



Onondaga County Legislature

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PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES – OCTOBER 21, 2025 **MARK A. OLSON, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr. McCarron, Mr. Bush, Mr. Garland, Ms. Fiato
ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, Mr. Romeo; also see attached

Chair Olson called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: Dan Wears, Commissioner

a. INFORMATIONAL: 2026 Budget

- 2025 Highlights
 - Utilization of the training rooms
 - Done nearly 100 events; ~2,400 students
 - Cybersecurity Planning Class
 - Stormwater Runoff Classes with Soil & Water Conservation
 - Public Health Incident Command classes and other digital analysis from law enforcement perspective
 - Hosted a class with DCJS (Division of Criminal Justice Services) and Chief's Association with FBI agents and people across NYS taking the class
 - Continue to build out the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) policy procedure with training exercises
 - Did functional exercise in February with help of a contractor using grant funds
 - Position added in 2025 for training exercises
 - Tabletop exercise program with Regional Hazmat Team - organized and contracted out
 - Pipeline Emergency Response
 - Last exercise coming up with Madison County
 - Done tabletops with Oswego County, Onondaga County, City of Syracuse and Madison County
 - Kicked off EMS study
 - Buy in and support from EMS agencies
 - Studying the prehospital emergency care system – looking for areas to make improvements from initial dispatch to transfer care to the hospitals
 - Currently in the data collection phase
 - Hope is 3rd quarter of 2026; yearlong process with the contractor
 - Created Citizens Preparedness Community Outreach position
 - Helped do more events; put out more information and effort will continue to grow next year
 - 2025 Budget – will come in under budget with salary savings
- 2026 Budget
 - Standard salary adjustments
 - Increase to Facility Maintenance – improving on that being out on their own
 - Increase to the 103 line
 - Mostly Deputy Coordinators
 - Goal to get equipment to fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies to make them aware of it and what the equipment capabilities are
 - Partially funded vehicle
 - Received 50% to replace a 10 year old Tahoe; other 50% will use grant funds
 - Standard vehicle replacement is every 10 years

- Continuing priorities from 2025
 - Build out EOC with training exercises
 - Recruitment retention efforts for first response agencies – website, contracted out, social media
 - Goal is not to replace or take over, but augment what is being done and try to amplify messages sent
- Expand the training exercise program with EOC, do more with towns, villages and other agencies
 - i.e. tabletop exercises or other stuff
 - Increase preparedness of partners, will increase preparedness at the county level; make it more effective
- Drone as a first responder program - pilot program
 - Happening throughout the country and in Oswego County
 - i.e. deploy a drone from a fixed location, get eyes on immediately and provide information to responders
 - Funding will be used for policy development, training, procurement equipment and all associated with it
 - Using it for iPhone crash detection – can fly over and say there is nothing at this intersection, up to more serious incidents happening
 - When not used in this scenario, can work with WEP or DOT, or whoever; can do infrastructure assessment and observation done to save money
 - Sheriff’s office already has great drone capabilities, training and equipment; Emergency Management is not looking to replace what they are doing; they take the drone to an incident and fly it from there
 - This program flies from a fixed incident to get initial visualization of what is occurring; they are different
 - As far as making it countywide with other agencies – the agencies that have a drone keep them in their vehicles and deploy them at the scene
- Capital Improvement Plan project for 2028
 - Goal of that is to renovate the basement of the EM building
 - Augment what is already happening on the first floor classroom space and doing hands on stuff; i.e. driver simulators
 - When EM started putting this together, work was done with fire, police and EMS to see what exists in the community, and what the needs are
 - Augment what exists; not replace any of the training stuff that is already happening
 - Big push into virtual reality as far as training in driver simulators
 - Incident command simulators – people can be put in a room and feels like they are on the street; there are concepts of doing an apartment which is very common for law enforcement and for medical treatment

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Does the budget as adopted give EM the best equipment, best training and best staff?
 - Yes, been fortunate to build the program over the past 10 years and believe it continues in that direction
- How is it going with the mobile command vehicle?
 - Hope to have it in service by the end of the month

2. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS (E911): Julie Kolakowski Corn, Commissioner

a. INFORMATIONAL: 2026 Budget

SECTION 1:

2025 INITIATIVES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Maintained Onondaga County’s reputation of successful 911 operations: dispatched to 94 police, fire and emergency medical service agencies; operated the Onondaga County Interoperable Communications System (OCICS) serving more than 160 public safety and public service agencies and consists of ~9,500 radios.

