



Inclusion Through Diversity

Marcia E. Lynch, Public Information Officer
607-274-5555, Office
607-227-2152, Cell
March 16, 2015
TWO PAGES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sheriff's Office Presents After-Action Report on Hornbrook Road Barricading Incident

Before the Legislature's Public Safety Committee, Tompkins County Sheriff Ken Lansing and Undersheriff Brian Robison presented the detailed After-Action Report on the Barricading Incident at 127 Hornbrook Road in Danby—a two-and-a-half-day standoff that began the evening of December 30, when Sheriff's officers attempted to serve a warrant on David Cady and ended the morning of January 2, when officers entered the home after Mr. Cady died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

The report, the Undersheriff said, attempts to describe the incident and the response by law enforcement, answer questions that have been raised, and consider how elements of response to the incident can inform strategies and tactics in future situations.

The After-Action Report is posted on the Tompkins County website at <http://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/files/ctyadmin/hornbrook%20report%20final%203.12.15.pdf>.

A video file of the presentation will be posted on the Meeting Portal of the County website at <http://tompkinscountyny.iqm2.com/Citizens/Default.aspx> (Click on "March 16, 2015 Public Safety Committee – Regular Meeting/Media.")

In a more than hour-long presentation to the Committee, Undersheriff Robison, on behalf of the Sheriff's Office, assisted by other officers involved in the incident, went through the 34-page report, which details a detailed step-by-step account of operations and concerns over the two-and-a-half-days of the incident. Undersheriff Robison stated this was considered a high-risk situation, from the time officers were informed that Mr. Cady had a loaded gun, borne-out by a shot fired from a second-floor window by Mr. Cady in the vicinity of officers. The prolonged standoff, he said, was shaped by a number of factors ranging from bitterly cold weather, to the particularly lethal type of weapon in Mr. Cady's possession, to lessons learned in other barricading events that ended in deadly gunfire, and a progression of non-lethal tactics was used in attempts to draw Mr. Cady out of the house throughout the incident—including negotiations and efforts to raise the level of discomfort. Small robots were deployed to serve as "eyes and ears" of law enforcement but could not reach all parts of the house. Ultimately, the report states, heavy equipment was used to open-up parts of the home, as a way to expose and draw-out Mr. Cady—"the choice was made that placed the lives of Mr. Cady and law enforcement over property."

The goals of the response, the report states, were to achieve a peaceful surrender by Mr. Cady; to ensure that he could not escape from the scene and possibly cause injury or death to others; and to protect the health and safety of the officers involved.

Among elements presented as part of the Report, results of the subsequent inspection of the Cady home, with pictures taken by the New York State Police, which found a total of six long-guns positioned in several rooms throughout the house, with evidence that Mr. Cady had spent much time

positioned at the top of a narrow stairway leading to the second floor, armed with two guns and with a clear line of sight at whomever approached—a “fatal funnel” set-up that Undersheriff Robison said strongly affirmed the cautious strategy followed by law enforcement, including the decision not to force entry into the house earlier in the event.

Best Practices: The Report notes how responders applied the Lessons Learned from two recent barricading incidents, a 2013 event in Herkimer County that ended with the death of a suspect after he and suspect in the town of Augusta in Oneida County. An After Action Review and Report of the Oneida incident, prepared by an expert panel, identified 18 measures intended to minimize the risk of a similar tragedy in the future. With the exception of owning of Armored Personnel Carriers (which were borrowed from other jurisdictions), the Report notes that, in the Hornbrook Road incident, all those recommended measures were met.

Lessons Learned: The Report identifies four specific areas for improvement, what could be done differently moving forward, in such a critical incident:

- Incorporation of a “civilian” element as part of the overall response to manage the total incident environment—such as communication with municipal leaders and the press. More should have been done to notify people directly affected by the incident, the Danby Town Supervisor should have been notified. Immediate engagement of the County’s human services departments could have provided additional assistance to the Cady family.
- Better efforts at internal communication to directly and immediately involve the Sheriff, who because of communication delays was not involved in incident command until about ten hours into the incident.
- Use of the ROOK (the armored Bobcat vehicle), while the most effective means available to end the long standoff without loss of life, should be used only as a last resort, with communication improvements to provide context for its use.
- A secondary location for some aspects of the incident (which in this case could have been the Danby fire station), especially considering logistical issues related to the duration, the weather, and remoteness of the incident.

The presentation was followed by more than an hour of questions and comments from legislators and the public. Among the close to 50 people who attended the meeting, about a third of them addressed the committee and voiced questions, among them Danby Supervisor Ric Dietrich, who repeated his call for an independent review, and maintaining that the questions of his town’s residents have still not been adequately addressed. Most speakers questioned aspects of the incident, as described in the report, and several expressed their view that the response amounted to an overreaction, some expressing concern about what they see as the militarization of law enforcement.

Indicating that discussion can continue next month, Public Safety Chair Nate Shinagawa thanked the Sheriff’s Office for the report and presentation, for their transparency and willingness to respond to the public’s questions. While noting that he still has more questions about the report, Legislator Will Burbank joined Legislator Martha Robertson in expressing thanks to law enforcement for all that officers do to keep the community safe. Challenging some of the critical statements made about officers, the focus now, Burbank said, should not be to look backward to condemn what happened, but to look forward to see how such an incident can be handled in the future.

Contact: Sheriff Ken Lansing or Undersheriff Brian Robison, 607-257-1345; Nathan Shinagawa, Chair, Public Safety Committee, 280-7557.

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