

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Friday, February 29, 2008
CONTACT: Scott Johnson (518) 860-9984

SARATOGA SPRINGS MAYOR SCOTT JOHNSON REPORTS PROMPT SOLUTION TO CLAIMED MALFUNCTIONS OF POLICE STATION PHONES

“There have been recent reports in the press claiming three separate instances of alleged malfunctioning of the non-emergency phone lines servicing the Police Station in City Hall, beginning in July 2007. This matter was brought to the Safety Committee’s attention at its regularly scheduled monthly meeting on February 12, 2008 from the Public Safety Department. There have been several meetings since that date of the Safety Committee and I am pleased to report prompt identification of the problem and a proposed solution to better serve the public safety. It has been determined that there may be an issue involving the cabling within the City Hall telecommunications system, and not the existing police phone system. There also were instances of the alleged malfunctions that ultimately were attributed to human error, not system malfunction.”

“It is important to not promote public hysteria on an issue involving phone service to the Police Station, particularly with the prior media accounts regarding the conditions existing at the Station. First and foremost, it is paramount to stress that the emergency phone line, the 911 system, has been and remains fully effective. It was only the non-emergency phone line, 584-1800, that was claimed to be at issue. Certainly, the sky is not falling.”

On February 12, 2008 at the Safety Committee’s regularly scheduled monthly meeting, members from the Public Safety Department informed the City Safety Committee that there had been three alleged instances of telecommunication malfunction in the Police Department in 2007 including July 19, 2007, September 25, 2007, and November 8, 2007. The alleged malfunctions involved the non-emergent telephone lines of 584-1800 and not the 911 emergency lines. The Police Department at this meeting requested the matter be labeled a “health and safety issue.” The Committee initiated an immediate investigation into the circumstances surrounding each incident.

In the short time that Safety Committee has been given the task of investigating the matter, a tremendous amount of work has been done in gathering needs assessments from each department including the Police Department to qualify and quantify any infrastructure issues that may have contributed to perceived system malfunctions. Two subsequent meetings have occurred since then to detail the issues and the infrastructure currently in place. Vendors have been called in to discuss the perceived issues and been asked to provide detailed repair and maintenance reports of the issues as identified.

The Committee has been assured that there are ample parts available should any component need replacement.

The Mayor’s Department has agreed to work with Safety Committee in establishing accountability in the management of telecommunication services provision. Complaints, repairs and maintenance will begin to be tracked as of this date with regular monthly reporting of any issues to the Safety Committee.

“The Safety Committee will continue to work through the City’s and the Police Department telecommunication issues until there is a comprehensive long-term solution to the viability of the services provided to the community”, said Johnson. “Our team prides itself on the multidisciplinary team approach it takes toward solving the City’s risk and safety issues for both its employees and the City as a community.”

The full status report of the Safety Committee, dated February 29, 2008, is attached.

###