Focus remained on addressing staffing shortages. with consistent community career fair and event presence, as well as social media outreach, we have expanded our pool of qualified applicants. Our Training Division also held year-round back-to-back new-hire, promotional, and cross-training classes to expand workforce operational capabilities.

Advancement of Nurse Navigation (low-acuity medical call diversion) to operate more consistently and effectively.

Secured funding for expansion of Persons-In-Crisis Navigation (low-risk mental health call diversion) pilot program to 24/7 operations. This will add Crisis Counselors and Persons-in-Crisis Coordinators (all 988 employees) to the 911 Center operations floor and allow for legitimate dispatch of mental health resources in Onondaga County.

Secured the optimal AI software solution for Onondaga 911 and began the implementation and training process.

2025 BUDGET REVIEW

E-911 is forecasted to be within our allocated resources for 2025 aside from our personnel accounts. With the continuous onboarding of new staff, our personnel accounts are stressed and are projected to exceed budget. We must maintain a minimum level of staff to meet call demand and maintain public safety. We will continue to manage our resources accordingly to ensure we deliver the vital services our department provides.

SECTION 2:

2026 BUDGET OVERVIEW

The 2026 budget includes standard salary and wage increases as well as increased cost in maintenance & utilities, and other expenses due to inflation and contract escalators.

SECTION 3:

2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Position the 911 Center to fund and staff all positions on the roster in 2026 for functional operational strength and reduced overtime. This will be an ongoing process of advocacy, recruitment and hiring.

Continue focus on current employees to address issues of retention, stress and fatigue.

Continue growth of the Nurse Navigation and Persons-In-Crisis Navigation programs.

Leverage AI software solutions to aid in call-handling, quality control and training, and non-emergency triaging.

- AI program
 - In line with the CE's initiative to have AI programs
 - Program invested in is called Prepared (acquired by Axon)
 - Enables broader integration of Axon tools with the AI system
 - Seeing things in the 911 world that are more intel based and ability to do analytics
 - Will meet the leaders of this in a couple weeks
 - AI tool that allows to do transcription
 - All calls that come in will be transcribed (on the call taker and the caller side)
 - Translated in 20+ languages; number continues to go up, cost and time saver
 - Summarizes the call and aids the call taker; it does not replace the call taker
 - It is an outstanding tool to help do the job faster and more accurately
 - QA/QI tool (like a coach)
 - Staff feeds this tool – tell it key questions that the call taker should be asking in certain situations
 - If the call taker forgets something, it will remind them
 - Think of it as a “supervisor” – supervisors cannot be over everyone's shoulder
 - Employees have outstanding calls or calls that do not go well – these are usually not caught for weeks or months, where this will handle it instantaneously
 - Tool will also help staff know what calls need to be diverted to (i.e.) Persons in Crisis or Nurse Navigation
 - Non-emergency triage tool
 - An AI Bot that will take the hundreds of thousands of non-emergency calls (i.e. barking dogs, parking complaints)
 - This is where a body is saved and is sent to an AI Bot that sounds human
 - This is an outstanding tool that will take several months to build
 - Will run a PR campaign to let the public know this is coming
 - All these things are being tested right now

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- By using PR tool, will it increase it so that AI Bot encourages people because it is not what is happening, by saying this is a new PR tool to take care of these calls, and more people will call?
 - No, this will not change any of that
 - If a person is expecting a human being, this is a tool that will help that person by sending a text message with the right information and place to go; a faster and a more efficient process
 - Other departments doing similar things; examples being used across the country using this tool

