheriff? You are good to go sir. Thank you have a good day.
No report from the coroners, so we will move onto probation, Heather Sheehan.

SHEEHAN: You have my report. I can answer any questions you may have.

HUGHES: So we have the report of the probation office in front you. Any questions?

MENSER: The probation office recently relocated and the Essex County Transportation bus used to bring people there and it's no longer on the route and I've been asked by actually one of the Judges from Ticonderoga if this could be brought up so the people who come up on the transportation bus can get to the correct location?

SHEEHAN: Yes, that's been an ongoing issue. We put band aides on the situation but it really hasn't been fixed yet. I believe the sheriff's department and myself have requested that it be a possibility. There was a transportation survey that just went out. We encourage our probation aries to fill that out and submit that as well as us as well. I did just do a presentation at the magistrates meeting the other night and we did ask maybe if it would be helpful if the magistrates would write a letter of support to make that a stop. So, any suggestions or help at this board level would be more than appreciated.

MASCARENAS: Not Heather's to manage. So, we'll speak to Doreen maybe just having them stop at the public safety building is the answer but we'll see if there's anything that is problematic from her end on doing that. I can't think of one but she'll certainly be able to tell me if that's feasible for whatever reason and yes, the stop was always at the main complex it wasn't specifically for probation it was anybody who came to Elizabethtown for any specific reason and acted in that way but yeah, we'll have that conversation with Doreen.

HUGHES: Thank you for raising that issue.

O'BRYAN: Can I say one thing about that too, Judge LaPearle talked to me about it and the timing of the day is important if you set this up because I know the Sheriff allows people to leave a certain hour in the morning and I think people are staying int hat area because they have no ride so this would help get them out of that area which is hard to get and it would help everybody out with not only looking at making a stop but making the correct times.

SHEEHAN: Yeah, I can't speak for the Sheriff's department but as far as our department goes, if we know that there's a stop at a certain time we will accommodate those appointments around the stop. The only concern on my end would be that there's need to be two stops and preferably not at 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. because then we're going to have people loitering every day.

MASCARENAS: And that's what we had here there was some that was essentially what was going on when they come here it would be brief and then wait for that 4 o'clock bus ride to head south.

SHEEHAN: But we are happy to accompany times and we'll work with them for them to be able to get that ride absolutely.

HUGHES: Anything else for Heather this morning? Okay, all set, thank you. Public Defender- Emily Evatt.

EVATT: Good morning everyone. I submitted my report. Do you have any questions? I would like to bring to your attention I brought my Deputy here with me this morning Mr. Weyand you'll be seeing next month.

HUGHES: Nice to see you Eric. Thank you for being here today. Any questions for Emily on her concise report, thank you. Any questions for her?

PIERCE: Emily hi. You have two interns this summer what do these interns do in your office?

EVATT: That's a great question. We have one in high school and one in college they will be doing different things. The one in college will be following attorneys to court, taking notes, helping them prepare memos, things of that nature. The high schooler will be doing that as well but there will also be some filing, some scanning, some more entry level processing but they will be here for the trial which I think will be very exciting for them.

HUGHES: Any other questions? I think I speak for the entire group and room that says best of luck to you. Well wishes in welcoming a child into this world.

EVATT: Thank you.

HUGHES: Conflict Defender – Miriam Hadden.

HADDEN: Good morning everybody. I circulated my report this morning. Does anybody have any questions?

HUGHES: Everyone have the report from Miriam this morning on your desks? Any questions for her? Thank you for providing it. Any questions?

O'BRYAN: I'm looking at the numbers Miriam and they look like they've grown a little bit and you're one person.

HADDEN: Yeah, so actually my caseload has just about doubled within the last few months. I was just discussing that with the public defender's office. I learned this morning that the money that was allocated for a second conflict defender is now going to be used for the Assigned Counsel panel which I was a little concerned about, frustrated with this morning when I found out it to be on this just because my numbers are up and grown so much but obviously you know, we need to do what we can to make sure that we meet all the needs of the county without any additional costs so I'm hoping that we can have some meetings to discuss how my caseload might be lessened as well by the use of these new so, essentially what's happening this summer Ms. Evatt as you can see is obviously going on maternity leave their office is significantly understaffed right now they only have two other attorneys and they just lost their third attorney last month. I think in the anticipation of that as well as having the murder case, a lot more cases have been coming to my office for the last few months which has been quite taxing for me personally and so it was sort of in the back of my mind that if this should continue I will need somebody else to pick up some of the extra work because I was already at my, my caseload was already a weighted caseload that was doubled.

O'BRYAN: The other thing we have to be aware of is this bottlenecks the courts. Ticonderoga court last week was 98 cases in one night they actually got done at 10, 11 at night they were done I guess. I know both you and the public defenders' I know are working hard at this, the numbers we've got to watch these numbers because it could really cost a lot of problems.

