

# The Post-Journal

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## City Court Has High Number Of No-Shows



The Jamestown City Council discussed Monday during its work session meeting that 107 issued appearance tickets lead to no appearance in court following a charge by the Jamestown Police Department during the month of January. P-J photo by Dennis Phillips

The new cashless bail in the state has led to 107 no-shows in city court.

On Monday, Harry Snellings, Jamestown Police Department chief and city public safety director, said during the Jamestown City Council Public Safety Committee meeting that, as of last week, 107 appearance tickets issued by the Jamestown Police Department following a criminal charge led to no one appearing in court.

As part of the new criminal justice reforms passed last year by the state Legislature that went into effect at the beginning of the year, cash bail has been eliminated for most misdemeanor and nonviolent felony offenses, which includes stalking, assault without serious injury, burglary, many drug offenses, and even some kinds of arson and robbery.

Cashless bail has led to the police department issuing an appearance ticket to people being charged instead of them being taken into custody.

Snellings said as part of the new criminal justice reform laws, police officers have to now ask those being charged how they would like to be contacted by the court if they don't appear. He said the court has to wait 48 hours before they can issue a warrant for someone following a no-show appearance.

*"It's a huge increase in bench warrants,"* said Brent Sheldon, Ward 1 councilman and Public Safety Committee chairman.

Snellings said he will be attending a hearing of the Repeal Bail Reform Task Force that will be held Thursday in Buffalo. He said James Quattrone, county sheriff, will also be attending the task force hearing, which is being headed by state Sen. George Borrello, R-Sunset Bay, who is the chairman of the task force. Following

the meeting Thursday, there will also be upcoming roundtables meetings on Long Island, the Hudson Valley and in Syracuse.

Last month, the council approved a resolution asking the state Legislature to immediately revise the newly enacted criminal justice reform laws during its regular voting session meeting.

Last month, Snellings told the council that police department personnel have fallen behind on recording evidence because of the new criminal justice reforms laws. He said his main concern is the new discovery law, which now requires all evidence to be submitted to the court within 15-days.

Snellings said to adjust to the impact of the new quicker discovery rules, the city's police department started implementing new procedures at the beginning of December. He said department personnel have already fallen behind when it comes to physical evidence that is collected because of the attention needed on digital evidence. He added Mark Dean, city information technology director, has had to assist department personnel with collecting video evidence of each person being "*booked*." Snellings said more than 150 people were booked in December.

*"That's a lot of video evidence,"* he said.

Last spring, the state Legislature approved cashless bail for nonviolent defendants and a quicker discovery process, which is now only a 15-day process. Since the new laws were passed by the state Legislature, Chautauqua County District Attorney Patrick Swanson and several police chiefs, including Snellings, have publicly stated the new laws will increase the workload on department personnel and will have a negative impact.

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