

**Herkimer County Legislature
Public Safety/Emergency Management and Ways & Means
Committee Meeting
Friday, January 15, 2021
Via Zoom
Follows Human Resources and Ways & Means**

Persons Attending:

John P. Stephens (Chairman, Public Safety/W&M committee member)
Gregory Malta, Sr. (Public Safety committee member)
Raymond Johnson (committee member, both)
Kurt J. Ackerman (committee member, both)
William Weakley (Public safety committee member)
Peter J. Campione (Public Safety committee member)
Patrick E. Russell (Ways & Means Committee Chairman)
Raymond Smith (Ways & Means committee member)
Frederick J. Shaw, Jr. (committee member, both)
Vincent J. Bono, Chairman of the Legislature
James W. Wallace, Jr., County Administrator
Brandy Serow, Secretary to Co. Administrator
Lorraine Lewandrowski, County Attorney
Sheri Ferdula, Budget Officer
Steve Billings, Personnel Officer
John Raymond, Director of Emergency Services
Garry Murphy, Director of Probation

(Non Committee Members Signed In)

Legislator Mark Gaworecki
Legislator Robert J. Schrader
Legislator Bob D. Hollum
Legislator William E. Keeler, Sr.
Legislator John L. Brezinski
Legislator Ray Donley

Absent:

N/A

Mr. Stephens called the meeting to order at 11:10 a.m.

Items Discussed:

PUBLIC SAFETY/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND WAYS & MEANS:

1. Accept grant and authorize chairman to e-sign in Probation
2. Other

PUBLIC SAFETY/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

3. Discussion for a back-up 911 Center
4. Other

Committee Vote Record:

PUBLIC SAFETY/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND WAYS & MEANS:

Mr. Stephens: "Okay, first up is accept grant and authorize chairman to e-sign in Probation. Garry, do you have anything to say? It's \$4,880 for October 1st to September 30, 2021."

Garry Murphy: “Yes, that’s correct. Basically it’s just a simple annual grant that we receive from DCJS. It’s not very much but it helps out a little bit.”

Item #1 – On motion of Mr. Malta, seconded by Mr. Campione for Public Safety, and on motion of Mr. Smith, seconded by Mr. Shaw for Ways & Means, Item #1 was voted on, approved and moved for Resolution. Unanimous.

Item #2 – N/A.

PUBLIC SAFETY/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT:

Mr. Stephens: “I sent information to Public Safety. This is for discussion only for a back-up 911 Center. I did send information to all of the members of the Public Safety Committee. It’s been an issue for many years and this COVID issue has brought it to the forefront again. Oneida County had to shut down their main 911 center due to COVID. They had to sanitize it. They brought in a company to do all of that. They had the ability to go to one of their back-up sites. We do not have that capability right now. Bill Weakley brought up a great point. I was COVID focused, seemed to be the only thing to think about these days but Bill brought up a different point. If we had a catastrophic event at our current facility such as a fire or something along those lines we would really have nowhere to go. In speaking with John Raymond, if our 911 Center was to go down it would take hours if not days to try and get something temporarily up and running that would work. Obviously it wouldn’t be what we have now. I put together some information for the Public Safety Committee. If anybody else wants it I would be glad to send it to everybody. That’s not an issue but I don’t want to step on any other Chairman’s toes. It’s just for discussion. There are some numbers that have been put together. Grant funding would cover the majority of what we want to do. I have talked with a local municipality, I’m not going to name that because that would need to go into executive session. They would be willing to give us some space to move forward with this. If anybody has any questions I will take them but I will get this out to everybody if that’s okay with the other Chairmen of the other committees. I’m not sure if it would be Properties and Ways and Means or either one or all four. You guys tell me what you would like me to do.”

Mr. Gaworecki: “Mr. Chairman, this is Mark Gaworecki. I have a question. I believe when I used to work at 911 I was told that the correctional facility was the back-up. Is that no longer the case or am I incorrect all together?”

Mr. Stephens: “That’s not the case now. I’m not sure if you are totally incorrect. That would be a John Raymond question if John is on. Can you answer that John quickly?”

John Raymond: “The new facility has the same radio controller that we have here at the 911 Center so yes we could potentially go there. The problem is, would the phone system be able to handle the amount of calls that would be coming in and Mark would understand this more than anybody. If we were to go down there and start dispatching one would be we would have good access to the radio system. If there was a catastrophic failure here at the center, there could be a potential of the radio system being down so there is that issue. That is being worked on with grant money, John, you and I have talked about it and I’m not going to get into it on things that we could do to harden that up and make it better. What the problem would be is getting phone calls down there and then answering them and we would be pretty much operating in the blind down there. We would have no CADs, everything would have to be on pen and paper which creates some liability and the other issue is we would also lose what is called ANIALI which is Automatic Number Identification and Automatic Location Identification which is the GPS stuff when you dial from your cell phone or the location information if you are still using a Land line. Address and all of that stuff. That and some liability there and that would just be...trying to get it up and running would be probably...if this happened right now I would be on the phone with Verizon and trying to transfer phone calls to somewhere where we can answer them and that doesn’t happen instantly. They are

pretty good at doing stuff. We have had to do it here because we have had issues where we had to transfer over to a back-up phone system in the building. Last time I had to do that it took about fifteen to twenty minutes. So there is a potential if someone had a fire or a heart attack, anything like that, that's a potential for a call being missed. But, to answer your question, there is a room down there in the new center from what I have been told. I have not seen it, at the new jail where they could get over to it and they could tone out and dispatch fire departments proving that the phone system is operating at that point."