MASCARENAS: I can expand on that a little bit too and what we are doing. We're trying to create an overflow plan that ILS will look at and approve in terms of us having attorneys from the panel work at specific courts until further notice essentially so our goal is to get our office public defender back up to full staff knowing that attorneys are hard to come by we need a plan B. We do have several interested attorneys on taking on courts on basically not a full-time basis they would be paid the panel rate but they would be those attorneys that would go to those courts weekly. Ticonderoga we have a substantial amount of interest so we think we can meet Ticonderoga's need, Lake Placid we have a substantial amount of interest, North Elba so I think we can meet those court's needs. What we're doing now is negotiating with ILS so nothing has really been decided from what I've saw because we're still kind of trying to figure out what they will pay for and what they won't pay for. I'm looking at this as it's irrelevant I need, while I would like the money it's a service I can't choose not to do. The constitution gives people the right to representation and the burden of that representation has been placed on counties to do and supply so that's what we'll continue to do. Now, I'm trying to work hard to get the money to pay for it. Emily has been really great at offering solutions to this problem. Leah has been outstanding in offering solutions in trying to get these things down on paper that we're trying to accomplish so we're close to having a good plan. I think we could be off and running pretty quickly which should save everybody caseloads if this happens it's in our larger courts. Reg Bedell who is our Assigned Counsel administrator has agreed to take on several courts on his own including here at one of the county courts and a couple local courts so everybody is pitching in and trying to help out right now and we will have a final plan to put in front of everybody pretty quickly we're just kind of waiting on the answer from the state.

O'BRYAN: That is great that's what is happening and is needed. It is best to be ahead of it and if you may just want to write a brief note to the Judges from the county and say Judges, here's what we're doing makes me feel a lot better because I tell you, you sit there for 98 cases that is a lot it's taxing. So I'm glad to hear that thank you both.

HUGHES: And thank you for your perspective too. Any other questions for Conflict Defender, Miriam Hadden?

MENSER: I was wondering, how many of these number increases are based on seasonal issues or is it pretty much things are not going the way they should and the county is taking the wrong direction?

HADDEN: I would say it's not seasonal. I don't think that that is a factor. I don't know if there's been a change in the numbers overall I think there has been just a drop in the number of attorneys available to handle the caseload so, I think that's why my numbers have increased. I know that when Jerry Palladino left to go to work at the department of social services that I received quite a large number of his cases. There was several cases where I had to meet one case but that particular person had three or four other cases that were also pending, they came to me you know, I think there was just like not availability for some of the assistance public defenders because of the murder case they were working on or more cases were coming my way that's sort of my take on it. I don't know if any other factors have really played in but I have noticed a

significant uptick in the cases in Ticonderoga. I mean I think it's pretty standard when we 94, I know that Judge LaPearle is handling a large amount of those cases because of his case load before the new Judge started as well as the fact that the new judge is still getting up to speed on things but I will say it's pretty standard for us coming home, for me at least personally after 9 pm, 10 o'clock at night a couple times a month and you know, that's hard on attorneys, that's hard on the families of attorneys when we're working from 8:30 in the morning until 10 o'clock at night on a regular basis. It's a bit much to ask for any person to put that amount of time in. I think if it's possible it would be great for everybody to kind of come together and figure out a way to make this whole situation work better for everybody. I know it's great for every town to have their own Judge and I know that towns like to have that autonomy y but reality I think our county would benefit perhaps from a district court arrangement where there's a centralized court because I think you know attorneys are being stretched very, very thin and it effects how the defendants, it effects the type of representation they can get when you have the double I guess, recommended caseload you're not, people are getting half the amount of your time and your attention and you are able to give half your time and attention to a case there might be a very serious case that affects somebody's life so these are all important things and I think sometimes the status quo just has to change and adjust with the times.

O'BRYAN: We have talked about district courts in the past and again, it's transportation that holds us up because we are such a rural county, such a large county that if we ever crack that one it would make perfect sense to move in that direction because I hear you, it would help the numbers.

HADDEN: Certainly and perhaps a way to look at that too is savings on one end could be high. I know that transportation has been a huge issue not just for the public defender's and the courts but when I was an attorney for the department of social services it was very commonly a reason that people weren't able to be reunited with their children because they did not have anyway to get to their appointments and that was hurting their ability to work towards unification so I think you know, public transportation is huge for a county where there is such a large number of people who are on public assistance and welfare who just don't have the money to pay for these raising gas costs. I think if there is a way that we can improve the transportation locally I know I've had plenty of clients who have waited and waited for a bus that never came and missed court or missed a probation appointment or whatever it may be because of that. I think everybody would benefit from that so I would strongly encourage discussion about how that can be improved if we were to move to a district court certainly, that would save money in some ways that could perhaps be applied towards public transportation.

HUGHES: We are hearing a theme this morning thank you for reinforcing it.

REUSSER: I was just going to say that does the county prevention team whatever figure out what the type of cases that dominate these courts and what are we doing about prevention and intervention in reducing the numbers of the court? How active are we putting these pieces together?

