

PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING

Held In Room #318

PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING

CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512

Members:

Chairman Gross, Legislators LoBue & Oliverio

Wednesday

6:30p.m.

April 10, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 6:30p.m. by Chairman Gross. He requested that Legislator Oliverio lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators LoBue, Oliverio & Chairman Gross were present.

Item #3) Approval/Protective Services Meeting Minutes/March 13, 2013

Chair Gross stated that the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4) Update/Putnam County Coroners

Chair Gross stated that Dr. Neshewait was unable to attend the meeting, therefore this agenda item will be tabled to a future meeting.

Item #5) Update/Putnam County Schools Safety Plan

**5a.) Memo Dated: March 19, 2013 From: Chair of Protective Roger Gross
To: County Executive Odell & Sheriff Smith Re: School District/County/
Recommendations on Increasing School Safety/Putnam County School
Districts**

**5b.) Memo Dated: March 19, 2013 From: Chair of Protective Roger Gross
To: Sheriff Smith Re: February 13, 2013-Protective Services
Committee/Costs Associated-Special Police Officer**

**5c.) Response From: Sheriff Smith Dated: April 5, 2013 Re: Response to
Memorandums Detailed in Agenda items 5a. & 5b Subject: Special Patrol
Officers**

**5d.) Memo Dated: March 19, 2013 From: Putnam Valley Central School
District Superintendent & Board of Education Members/Formal Request to
the County To provide Funded School Patrol Officer at the Putnam Valley
Elementary School**

Chair Gross stated that he would like to address agenda Item #5. He stated that he would like to begin by stating that the number one goal is the protection of our children and the school safety in our County. He stated that he would like to provide a little background on this matter. He stated that on February 13, 2013 the Protective Services Committee agreed to gather data from our six school districts and the Sheriff's Department regarding the present School Resource Officer program (SRO) and the possibility of a School Patrol Officers (SPO) and what the costs would be. He stated this all came about as the result of the massacre that occurred in Newtown, CT on December 14, 2012. He stated that on February 14, 2013, the Chairman of the Legislature initiated a Task Force to review school safety and to collect data.

He stated that it was similar to what the Protective Services Committee was committed to doing, as decided at the February 13th meeting. He stated that the Protective Services Committee did not endorse the Task Force on February 13th, but were asked to be involved. He stated that he was specifically asked to Chair the two meetings: March 1st and March 12th. The purpose of the meetings were to discuss school safety and how the County could be of support. He stated now a dual track for collecting data. He stated that this is new territory for the Committee in that the Task Force would give recommendations to the County Executive, whereas the Protective Services Committee would determine policy based on funding and whatever additional information comes forward on this matter. He stated that he would like to thank the Mahopac and Putnam Valley School Superintendents for their participation in the Task Force and also the Sheriff's Department representatives and multiple Department Heads (Finance, Law, Social Services and the Administration) were in attendance at the meetings. He stated that he has a proposed plan that came out of the discussions. He stated that he will provide an overview of the proposed plan: Support of an SPO program from requesting school districts. He stated that the County will initiate a hiring process. School Districts along with the Sheriff's Department would be part of the screening process for suitable candidates. There are many retired law enforcement personnel residing in our County who would be a genuine asset for an SPO program. He stated that he would like the retired "Special Victims Personnel" to be strongly considered as candidates to fill the SPO positions. He stated that he believes that they would be a huge asset, with their specialized training, to the proposed SPO program. He stated that there was a discussion had in the meetings pertaining to uniforms and training. He stated that the School Superintendents that were at the meetings agreed to cover those costs. These items are still up for discussion, as stated these are recommendations that came from the March 1st and March 12th meetings. He stated that the liability costs would be covered by the County. Salaries for the SPOs would be approximately \$20-22 dollars an hour, and would be handled by the school districts. He stated that Management would be determined. He stated that the current person who handles the SRO program would not be able to handle all of the SPOs that would be hired. He stated therefore there is the question of hiring someone who would manage the proposed SPO Program. He stated that there was a recommendation that the Schools utilize one of their staff members to manage the SPO Program. He stated that there would need to be some legal agreements between the County and the School Districts related to some of the aspects of this particular plan. He stated that is basically the overview. He stated that he did send this overview to County Executive Odell. He stated that this is an unusual situation in that the County is in its second quarter of the 2013 budget and school districts are just now formulating their budgets for the May vote.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he supports the SPO proposal. He stated that these are individuals who have been working in the field. He stated that they know law enforcement and they know the law. He stated that he would like to incentivize this. He stated he would like to make the school districts want this. He stated that when you compare the cost of an SRO to an SPO it is worlds apart. He stated that he would support the County paying for the training, uniform and the salary of the SPO for the 2013/2014 school year. He would like to give that a try and see how it goes. He stated that the other districts may join suit. He stated that whether it comes from the left or right pocket it comes out in the taxes. He stated to divide it among the County which is a much larger taxing entity than a school district, makes all the sense in the world to him. He stated that if the other school districts, such as Brewster, see the success of the SPO Program they may want to join in. He stated that this incentive proposal would allow us to guarantee that the SPOs would be ready to begin in September of 2013. He stated

