

**Law Enforcement & Public Safety Committee  
Regular Meeting Minutes**

**DATE & TIME:** July 1, 2019 – 6:15 PM  
**LOCATION:** KL Binder Library, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, County Office Building  
**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Chairwoman Lynn Eckert  
**LEGISLATIVE STAFF:** Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk  
**PRESENT:** Legislators Collins, Heppner & Ronk (arrived at 6:22 PM)  
**ABSENT:** Legislator Haynes  
**QUORUM PRESENT:** Yes

**OTHER ATTENDEES:** Legislators Nolan, Petit & Wawro, Deputy County Executive Marc Rider – UC Executive’s Office, Commissioner Iapoce – UC Department of Social Services, Under Sheriff Benjamin – UC Sheriff’s Office

Chairwoman Eckert called the meeting to order at 6:18 PM.

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**Motion No. 1:                    Moved to APPROVE the Minutes of the June 3, 2019 meeting**

**Motion By:** Legislator Collins  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Heppner

**Discussion:** None

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Collins, Eckert, Heppner & Ronk  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** **Minutes APPROVED**

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Resolutions for the July 16, 2019 Session of the Legislature

**Resolution No. 291:** Approving The Execution Of A Contract Amendment Causing The Aggregate Amendment Amount To Be In Excess Of \$50,000.00 Entered Into By The County – Visual Computer Solutions Inc. – Ulster County Sheriff

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution approves the execution of a contract amendment in the amount of \$11,926.30 with Visual Computer Solutions, Inc. to extend the term of agreement for support and maintenance of the police/corrections officer scheduling and payroll software to May 31, 2020.

**Motion No. 2:                    Motion ADOPT Resolution No. 291**  
**Motion By:** Legislator Heppner  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Collins

**Discussion:**

Under Sheriff Benjamin explained that the software provides scheduling as well as payroll services. Legislator Petit asked of the office uses swipe cards or finger print ID. Under Sheriff Benjamin responded that officers submit time sheets which are approved by a supervisor before being sent to the county’s Payroll Department.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Collins, Eckert, Heppner & Ronk  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** **Resolutions ADOPTED**

**Resolution No. 295:** Approving The Execution Of A Contract In Excess Of \$50,000.00 Entered Into By The County – Securus Technologies, Inc. – Ulster County Sheriff

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution approves the execution of a contract with Securus Technologies, Inc. at a minimum of \$750,000 (\$250,000 annually) for August 20, 2019 – August 19, 2022 to provide inmate communication services.

**Motion No. 3:** **Motion to ADOPT Resolution No. 295**  
**Motion By:** Legislator Heppner  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Collins

**Discussion:**

Legislator Heppner stated that he had a few questions about the contract and phone service in general and apologized for not reaching out with his questions before the meeting. He asked Under Sheriff Benjamin if he could explain the reasoning behind changing providers. Under Sheriff Benjamin responded that the primary reason for the change was the service and support surrounding the tablets but cited the reduction in rates for inmate phone calls as well. He explained that the introduction of tablets in the jail has drastically improved behaviors adding that they were an excellent tool for education and life skill learning. He stated that the service and functionality of tablets provided by the prior company was lacking. He advised the members that the rate for inmate phone calls was reduced from \$0.21/minute to \$0.14/minute, making it possibly the lowest rate in the state. Deputy County Executive Rider informed the members that the prior contract was not awarded through the RFP process. Legislator Heppner commented that he was pleased the price per minute for phone calls was reduced.

Legislator Heppner stated that he read a number of recent articles on inmate phone service questioning the ability of providers to utilize voice recognition technology to create databases of individuals’ voices. He expressed added concern that individuals who were pre-trial detainees and who may never be convicted could have their information or voice “print” recorded. Under Sheriff Benjamin assured the members that no such voice recognition technology has been, or would, be used at the jail.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Collins, Eckert, Heppner & Ronk  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4

**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** Resolution ADOPTED

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Chairwoman Eckert advised the members that Department of Social Services Commissioner Iapoce would present information on the Safe Harbour Program before continuing with Resolutions. Commissioner Iapoce introduced himself to the members and thanked them for the opportunity to discuss the program with them. He explained that the Safe Harbour Program has its origins with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and arises from federal legislation in 2014 called the Strengthening Families and Preventing Sex Exploitation of Children Act. He advised the members that the state requires every county Department of Social Services screen children they encounter for evidence of possible trafficking. He stated that instances of trafficking are, in all actuality, child abuse.

He explained that Ulster County was one of the first in the state to join the Safe Harbour program in 2014, adding that they are in the fifth and final year of the five year program. He advised the members that the program focuses on three areas; awareness, education, and training. He added that each individual county is given flexibility on how to implement the program. In Ulster County the program is facilitated by Department of Social Service employees as well as contracted providers.

He recommended the members review the materials provided in the meeting materials, especially the documents “Myths & Facts”, “Trafficking Red Flags”, and “Resources”. He added that the program funds informational billboards, in-school prevention education programs, brochures, PSAs, and more. He advised the members that the county is hoping to create a position through their Office of Victims Services Grant and the ongoing Safe Harbour grant to have someone in the Crime Victim Assistance Unit to coordinate education and outreach. He informed the members that the county’s Interagency Council on Domestic Violence, in effect since 2009, was expanded to include Human Trafficking in 2018, and is now the Interagency Council on Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking He explained that the programs spends a lot of time reaching out to community organizations and partners such as Catholic Charities, the Boys and Girls Club, the LGBTQ Community Center and others to raise awareness of the problem, educate them on the signs of human trafficking and inform them about the resources available. He stated that he is amazed at how often he encounters people who do not know about the program and encouraged the members to spread the word.