Mr. Gaworecki: "Thank you very much."

Mr. Shaw: "John, the alternative here you are looking at with John would eliminate those problems?"

John Raymond: "What we would do, providing we get a location to do this at, we would have microwave connectivity over to the back-up center and we would basically duplicate everything you have here at 911. So you would have the phone lines would all appear at that location. The way Oneida County's work is all of their phones and stuff appear there, the back-up is in their County Office building in downtown Utica. The main 911 Center in Oneida County is in Oriskany. Both phone lines ring in at both places at the same time so someone could be at either one of those locations and operate. They actually use their back-up centers sometimes to take over for calls if they have a flood or something going on, they put extra dispatchers over there and let them answer the calls. Everything is duplicated the way you set it up so there is some expense to this. A lot of this we can cover with grants but there is still some expense and John has that laid out pretty good. Basically everything is...the servers are all the same over there, everything is mirrored. It's constantly sharing data mirroring what's going on at the main center. If this place went down, the people there would pick up right where we left off. Did that answer your question I hope?"

Mr. Shaw: "What would the County cost be to have them do that?"

Mr. Stephens: "I have that all broken down. I will email it to you. Rough estimates for a total to put an attentive cost on this is around \$825,000 with all but around \$35,000 would be covered by grants. And out of that \$35,000, \$24,000 of that is phone line installation and maintenance and \$12,000 of that \$35,000 is fiber connection to the building which might already be there. We haven't investigated that site that far enough along. It was premature to do that. So out of \$825,000 I would say \$35,000 would be the County's cost. Anybody else have anything?"

Mr. Smith: "John, why don't you get that information to all of us so we can look at it and make a decision? We can't make a decision here now but with the information it would help us."

Mr. Stephens: "I'm good with that Dutch. I wasn't asking for a decision. I just wanted to bring this to light, for discussion and I believe with Mr. Russell and Mr. Johnson's blessing I will send this out. I think that would probably be those three committees."

Mr. Smith: "I think we all need it so..."

Mr. Stephens: "I'm fine with that."

Mr. Russell: "Fine with me."

Mr. Johnson: "Fine with me."

Mr. Stephens: "All right. I will pass this along and then everybody can look it over. Obviously any questions give me a holler. I'm fine with that."

Mr. Smith: "Thank you."

Mr. Stephens: "Do we have anything under other?"

Mr. Malta: "Yes, I have a question John. We are on the 911 subject, how are we making out with the...any discussion between you and Ways and Means on the 911 retention of the people up there or the recruiting? How are we doing up there?"

Mr. Stephens: "I sent a lot of information to all of you folks on the Public Safety Committee. I know it was probably overwhelming but I thought it was a necessity to do that. I also copied Mr. Russell on that as Ways and Means so if he wants to comment on that, I believe Public Safety voted to send it to Ways and Means to see if we were going to do anything on that I will defer to Mr. Russell on that."

Mr. Russell: "Well, I guess it's been a recommendation that it's best to go to their union contact so we can go forward with it."

Mr. Stephens: "Pat, I know you and I talked about that on the phone. I have a little bit of a concern with one of us approaching the union. I think this is more of an operational issue than a union issue but that's just my feelings. I don't think it would be appropriate for any of us to contact the union."

Mr. Russell: "I don't either but we would have to get word to them some way."

Mr. Wallace: "The union would have to come to us with this to negotiate."

Mr. Stephens: "Well exactly and I don't know how to go about that Jim. I don't know, that's just not the right way to do things."

Mr. Russell: "Is Steve on?"

Steve Billings: "Yes, I am here."

Mr. Russell: "What is the right way of doing it, that's the question?"

Steve Billings: "I guess I would be happy to reach out to their labor service rep and the president and get their feel to see if they have any ideas or proposals. They have talked to the staff up there. Maybe they can come back to us with something. I guess that would be the way to go if you want to move forward."

Mr. Russell: "Well, we need to look at it. There is enough people that want to look at it."

Mr. Stephens: "I'm fine with that. That's a good idea."

Jim Wallace: "Makes sense."

Mr. Stephens: "Sooner the better I think because we are down to nine full time dispatchers up there at the moment. If I'm wrong on that John correct me but I think it's nine and one of them is a trainee, correct?"

John Raymond: "Technically ten but one is a trainee and she has not been released to take calls yet."

Mr. Stephens: "Okay."

Mr. Malta: "I have a question. I have a question for you and Mr. Raymond. In regards to the union, have there been any grievances from anybody up at the center up there? I would have thought they would have contacted their union rep by now."

John Raymond: "No grievances that I am aware of."

Mr. Stephens: "That's what I have been told Greg."

Mr. Malta: "Have any of them approached their union rep to tell them what's going on?"

Jim Wallace: "It's not our responsibility Mr. Malta."

Mr. Malta: "No, I am saying the employees."

Jim Wallace: "I'm just saying be very careful"

John Raymond: "I think they have. They come and tell me stuff every now and then but what they are talking about I have no idea."

Mr. Malta: "Okay. Thank you."

Mr. Stephens: "I'm fine with Steve starting that conversation and we will go from there."

Mr. Russell: "I'm fine."

Jim Wallace: "Makes sense."

Item #3 – Discussion only. No vote taken.

Item # 4 – N/A

At 11:25 a.m., on motion of Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Malta, the Public Safety/Emergency Management Committee adjourned.

The Ways & Means Committee continued.