



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES – AUGUST 19, 2025 **MARK A. OLSON, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McCarron, Mr. Bush, Ms. Fiato

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mr. Garland

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Mr. Romeo; also see attached

Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. DISTRICT ATTORNEY: William Fitzpatrick, District Attorney

a. Amending the 2025 Onondaga County Budget to Accept Grant Funds from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services for Additional Prosecutorial Services (\$3,000,000)

PURPOSE: For Onondaga County District Attorney's Office to accept the \$3,000,000 Prosecutorial Services - Additional Expenses from the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services.

OBJECTIVE/ WORK PLAN: District Attorney William J. Fitzpatrick has been appointed Special Prosecutor to investigate and potentially prosecute those responsible for the deaths Robert Brooks and Messiah Nantwi at the Marcy and Midstate Correctional facilities in Oneida County. D.A. Fitzpatrick was appointed after NYS Attorney General Letitia James, who by law has state wide jurisdiction over deaths of incarcerated individuals, determined her office had conflicts of interest in each case. In order to offset expenses associated with two complex investigations and prosecutions involving 30 correctional officers in another county, Governor Hochul promised D.A. Fitzpatrick \$3,000,000 to be used to directly support the prosecution expenses as well as other prosecutorial related services that support a fair and effective justice system and comprehensive public safety response to crime that works to support survivors and hold perpetrators accountable.

FUNDING SOURCE: New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services

BUDGET: \$3,000,000

- Prosecution
 - Attorney General (AG) asked Mr. Fitzpatrick to take over prosecution of the death of inmate Robert Brooks
 - 5 days after arraigning 10 people regarding the death of Robert Brooks, inmate Messiah Nantwi was killed
 - 2 Assistant DA's dedicated to both homicides as well as Mr. Fitzpatrick as lead counsel on both cases
 - Governor reached out about financing:
 - Promised \$2M (Robert Brooks case)
 - Promised an additional \$1M (Messiah Nantwi case)
 - \$3M will be spent on (i.e.) expert witnesses and travel to Utica (2-3 week trial)
- Vera House
 - Under new leadership
 - Have been in conversations with Tricia Matthews (Chief Executive Officer) for about 2-3 months
 - Vera House in bad financial shape because of mismanagement (due to 2 individuals from a previous administration)
 - Facing deficit of \$900,000 because of the inability to get grant money
 - DA is not going to spend \$3M on these two cases; all state taxpayer money
 - Would like to give part of that to Vera House
 - The County cannot survive in this community without Vera House

- Invaluable to the DA’s office to ensure cases get to prosecution
- This would be a bridge to get Vera House in good financial shape for 2026
- Grant money would then start flowing again
- The Governor and AG were very helpful and gracious in this regard

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Is there a plan in place for Vera House to ensure this will not happen again?
 - Absolutely

A motion was made by Mr. McCarron, seconded by Ms. Fiato, to approve this item. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

Chair Olson spoke with Commissioner Wears, who is in Columbus doing a final inspection of the EM50, and updated the committee that it is on schedule.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**
DATE: **AUGUST 19, 2025**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Mary Washo	Financial Operations
Bill Fitzpatrick	DA
Joe Coolican	DA
Barry Weiss	DA
Michelle Robbins	DA
Dan Kranz	CF
Lucy Loke	DA
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
John DeSantis	Leg
Ethan LeMontagne	Leg