Legislator Petit advised the members that her son recently obtained a CDL license, and human trafficking awareness was included as part of the training. She asked Commissioner Iapoce if there was a large number of cases of trafficking of illegal immigrants. Commissioner Iapoce responded that the majority of cases in Ulster County involve local children, or those from neighboring counties. She asked if children are reunited with their families. Commissioner Iapoce responded that reunification is the Department’s goal, but is not always possible. Legislator Nolan asked if Commissioner Iapoce could share the number of cases of trafficking reported in the county. He responded that there were 68 children referred since the program’s inception. Of those, 11 met specific federal definition of human trafficking, which qualifies him or her for certain benefits throughout their lifetime. He added that those who do not meet the federal definition still qualify for and receive local services. He explained that the bulk of referrals come from the county’s child services unit.

Chairwoman Eckert asked if there were other measures or indicators available to reflect more accurately the extent of the problem. Commissioner Iapoce stated that there is often underlying traumas which makes individuals more susceptible to trafficking. He recommended the Office of Children and Family Services website to obtain regional data. He informed the members that since the inception of the Safe Harbour Program in New York State in 2014 the number of confirmed reported cases increased by 750 percent statewide. Chairwoman Eckert asked if the number of reported cases would increase as the issue receives more attention. Commissioner Iapoce responded that he was hopeful that the education and prevention programming will help to both raise awareness of the issue, and inform members of the public about the resources available should they encounter a trafficking victim. Chairwoman Eckert asked if there was an opportunity with the newly elected Sheriff to reach out to the law enforcement community to educate them on signs of trafficking and how to approach and handle victims they may encounter. Commissioner Iapoce responded that the county was ahead of the curve in that regard and complimented the prior Sheriff for his early participation in the program and the number of trainings he conducted for his officers and the public. The members discussed the changing perception of prostitution vs. trafficking.

Legislator Ronk stated that the Sheriff's Office in cooperation with the District Attorney's Office have a successful internet crimes against children program, which targets the traffickers themselves, and asked how the Safe Harbour Program might fit into that. Commissioner Iapoce responded that the evidence required for child pornography charges versus trafficking are very different, adding that pornography evidence can exist without any contact with a victim. He explained that prosecutors are often faced with prosecutorial decisions based the likelihood of obtaining a successful conviction. He shared a couple of instances in which a trafficker was arrested and convicted of crimes other than trafficking, especially in instances when a victim is unwilling or unable to cooperate.

Chairwoman Eckert asked about the continuation of funding now that the program is in its fifth year. Commissioner Iapoce explained that as a graduated county the state would continue to allocate funding. She thanked Commissioner Iapoce for his time adding that she found the conversation fascinating. The members complimented him for the information shared and the comprehensiveness of the Safe Harbour Program in the county. He thanked the members for inviting him to discuss the subject and the program.

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**Resolution No. 304:** Authorizing The Chair Of The Ulster County Legislature To Enter Into A Lease Agreement With Ulster County Community College For The Public Safety Training Facility Located At 250 Ulster Landing Road In The Town Of Ulster – Department Of Public Works (Buildings And Grounds)

**Resolution Summary:** This resolution authorizes the Chair to enter into a lease agreement with SUNY Ulster for use of 250 Ulster Landing Road in the Town of Ulster for a countywide Public Safety Training Center at a cost of \$10.00 for a period of ten years for educational, public safety training, and general office purposes.

**Motion No. 4:**                   **Motion to ADOPT Resolution No. 304**  
**Motion By:**                   Legislator Ronk  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Heppner

**Discussion:**

Deputy County Executive Rider explained that SUNY Ulster will provide the janitorial services while the county provides maintenance. He added that the lease provides the county with the opportunity to get state funding for the project.

**Voting In Favor:** Legislators Collins, Eckert, Heppner & Ronk  
**Voting Against:** None  
**Votes in Favor:** 4  
**Votes Against:** 0  
**Disposition:** **Resolutions ADOPTED**

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Chairwoman Eckert informed the members that electronic copies of the monthly financial reports were available for viewing and asked if there were any events the members would like to share. She advised the members that the next meeting was scheduled for August 5<sup>th</sup> and asked if there was any other business.

Legislator Ronk asked Mr. Rider if he was able to explain why County Executive Ryan did not sign the June Resolution making the necessary changes to the budget to accommodate the state mandated change to the District Attorney’s salary or the June Resolution accepting state grant funds to conduct the Crimes Against Revenue Program (CARP.)

Mr. Rider responded that the Executive’s Office has no say in the District Attorney’s raise as it is mandated by the state, adding that the Executive did not want to sign the Resolution as one of his first acts coming into office. Legislator Ronk stated that the Legislature did not have a say in the raise either, adding that it is the county’s responsibility to take the necessary steps to comply with the state mandate. Legislator Heppner pointed out that the state mandated Public Defender’s salary has not been increased in 13 years.

Legislator Ronk questioned the reasoning behind not signing the CARP revenue grant as the crimes pursued recover county funds. Mr. Rider advised the members that there is a shift in a focus on pursuing welfare crimes.

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Chairwoman Eckert asked if there was any other business, and hearing none;

**Adjournment**

**Motion Made By:** Legislator Ronk  
**Motion Seconded By:** Legislator Heppner  
**No. of Votes in Favor:** 4  
**No. of Votes Against:** 0

**TIME:** 7:19 PM

**Respectfully submitted: Jay Mahler, Deputy Clerk**  
**Minutes Approved: August 5, 2019**