



Monroe County Legislature

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Via Electronic Mail

Monroe County Board of Ethics
C/O County Attorney Matthew Schwartz
39 W. Main St.
Rochester, NY 14614

May 14, 2026

Board of Ethics Members:

As a Monroe County Legislator, I am requesting an advisory opinion regarding a private consulting business operated by Monroe County Sheriff Todd Baxter. The business raises serious questions under the Monroe County Code of Ethics.

Facts

1. Sheriff Todd Baxter is the elected chief law enforcement officer of Monroe County. He commands an agency of 1,100 personnel, administers the Monroe County Jail, and exercises authority over hiring, promotion, assignment, and discipline within the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.
2. Sheriff Baxter operates a for-profit consulting firm, Baxter & Barnes Leadership ("BBL"), while serving as Sheriff. The firm's public Facebook page identifies him as a principal. Its About section opens with the words "Sheriff Todd Baxter" and describes the Monroe County Sheriff's Office as the basis for his qualifications.
3. A BBL flyer offers a program titled "Transforming Jail Culture" — a two-day session described as "designed for jail leadership." Its stated goals include improving staff wellness and safety, building trust and professionalism, addressing cultural challenges, and reducing liability through leadership. Sheriff Baxter administers a county jail and is selling paid consulting services on how to run one.
4. On May 13, 2026, BBL posted a photograph of Sheriff Baxter in his law enforcement uniform to the firm's public Facebook page as promotional content. The post sells Sheriff Baxter's current position as a reason to hire the firm.
5. In November 2023, this Board found a violation of Section 45-13.A in connection with Sheriff Baxter's appearance in a television commercial in which he did not wear his uniform, did not display his title, and made no reference to his official position. A violation was found notwithstanding those facts. None of those mitigating facts are present here.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

Sheriff Baxter controls the careers of every person who works for him and makes decisions about who gets hired, promoted, and assigned within MCSO. He oversees an office that investigates crimes, administers the jail, and awards contracts.

Any number of people could hire BBL in circumstances where influence concerns arise. A candidate seeking employment with MCSO. A vendor seeking Sheriff's Office business. Someone under investigation by his office. The payments made to BBL financially benefit the Sheriff.

Ethical Questions

1. Does the operation of a private consulting business by a sitting Sheriff, marketed to the universe of people and institutions over which he exercises authority, constitute a conflict with the proper discharge of his duties under Section 45-4?
2. Does BBL's "Transforming Jail Culture" program — sold by the administrator of the Monroe County Jail to jail leadership — constitute incompatible employment under Section 45-8?
3. Does the use of his title, his office, and his uniform to market a for-profit business give reasonable basis for the impression that persons can improperly influence him in the performance of his official duties under Section 45-13.A?
4. What obligation, if any, does Sheriff Baxter have to disclose the identity of BBL's clients and to recuse himself from matters involving those clients in his official capacity?

The Monroe County Code of Ethics exists to ensure that public authority is exercised in the public interest. The people Sheriff Baxter polices, the employees whose careers he controls, the vendors who seek his business, and the institutions that contract with his jail can all write a check to his consulting firm. This Board previously found a violation on facts substantially less direct than those presented here. I look forward to the findings of your inquiry.

Sincerely,



Rachel Barnhart – Legislator District 17



Baxter and Barnes Leadership

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Description



Sheriff Todd Baxter is a 36-year veteran of law enforcement. He has served the citizens of Monroe County as Sheriff since January 1, 2018, having been elected as the 49th Sheriff of Monroe County in November 2017. An organization 1,100 members strong, MCSO is comprised of five bureaus to include Police, Jail, Court Security, Civil and Staff Services. The MCSO has a budget of \$177,000,000. His law enforcement career also includes 22 years of service to the Rochester Police Department, four years of service as Chief of Police of the Greece Police Department, and two years of service with the Ogden Police Department. He holds an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice from Monroe Community College, a Bachelor's Degree in Organizational Management and a Master's Degree in Strategic Leadership from Roberts Wesleyan College. Baxter also teaches at Roberts Wesleyan.

