Opinions vary as DC officials address new bail, discovery laws

by Curtis Schmidt

New bail and discovery laws are on the books for 2020 in New York and officials in Dutchess County, like their colleagues across the state, are working to implement the new laws.

In April 2019, New York State passed sweeping criminal justice legislation, strictly curtailing the use of cash bail and pretrial detention, overhauling rules governing the sharing of evidence (Discovery Law), and strengthening measures intended to ensure a defendant’s right to a speedy trial.

Change always comes with its share of challenges, and the new laws definitely have seen their share of supporters and detractors in the first few weeks of implementation.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has been quoted in newspaper articles and on radio reports, terming the new bail law “a work in progress.”

In reference to the bail law, for most misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies, cash bail is no longer permitted. Judges must release individuals charged with those crimes with no cash bail, either on their own recognizance or with release conditions designed to ensure that the individual returns to court, such as pretrial supervision and text message reminders for court dates.

For those charged with the most serious crimes — including almost all violent felonies and certain nonviolent felonies, such as sex offenses and witness tampering — very little has changed in New York. In those cases, judges will retain the option to set cash bail.

Most local officials agree with the need for bail law reform — but some have issues with time allowed for implementation and a variety of particulars, because each case is different.

FLASHING LIGHTS: STATE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES IN DUTCHESS COUNTY

Committee explores ways to improve EMS delivery in Dutchess

Residents are encouraged to take survey to help assess current knowledge and service expectations.

by Kate Goldsmith

You’re driving along, and suddenly in the rear-view mirror you spot an ambulance, a police car or firetruck approaching rapidly, lights flashing, sirens wailing. You pull over to let the vehicle get to where it’s going, hoping the emergency that summoned it will be resolved with the best possible outcome.

Emergency services personnel at the Roosevelt Fire District Station 3 on Route 9G in Hyde Park include, from left, 1st Lt. Nicholas Tru, Capt. William Marshall Jr., EMT Debra Keefe, Driver William Marshall V and EMT Joseph Aleksynas. Photo by Curtis Schmidt

Or, maybe you’re the one whose circumstance — a car accident, a house fire — have prompted the call to 911 that has dispatched such assistance.

In either case, you’re witnessing emergency services in action, delivered by a myriad of providers on the state, county and local levels — a combination of law enforcement agencies, volunteers and paid personnel.

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Editor’s note: This is the first in a series of articles highlighting the current delivery method for emergency services in Dutchess County, the opportunities and challenges the current methods present, and a vision for emergency medical services that is patient-centered, consistent, reliable, affordable and sustainable.

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**HV Hospice, Astor Services named organizations of the year**

Hudson Valley Hospice, along with Astor Services for Children and Families, has been named one of the Martin Luther King Jr. Organizations of the Year by Catharine Street Community Center (CSC). Organizations of the Year are selected based on recommendations from CSC, voting by community members with first-hand knowledge about the organizations’ contributions, services, and overall impact, considering the quality of life in the community.

Guidelines for consideration of nominees include:
- provision of services in the Mid-Hudson Valley for a minimum of 10 years;
- promotion of diversity and inclusiveness;
- efforts to facilitate career advancement and learning opportunities for employees;
- operation of direct and indirect educational and support services for individuals, children and families locally and country-wide;
- an earned reputation for quality services and care and implementation of inclusive programs and services for individuals with limited resources.

Both organizations will be recognized at the 29th Annual MLK Welcoming Recognition Ceremony and Dinner, on Thursday, Jan. 20, at 4 p.m., at the Poughkeepsie Grand Hotel, which precedes their Breakfast on Friday, Jan. 21, at 7 a.m., at the M.J. Nesbitt Convention Center (Mid-Hudson Civic Center).

"Hudson Valley Hospice is thrilled to be recognized alongside Astor Services for Children and Families for the meaningful work they do within our community," said Michael Kaimis, President and CEO of Hudson Valley Hospice. "Martin Luther King Jr. treated others with kindness, fairness, love, and respect, and exactly what our organization aims to do with patients and their loved ones every day and every night.

Hudson Valley Hospice is the premier provider of end-of-life care in Dutchess and Ulster counties. The services and support include Hospice and Palliative Care certified Registered Nurses, Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Practical Nurses, Home Health Aides, Spiritual Care Chaplains, Birthing, Counselling. Services include Medical equipment, oxygen, and medications are also provided. Hudson Valley Hospice has an advanced program which includes Music Therapy, End of Life Doula and many complementary therapies such as Pet Therapy, Reiki and other alternative therapies. Hudson Valley Hospice, visit hvhospice.org or call 845-485-2273.

Astor Services for Children and Families promotes the well-being of children, adolescents and their families through a range of programs that prevent and treat emotional problems and facilitate healthy development. We are honored to have been selected for this award by the Catharine Street Community Center," said Sonia Barnes-Moorhead, executive vice president of the organization. "This recognition truly proundly serves the Hudson Valley and Bronx communities by providing direct support to children and families who need it most, and we strive to uphold the highest level of inclusivity, diversity and care.

"We want to learn more about Astor's programs and services, visit astorservices.org or call (845) 871-1117.

