

# New sheriff takes reins in Hancock County

By [Bill Trotter](#), BDN Staff



New Hancock County Sheriff Scott Kane shakes hands with well-wishers after being sworn into office on Jan. 1. Kane was elected last fall after William Clark, who served as Hancock County sheriff for 34 years, decided not to run again.

ELLSWORTH, Maine — The last time a new sheriff took office in Hancock County, 34 years ago, the law enforcement landscape was decidedly different.

Technology, drugs, mental health issues — all these things have become everyday factors or tools when it comes to police work, according to Sheriff Scott Kane, who was sworn into his new position on Jan. 1.

“I started in 1984 part-time, and the changes from 1984 until now are incredible,” Kane said during a recent interview at his office.

When he first got into law enforcement, alcohol and marijuana were among the main substances police officers had to contend with when responding to emergencies or

enforcing the law, Kane said. Now, with opiate addiction much more prevalent, it plays a role in many of the situations that draw police attention, he said.

“So much of what we’re [dealing with] is driven by drugs,” Kane said.

And part of what Kane has to deal with as sheriff is the county jail, which falls under his oversight. People with mental health issues that might be exacerbated by drugs or first-time offenders who may need help addressing their substance issues often wind up in jail, he said.

Some people deserve to be there, Kane said, but some people who get arrested are better off getting back out so they can get the counseling they need. The new sheriff, who has been a certified DARE officer for more than 20 years, said he fully supports recovery programs that can help people get their lives back on track, and that he wants to get more crisis response training for his officers.

“The jails have just become a dumping spot” for people with substance or mental health issues, Kane said. “In my years in law enforcement, I have realized that there are some people who are truly evil, and those people belong in jail.”

Then there’s the funding. Kane said that learning more about the jail’s operations and getting a better understanding of what kind of funding pressure the state Department of Corrections is facing are among his most immediate tasks.

“We don’t know what’s going to happen out of Augusta,” Kane said. “If the state all of a sudden decides that it’s not going to give you any more money, you’re going to have to be creative. You’re going to have to have a crystal ball and a magic wand to solve some of the [funding] issues that are up there.”

Kane said that as he learns more about the administrative side of running the sheriff’s department, he will have a lot of help from two longtime sheriff’s department employees. His brother Patrick Kane has been promoted from lieutenant to chief deputy, he said, and former Chief Deputy Richard Bishop has become the department’s first director of safety and compliance, a position that will be funded from year-to-year as long as it is supported by county commissioners.

With the creation of the new position, and with a new county administrator position that commissioners expect to fill in the coming weeks, the 2015 county budget [has increased only 1.4 percent](#), from \$5.16 million to \$5.23 million, from last year’s budget.

Kane said that keeping Bishop, a former jail administrator, on in the department will be extremely beneficial to him and the residents of Hancock County. Bishop has extensive experience analyzing safety plans for institutions such as schools and hospitals, Kane

said, and has an institutional memory that is invaluable. And it will make sure other officers can focus on responding to emergencies and investigating crime, he added.

“He’s a hell of an organizer,” Kane said. “He accounts for everything. He documents everything. He just doesn’t forget stuff. There’s not a lot of people that have those skills.”

Kane added that someone from among the patrol staff will be promoted to serve as one of the department’s two lieutenants, along with Lt. Tim Cote. After that, a new hire will be chosen to fill that vacant patrol deputy slot.

Kane has taken office as part of a wave of change that resulted in half of Maine’s 16 counties electing new sheriffs last fall.

Aside from Hancock County, new sheriffs began serving this month in [Aroostook](#), [Androscoggin](#), [Penobscot](#), Somerset, [Waldo](#), [Washington](#) and York counties. In each case but one, the new sheriffs replaced men they had worked for who decided not to seek re-election. The lone exception is in Washington County, where Republican Barry Curtis defeated the incumbent, independent Donnie Smith.