



Saratoga County Board of Supervisors Public Hearing

Wednesday, December 6, 2023 4:30PM
40 McMaster Street, Ballston Spa, NY

Minutes

Roll call was taken

PRESENT –Philip C. Barrett, Eric Butler, Eric Connolly, Joseph Grasso, Mark Hammond, Edward D. Kinowski, Theodore Kusnierz, John Lant, Scott Ostrander, Willard Peck, Jean Raymond, Kevin Tollisen, Kevin Veitch, Matthew E. Veitch – 14.

ABSENT – Diana Edwards, Tara Gaston, John Lawler, Ian Murray, Thomas Richardson, Jonathon Schopf, Michael Smith, Sandra Winney, Arthur M. Wright – 9.

Chairman Kusnierz called the public hearing on the Tentative 2024 Saratoga County Budget, as revised by the Board of Supervisors on November 13, 2023 to order at 4:30pm.

Chairman Kusnierz asked the Clerk to read the notice of public hearing.

Chairman Kusnierz asked if there were any requests to speak.

Chris Greive – Saratoga County PBA

My name is Chris Greive, and I'm here today not only as a resident, but as a representative in Saratoga County Sheriff's Office. I'm here to speak with you all to address a staffing crisis that our agency is facing. And let me be clear with my words here, this is not a crisis. This is a disaster. Our agency is responsible for providing service over 238,000 residents spanning 844 square miles. For transparency an adequately staffed road patrol consists of roughly 89 deputies. We're currently operating with 48. Numbers say that we're 41 people short as I stand here and talk to you today. The shortage directly impacts not just the amount of service we're able to provide, but the quality of service we're able to provide. Short staffing leads to several things slower response to emergencies, mandated overtime, and more dangerous working conditions for our members. Some may ask what the cause for this is. And the answer is simple, fair compensation that not only attracts new officers but makes current officers want to stay. The Sheriff's office is currently the lowest paid agency in our own County. Our agency has exceeded 100,000 calls for service this year. For reference, estimates say that Saratoga Springs, Warren County and Cities like Guilderland, average about 20,000. A five year deputy with us makes about \$72,000. And the average home price in this county is about \$365,000. Simple math says we can't live in the county that we work. Let's go back to the 100,000 number. Warren County, our neighbors to the north. They average about 23,000 calls a year and that's listed on their website. A five year deputy of that agency makes \$88,000 a year and the average home price is valued at \$260,000. They handle

80,000 less calls make \$16,000 a year more than we do, and their cost of living is about \$100,000 cheaper. We have members that can't afford rent because it costs more than what they make in a two week period. We have a list of numbers compiled that's been shared with you all that we'd be happy to talk about if you'd be willing to give us a chance. To put it bluntly, we are incredibly underpaid for the work that we do. The holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and weekends that we miss. We have great cops, people who love doing this job. But we're losing them because the money doesn't support them. And the mandated overtime is taking them from our families. Year to date, the members, out members of work 2,205 shifts of overtime. For clarification that's 17,640 hours away from our families. This used to be a place people would retire from, now they're using us as a stepping stone to go other places. We need your help and we need to quickly. On behalf of the members of our agency and our residents in the county. I'm asking you to consider reviewing a compensation package for us that makes this crisis go away. Since signing our contract, we've lost 15 to retirement, another four scheduled and six have transferred out because there's no incentive to stay. I promise I am on my last sentence. We are continuously overworked and underpaid, there's no insight and increase in salary and compensation package will not solve all of our problems our agency. However, we need to entice officers to come here and stay with us. We need your help now more than ever. Thank you.

Issac Pulver - Greenfield

Good afternoon Supervisors. I am a resident of Greenfield. I'm here as the Director of the Saratoga Springs Public Library, which is a member of the Southern Adirondack Library system, and I'm here to express my gratitude on behalf of the libraries in Saratoga County for your restoration of funding to the Southern Adirondack Library system that helps to support our ability to provide access to eBooks, downloadable audios, e-magazines, which is a service which has grown exponentially as has the cost to provide it. The \$35,000 that you have restored to the budget this year is a drop in the bucket for what it costs for us to provide the service but like I said, I'm just here to express my gratitude on behalf of the libraries, the library system, and the readers and users of the service. So thank you.

Chairman Kusnierz asked if any written communications were received.

Mrs. Connolly said there was one email from the PBA as referenced by Mr. Grieve. Chairman Kusnierz stated that the email would be included as part of the record and is attached to these minutes.

Chairman Kusnierz closed the public hearing at 4:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Clerk of the Board