

## Commissioner's March 2025 report to Public Safety and Law Enforcement Committee

Good morning, and thank you for affording me this time to present an overview of what the Division has been working on the past month. The individual Department heads will discuss granular details, while I will touch on only some of the highlights:

### Old Business:

- The Sheriff and I remain immensely grateful for this Committee - and the entire Legislature's support - in funding our immediate communications and situational awareness needs. As part of our ongoing modernization initiatives, we identified gaps and you all allowed us to fill them. We have sourced and procured every item on the list and have begun receiving items. We are actively deploying resources to members of the Division who will use them to enhance operational capacity of our emergency response partners.
- Rabies Control
  - Between 1/25 – 2/24 the RCO has responded to 17 exposures across 9 townships. Dog – 11; Cat – 6
  - In one case the exposure was reported as a “coyote bite”. RCO Gerow conducted an investigation and determined that a coyote was in fact not involved, but instead a domestic dog was – who the owner was trying to protect from seizure. Through her dogged work (pun intended) she saved the County more than \$10,000 by being able to quarantine the offending animal and not have to vaccinate the owner/victim. This is only one example of the value of an expert rabies control officer and its impact on public safety.
- Committee Chairman Alvarez, ITS, DPW, the Sheriff's Office, the County Manager's Office, and I met again to continue our conversation about improving safety and security at the Government Center. We met with a vendor to see a demonstration of a weapons detection solution. We will be putting forward a Resolution for April to initiate Phase I of the improvement plan.
- We welcomed the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services Office of Counterterrorism - Domestic Terrorism Prevention Unit, who met with core STAC team members to review and improve our Domestic Terrorism Prevention Plan. Their insight and guidance was invaluable.
- To clarify a conversation from last month regarding the Volunteer partial tax exemption, I was speaking to the impact from existing jurisdictions within the County that have passed the exemption. To be clear, if all of the varying jurisdictions passed the exemption, then a resident who is a volunteer could see a reduction in their taxes far exceeding that of the \$200 State Tax Refund; however, that would require The County, Town, Fire, and school to do so. As it stands now, where the Town and Fire District only have passed the exemption, in many cases the savings is not much different than the State tax refund. I would encourage the Legislature to ask Chris Knapp for additional information if they are so inclined, as he is a wealth of knowledge on this and can give a realistic view on what such an exemption would look like if the County were to participate.

- I am very excited to announce that we have appointed a Deputy Fire Coordinator for Special Operations. This individual brings an immense wealth of experience and knowledge in the field and is ready to hit the ground running on their first day.

New Business:

- Deputy Commissioner Rau worked tirelessly with our partners in Grants Administration to develop and submit an application to New York State Department of Health for a substantial grant which will be used to further enhance our prehospital care system. I am so very proud of their hard work to get this across the finish line and to announce that they were awarded the full requested amount of half a million dollars. The County will see substantial returns as a result.
- Confidential Secretary O'Brien worked with Jill Holland from Kauneonga Lake Fire Department to develop and submit a grant application (in a very, very short window) to the New York State Office of Mental Health Suicide Prevention Center. They too received notification that they have been awarded their grant, which will be used to further expand the services of the newly created Public Safety Health & Wellness Coordinator, a position that we anticipate filling this week.
- I was fortunate enough to attend the New York State Emergency Manager's Association training conference in Syracuse, where the 62 County Emergency Managers received their mandatory annual Tier II training.
- I was lucky enough to have had the opportunity to attend a training with the U.S. Cybersecurity Infrastructure Security Agency Office of Bomb Prevention on hostile surveillance. This course teaches us how to identify potential actors of mass violence and I intend to bring their three-day course to the County this fall.
- I spoke with Woodbourne Correctional Prison Superintendent David Howard after a series of emergency medical incidents at the facility - involving exposures to unknown substances – which caused injury staff. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision Office of Special investigations is conducting an investigation to determine the cause. I also spoke with Dr. Whalen, the Director of the New York State Office of Public Health who has assured me that they have found no indication that whatever the substance is poses any risk of secondary exposure to our first responders or hospital staff. I have an additional call into Deputy Commissioner Darren Miller of NYS DOCCS, for additional information.