Sheriff Baxter joined the local force following three years of active duty with the U.S. Army as a Military Police Officer. He continued his military service with the U.S. Army Reserve, 98th Division, for another 19 years before retiring as a Master Sergeant, Brigade Anti-Terrorism and Training Non-commissioned Officer in 2005.

In April 2014, Baxter assumed the duties of Executive Director of the Veterans Outreach Center, Inc., the oldest, local, non-profit, taking care of veterans. He recognized the role family wellness plays in supporting the overall success of an individual, and is proud to have helped produce financial stability and programs that serve the region's 68,000 veterans and their families.

Todd and his wife Mary of 34 years have two sons, Kevin and Zachary. Kevin and his wife Shannon welcomed their first child, Cora Maren Baxter in July 2021. They welcomed their second child, Colton Richard Baxter, in April 2024. Zachary is a First Lt. in the U.S. Army, serving in Germany.

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Baxter and Barnes Leadership

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Leadership is not built in comfort. It is tested in crisis, change, pressure, and responsibility.

Todd Baxter has lived those lessons, working his way through the ranks of the Rochester Police Department, serving 22 years in the U.S. Army, taking over the Greece Police Department during a time of crisis, leading in public safety for nearly four decades, and helping guide a nonprofit back to financial stability.

Baxter & Barnes Leadership brings those real-world lessons to organizations that want stronger leaders, better communication, healthier teams, and a renewed sense of mission.

Leadership is leadership. It is a people business. [See less](#)





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— WHO WE ARE —

At **Baxter & Barnes Leadership (BBL)**, we believe strong leadership is built on a foundation of trust, competence, and adaptability. Our programs reflect decades of experience, from frontline supervisors to CEOs, and are grounded in practical lessons, not theory.

We work alongside your team to assess goals, identify development needs, and deliver tailored solutions designed for your unique mission. Whether you're in public service, trades, a nonprofit, or corporate leadership—BBL helps build teams that thrive.

— OUR LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS —

● **10 Leadership Lessons Built in the Baja 1000**

1-Day Program

Follow our team on the ultimate endurance challenge of completing the Baja 1000 car race. Learn how to:

- Build high-performance teams
- Communicate under pressure
- Lead through setbacks
- Conduct dynamic After Action Reviews

● **Transforming Jail Culture**

2-Day Program

Designed for jail leadership to:

- Improve staff wellness and safety
- Build trust and professionalism
- Address cultural challenges head-on
- Reduce liability through leadership

● **Organizational & Tactical Communication**

½-Day Program

Hands-on training in critical communication, including briefings and essential messaging strategies from every day communication to areas where risks are high.

● **Problem Solving**

1-Day Program

From urgent issues to long-range decisions—develop unconventional thinking, structured analysis, and problem-solving stamina.

● **Research for Leaders**

2-Day Program

Gain tools to design and apply research that solves root problems, not just symptoms—while saving time and money. Emphasis is placed on conducting thorough literature reviews and effectively using data.

● **Leading Change**

1-Day Program

Learn the change model, generate buy-in, and develop inspired visions that resonate with your team.

● **Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

1-Day Program

Use DISC Assessments and practical exercises to build stronger relationships and teams through emotional intelligence.

● **Risk Assessment & Mitigation**

1-Day Program

Train your staff to identify hazards and develop risk-reduction strategies that protect your mission and assets.

● **Threat Assessment & Management**

1-Day Program

Build and sustain a team to intervene in grievance-fueled violence, online radicalization, and other targeted threats in your community.

● **Leadership Essentials for the Newly Promoted**

1-Day Program

Whether you're advancing to Sergeant, Lieutenant, or Captain, this promotional training equips new leaders with the mindset, tools, and confidence to lead effectively from day one. Designed for individuals promoted to different ranks or multiple individuals stepping into the same rank, this course focuses on practical leadership skills, decision-making under pressure, communication across the chain of command, and building trust within your team.

— CONTACT US —

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