Ms. Corn continued her presentation:

- Last piece is creating a Dashboard tool
 - An analytical tool that tells everything happening in the E911 center while it is happening
 - Similar to “hey Google, tell me how many shootings Onondaga County had this week”
 - There is a lot of data at the 911 center, so how can E911 be a better analytical resource for the community
 - Beta testing right now
- These AI tools are not replacing human beings; they will make jobs easier, better, and provide relief to staff
- With data and content coming in about the stress levels of staff, it is becoming more apparent how hard the job is and the time on task is just as significant as the degree of the calls
- Doing some analysis on why overtime is where it is, and the costs of doing the job including stress levels
- Understand overtime higher since COVID, but now staffing in 2025 is almost full
- Done some analysis using nationally accredited standard from Armed Forces Career Office (AFCO)
 - Tells what minimum staffing needs to be to match the population, call volumes etc.
 - 911 numbers are too low; numbers and factors have changed
 - Analysis has not been done in 5+ years
 - Do not have enough staff to do the job; that is why staff call in sick, get burned out, and why there is overtime
 - 911 is basically where they need to be but the numbers are still there
 - At least one more year of costly training because it requires two people sitting side by side
 - 2026 plan is set; know the funded positions
- Need to prepare for future and right-sizing department to ensure appropriate staffing levels
- 911 has to be working for the helicopter and drones to go where they are needed
- Have to have the staff to get first responders where they need to go
- 911 has positions filled, but need more

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Did the staffing study address how many shifts are needed?
 - Yes, it is broken down by how many people are needed for each shift (7am-3pm, 3pm-11pm, 11pm-7am)
- Is there an analysis based on the shifts now vs the shifts in the study?
 - Yes

REQUEST: Would like the staffing study (recommendations and current staffing)

- Is the Legislature not funding 911 enough?
 - No, the analysis is showing that more funded positions are needed
 - Funded for 2026
- Did 911 put enough money in the budget for more staffing positions?
 - Currently there are no more funded positions; maxed out
- What is the status of the 911 building?
 - Funding in the CIP to do a study to compare creating a new facility versus expanding existing building
 - Pros and cons for both locations
 - One thought is using land on EM campus and create an entire building; more costly
 - Another thought is tearing down the building next to the EM campus

- With the existing staff, what did the program say about how many numbers are needed?
 - 17 more bodies
- Are the 17 positions call takers positions or a mix?
 - That would be a discussion
- How would EM compare Onondaga County's 911 center to other municipalities in the country or the state in terms of technology?
 - Absolutely on the cutting edge
 - See comparisons across NYS; go to conferences 2x a year and talk to counterparts
 - APCO conference once a year to see what others are doing across the country
 - In NYS, the only one in Onondaga County's ballpark are NYC (in its own class) and Rochester/Monroe County
 - Appreciate the support from the Legislature and Executive in getting the tools needed
- Would that take the mental health issue down?
 - Yes; NYS did a study and nationwide study that this is in the top 10 most stressful jobs
 - It is the constant competitiveness of the job; time on task matters
 - Spending 85% or more working on calls eventually causes burn out
 - Submitted for grant with NYS called CARES UP, which is a mental health grant
 - EM is one of two 911 centers to get that
 - Looking at creating a quiet room, this will also help with training
 - Seeking a therapy dog and very close to making that reality

The meeting was adjourned at 9:37 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



DEBBIE KAMINSKI, Assistant Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2025

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Julie Corn	911
Esteban Gonzalez	911
Dana Smith	911
Sandy Miller Martens	KingOps
Dan Weas	EM
Darcie Lesmax	leg
Jim Beebe	leg
Ethan LaMontagne	leg
Dan Romeo	leg
John DeSantis	leg
Ann Rooney	CE
Ryan Ockenden	law