The mission of Catharine Street Community Center is to support families in Dutchess County through education, after-school and summer enrichment programs which assist individuals, children and families to acquire and strengthen the tools necessary to cope with our challenging economic, social and cultural needs and enter a better community. To learn more about Catharine Street or to get tickets visit, catharinestreet.org or call (845) 873-2722.

**Berkshire Taconic announces grant deadlines**

SHEFFIELD, MA— Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation recently announced the first round of deadlines for competitive grants and scholarships in 2020. Apply at BerkshireTaconic.org/Grants and BerkshireTaconic.org/Scholarships.

**FOR SCHOLARSHIPS**

The James C. Kapetian Endowment Fund honors excellence in teaching with a $10,000 prize for study or travel. The successful candidate’s school will also receive a $2,000 grant. Nominations from school administrators or chief administrators are due Feb. 9. Nominees must complete their applications by March 30.

The Strengthening Education Enrichment and Development (SEED) Fund supports the development of projects that enhance and extend the educational experience of the students and teachers in the Pine Plains Central School District. Grants range from $1,000 to $3,000. Applications due Feb. 24.

The Dover Education Enrichment Program (DEEP) supports the development of projects that enhance and enrich the educational experience of the students and teachers in the Dover Union Free School District. Grants range from $250 to $1,500. Applications due Feb. 27.

**FOR NONPROFITS**
The Crane Family Fund supports environmental nonprofit organizations to address special, unfunded, mission-driven projects. Grants range from $1,000 to $25,000. Applications due Feb. 15.

Harvard Business School’s Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management (SPNM) program is an intensive one-week course for nonprofit CEOs or executive directors who are responsible for shaping the direction, mission policies and major programs of their organizations. The program is valued at $6,500 and will be held in July on the Harvard Business School campus in Boston, Mass. Applications are due March 1.

The Green Pastures Fund supports non-profit organizations or public entities that encourage and conserve small, community-based agricultural ventures. Grants range from $1,000 to $3,000. Applications are due April 1.

The Northeast Dutchess Fund supports nonprofits, public agencies or community organizations that serve the residents of Amenia, Clinton Corners, Dover, Millbrook, Millerton, North East, Pine Plains, Rhinebeck, Washington, Woodstock and Westbegin. Grants of up to $3,000 will be awarded. Applications due are April 15.

**FOR STUDENTS AND INDIVIDUALS: TRAVEL, SUMMER SERVICE AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS**

The Alice and Richard Henriquez Memorial Fund and Youth World Awareness Program provides grants to students ages 14 to 22 for international travel and service. Grants range from $500 to $1,500 for individual applicants, larger grants may be considered for groups. Applications are due Jan. 31.

The Violet H. Simmons Summer Enrichment Scholarship Fund supports summer projects for We CUT Camp. Grants range from $500 to $1,500. Applications due are May 1.

The Simple Gifts Fund awards to young people ages 13 to 19 for participation in cultural or creative summer programs. Grants range from $250 to $300. Applications are due March 15.

**Tax Aid: ACH Coalition help prepare, fill taxes**

Free tax preparation once again is available from AARP Foundation Tax-Aide’s (BT-Aide) Ride-Trojan volunteers, six days a week, at the Hudson Valley CASHEL Coalition. Last year, 8,437 residents of Dutchess, Orange and Putnam counties received help preparing and filing their taxes. This year, the Coalition hopes to help even more people receive the refunds they deserve.

To receive help, schedule an appointment through United Way’s Hudson Valley Region 2-1-1 Helpline (or by dialing 1-800-189-4749) from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily. This free tax preparation service is provided to all those who are eligible thanks to AARP Foundation Tax-Aide, Hudson Valley CASHEL Coalition members, United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region and many other community partners.

Last year, $6,847,975 million was returned in the form of tax credits and refunds to people who need it most in our community. This year, President and CEO of United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region, "Part of the mission of United Way is fighting for the financial stability of our community. We hope that individuals, families, and seniors will take advantage of this free help and call 1-2-1 today."

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is one of the largest anti-poverty tools in the United States and the Osman Ways and Means Committee," stated Sharon Myers, United Way’s Financial Empowerment VISTA. "EITC and the child tax credit (CTC), greatly reduce taxes for families. They work together family credits lifted an estimated 9.4 million people out of poverty in 2017, including 5 million (or more than half of them) children. However, only 25 percent of qualified Americans do not claim their EITC every year. Last year, Hudson Valley CASHEL processed 987 returns for EITC, for a total refund of $1,590,365."

The tax preparation locations are located throughout Dutchess and Orange counties and are staffed by AARP Foundation Tax-Aide volunteers, six days-a-week, including evenings and weekends from Feb. 1 to April 15. Assistance is available for those with low income only and for those who need a translator. The service is open to area residents of all ages and income levels. AARP membership is not required.

In Dutchess County, there are 20 free Hudson Valley CASHEL Coalition tax preparation sites located in Beacon, Dover Plains, Fishkill, Hopewell Junction, Hyde Park, Millbrook, Millerton, Pleasant Valley, Poughkeepsie, Staatsburg, Stanfordville and Wappinger Falls.

Appointments are on a first-come, first-served basis, so individuals should call 2-1-1 as soon as possible.

For additional information about the Hudson Valley CASHEL Coalition, including volunteer opportunities, go to www.211hv.org/cashe.