

Sheriff Kevin McConville
Statement
Protective Services Meeting
April 19, 2022

As your elected sheriff in Putnam County, the deployment of personnel, assignment duties and responsibilities to address public safety issues is a fundamental responsibility charged to me; along with the fiscal duty and obligation to ensure expenditures are properly supported within the finite budgetary constraints that the Sheriff's Office must operate. These responsibilities are both critical and fundamental aspects of effectively operating the Sheriff's Office while fulfilling the many public safety functions we handle daily.

Contrary to past practices, I will not address any specifics regarding patrol operations, including the number or location of patrol posts, other than to assure everyone that patrols are assigned to provide effective and responsible public safety services in the towns that comprise Putnam County. Putnam is fortunate to have police departments providing services in the following areas: Carmel, Kent, Brewster and Cold Spring, in addition to the New York State Police and the Sheriff's Department. These law enforcement agencies interact and cooperate in mutually beneficial relationships to the direct benefit of our citizenry, and to deliver cooperatively produced seamless and efficient policing services throughout the county.

The development and assignment of duties and responsibilities, as well as expectations, is also a matter under my purview. It is not only a management prerogative, but also a critical necessity that we conduct assessments and hold performance reviews to evaluate duty functions against our performance metrics, and continually work to ensure our collective membership is working to attain the high levels of duty expectation standards we aspire to meet.

While accountability for balancing incurred and necessary expenses against budgetary limitations is my responsibility, I would observe that neither myself, nor any member of my command staff, had any involvement or any input opportunity into development of the 2022 budget. This was handled exclusively by the previous administration; thus, the budget was "inherited" with fund balances for the year already finalized.

It is an imperative that when developing public safety budgets such as for the Sheriff's Office, that my command staff and I know relevant criminal activity and trends, and relevant crime patterns, including information regarding staffing levels, deployment

issues and factors, to insure the most effective assignment of personnel to best protect the public. To that end, we were astonished to find that first line supervisors were operating as the sole and absolute authority regarding the approval of all time off requests as well as the sole authorization and final approval of overtime coverages without input, direction, or oversight of command management.

Let *that* sink in for a minute. Never, in my extensive law enforcement career have I ever heard of a situation where first level supervisors exercised such total and exclusive control of these important functions. It is a fundamental management right and obligation to manage both personnel and the approval of budgetary matters such as overtime. These functions are key foundations of efficiency that includes deployment strategies, management, and oversight of time off to impact staffing ratios, and the necessary and directed use of overtime approvals. When I addressed the Protective Services Committee in February, a few months ago, I explained that reorganization, restructuring, and management were the cornerstones of raising the degree of professionalism and operational efficiency of this Office. As I recall, the sentiment of the committee members was openly supportive, with one legislator commenting “I appreciate your honesty and transparency” and noting that “public safety is always a delicate balance.”

I will always work to ensure that the management of the allocated annual budgetary funds are utilized in a responsible manner and that funding is used to best accomplish our law enforcement objectives and purposes. That includes covering staffing vacancies that are created through illness, military leave and assignments, vacation, personnel, and holiday leaves, etc. Overtime usage will be available and directed to conducting specific enforcement operations, traffic enforcement, special details focusing on criminal activity, criminal investigations and so forth. In short, functions related to activities focused on maintaining both effective staffing levels and enhancing staff allocations to address matters that warrant extra attention and special efforts. I will continue to exercise my responsibility to effectively manage all allocated funding to tasks and purposes that best suit public safety and to support our many local county communities.

Let’s take a moment to look at what the previous costs of the “*unfunded*” positions deployment were costing the taxpayer. The average hourly rate of a deputy is currently projected at \$60 per hour, and so on 1.5 overtime that rate is \$90. This office was deploying an unfunded positions every Monday through Friday on the day and evening shift, totaling 80 hours overtime. These extra positions were then extended for all three shifts every Saturday and Sunday, for another 48 hours overtime. Thus, 128 hours overtime was being used every week at a minimum cost of \$11,520; however, often these shifts were staffed by sergeants and even BCI members at higher level pay rates,

which drove the weekly expenditures even higher. Consequently, the cost expenditure for this staffing scenario over a period of 4 weeks (a little less than a full month) was \$46,080 and would require essentially \$600,000 to staff over the course of the Year 2022. As a point of reference, the sheriff budget for 2022 overtime in total, amounts to \$640,000 and includes every unit and detail as well as all known events as well as any investigations that must be undertaken; the unfunded patrol was thus over-riding judgements and justifications that resulted in the establishment of projected overtime needs.

As is apparent, that this staffing expenditure alone would consume most allocated overtime funds, and that is before needing to use any of the funding to address the vacancies and reasons overtime was reserved to address. I shall not permit or allow funds to be expended without justifiable, legitimate needs to reasonably improve the public safety cause. I have heard the concerns of the Legislature advocating financial responsibility and accountability to the taxpayers in recent years. At many legislative meetings a legislator was noted questioning fund expenditures and made inquiries into the use, and even calls for the suspension of projects and/or the funding. As recently as April 5, 2022, a legislator questioned the need to approve a request for fund application for monies in the \$3.5 million range, stating that the related cost burden imposed would be unfair to the taxpayers.

While we law enforcement officers intend to judiciously manage the approval and dispersal of funds allocated to the Sheriff's Office, there often occurs events that warrant and require extensive use of overtime. Examples include the current extensive missing person investigation, February's armed robbery of a gas station in Garrison that resulted in an arrest for robbery 1st degree, or the successful search to find and rescue a 79-year-old woman who was missing for 8 hours on a bitterly cold night when the temp was in the teens, or the investigations into child pornography that require extensive and laborious effort to electronically trace the offenders and identify their locations. Further, overtime is also necessarily used for training purposes. When it is judged appropriate these functions are what we plan for and need to use overtime to fund.

Additionally, we have diligently worked to hire personnel to fill existing vacancies, developed a deployment strategy and schedule designed to ensure sufficient personnel are available and deployed to address our policing needs: criminal activity, traffic enforcement and community policing initiatives.

Any implication or suggestion that scheduling changes and personnel staffing modifications are driven by any reason other than efficiency while operating within a finite budget without eliminating the ability to save and use overtime when truly needed

is a distortion and incorrect. I believe reasonable people, who chose to take the time to evaluate and consider the reasons and judgements will conclude I have acted on high principal and extensive law enforcement knowledge and experience to guide and direct the Putnam County Sheriff Department. I also believe that my approach will help build the level of professionalism and enhance member morale and spirit.

As always, I invite every member of the Legislature, anytime you wish to see or speak to me regarding an issue within their respective district, I am readily accessible. Those members that have reached out have received a personal communication or a written response addressing your concern and our strategy to address the matter.