HADDEN: Right. I can say from my experience that I would say probably 90% of the cases are drug-related if not directly, indirectly that seems to be the largest factor in all these cases so I mean, that's an issue that I think the whole country is struggling to battle with so it's a difficult one.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, rural America seems to have that issue in general. I've been here 30 years, started with the youth bureau and we did the risk youth behavior survey at that time and that survey has taken on several different iterations but what you're going to see if you went back

30 years and looked at that data you're primary concerns are going to be what they were 30 years ago increased access to drugs and alcohol per capita in an area that has 36,000 people but is the second largest county in New York State geographically transportation has been an issue for a very long time. Not that people aren't trying to solve the issue it's how do you solve that issue and how do you keep it cost effective for those who are paying for the service? Because sometimes you have riders, sometimes you don't have riders there's one, there's two it becomes very inefficient. DSS has a little different animal in terms of their requirement. A lot of times we have homemakers on staff, OFA now has a driver on staff where they are able to meet some of their need but not all their need certainly helps but yeah, there's a big hole here. I can tell you courts are inundated at the end which conflict defender, public defender don't necessarily handle all this traffic our DA's are there as long as anyone and traffic tickets are a huge part of court system that bogs you down and takes up a lot of time at the end of the night. When I was doing that work we were getting somewhere around 20,000 a year in traffic tickets most of it is our size and the amount of interstate that comes through Essex County and touches your towns so yeah, there is an increasing need to have more attorneys to do better but there is less and less people to do that work and how we solve that problem, we'll see.

HUGHES: Work in progress.

THURSTON: Just one thought, how much of your work load is increased I understand and you're saying that you need an attorney but could you benefit from an intern or more of a clerical assistance rather than straight up an attorney that we all know is in short supply that you could perhaps use?

HADDEN: I think that my secretary does a really great job at trying to meet all of the clerical office needs. I don't really think that's where our need lies I think it's more just covering the courts. For example, Wednesday night courts just recently I had to be in Ticonderoga and had to adjourn Essex and that's an issue that comes up often there's several courts that they only happen to be happening once a month and it happens to be at the same time as one of the busier courts so it would certainly help if the town justices would try to avoid you know the smaller ones perhaps for example, Essex has a court the same night Judge LaPearle's court but if he were to hold court on a different Wednesday then perhaps it wouldn't be an issue so maybe just having some of the town justices try to keep that in mind when deciding which night of the month to hold court given the limited number of attorneys who can appear in court these days would help a lot. I think it's really just right now it's just the legal work is taking up most of my time not as much as the clerical side.

STANLEY: Don't need a huge discussion about this but just wanted to get this idea out there, we have like virtual doctors can we do a virtual lawyer to court from a central location here at the county that the defenders could zoom into these local courts?

MASCARENAS: We actually had the equipment one time but – we wrote a grant I think Dave and I worked on it years ago they were doing some of that stuff and the answer is no, they don't allow it.

HADDEN: I think that because involves constitutional rights they just want to ensure that you know, that people are getting adequate representation and I think it's very difficult to be able to conduct a hearing a lot of times issues like bail will come up at the initial appearance it's important for an attorney and a client to be able to have a moment to speak to be able to answer the courts questions and things like is logistically very difficult to do that.

PIERCE: I think some judicial districts do a lot of court –

HUGHES: You probably did it during Covid

MADDEN: The courts did just start changing their rules a little bit as it relates to individuals who are confined in prisons and mental institutions.

STANLEY: So I would just add to that comment then, that maybe that is something we should be sort of advocating for because instead of trying to redo our public transportation system I mean I was joking here with Supervisor McGill we need to have an Uber for court but I think if we can actual promote and work towards the technologies there, we have it, we've used it let's advocate to get this done and that's the most cost effective way to solve this problem.

HADDEN: I think on thing to also keep in mind though is that most of the individuals that are represented don't have computers, they very often don't have cell phones with minutes or time on it they are using track phones it's often very difficult to even just get them to come to court because we don't have any way of communicating.

STANLEY: So it wouldn't be for the individual, the individual would go to the town court like they always do we just need to have a system and be allowed to have a system that you guys working out of Elizabethtown can go into the 18 different courts and be able to do that. It's not asking the individual to have more even though I think there are some individuals that have cell phones over cars but that's neither here nor there it's more about trying to connect these courts and the local courts than it is to try and to figure out how to get everybody moved and courts going to 11 o'clock at night, for you going from Ticonderoga to North Elba I don't know how that works but there are solutions that should be able to be figured out.

HUGHES: Thank you sir. Any other questions? Thank you very much for bringing up these topics. I just want to remind the committee and the board that after the special meeting at 11:15 today there will be a walk through at the public safety building with probation and with emergency management services everybody is invited to attend. So you can participate in that it will be an excellent tour from both of those departments. Is there anything else for the good and the order of this meeting?

MCNALLY: I have two points first one is it's great that we have retired Judges in our forum they add a lot to the conversation when it comes to criminal.
The second thing is I'm not sure where to put this but on June 8th I've invited Jennifer Manierre, she is the Director of Clean Energy Citing for NYSERTA and she's going to come up and do a presentation on battery storage and also do Q&A.

HUGHES: Great, thank you for bringing that to our attention that will be good conversation. Is there anything else for the good and the order of this committee? We stand adjourned.

As there was no further discussion to come before this Public Safety committee it was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Garrison, Clerk
Board of Supervisors