that the legacy costs, such as retirement and health benefits really mount up and they are forever costs. He stated that hiring retired police officers to be in the SPO positions is the way to go. He stated that he did an analysis on the County's sales tax. He stated that the County is going to be running, approximately with a 2.5 million dollar surplus. He stated that is where he sees the funding for the SPO Programs being drawn from.

Legislator LoBue stated that she has not yet made a decision. She is not clear on what the costs are. She questioned if there were any representatives from the school districts tonight.

Chair Gross stated that the estimated cost of an SRO is is \$110,000. The County and the school districts split that cost \$55,000 each.

Legislator LoBue stated that she is aware of the SRO costs. She is unclear of the proposed SPO program and the costs associated with it. She stated that Sheriff Smith's memo (5c, backup) quotes \$4,500 for equipment per SPO and the training is \$3,360 per SPO. She requested that Captain Velotti address the committee members, since he may be able to answer some questions. Legislator LoBue requested that he please address the costs that are listed in Sheriff Smith's memo of April 5, 2013.

Captain Velotti stated that the costs that are listed were based on 120 hours of training per SPO. He stated that there are very qualified instructors in the Sheriff's Department. They all have other duties. He stated that there would be overtime costs involved to carry out the training required.

Legislator LoBue questioned if an approximate cost could be stated addressing the complete cost of bringing an SPO onboard.

Captain Velotti stated that he does not have that. He provided some broad based conversation on the projected costs.

Legislator DiCarlo stated that he believes that there are some questions that need to be asked: 1. Is the County willing to continue, in the future, to fund the SRO Program? He stated that a lot of the County's funding decisions will be based on that answer. 2. What districts want to be involved? He stated that when the Superintendents came to the Protective Services Committee Meeting in February there were Superintendents who stated that they did not want to be in a program with the County and that they would handle it on their own. He stated if it is a block grant of money that the County will provide, we cannot make the decision for the school districts on how they use the money. He stated that ultimately the County Executive's office needs to make a recommendation to the Legislature on what they see moving forward and what they think is palatable as far as the County's budget goes. He stated that there is a lot that has to be considered when making this decision. He stated that he does not want this to be a quick fix deal for this school year and forget about it next year.

Chair Gross stated that we are in the second quarter of the 2013 budget year, and the SROs are on-line through December of 2013. He stated that in his meetings a target date was set of September 2013 to have the SPO programs set up in the districts. He stated that so far the only schools that have expressed an interest are Mahopac and Putnam Valley.

Legislator LoBue stated to tie in with the comments made by Legislator DiCarlo, this is a trial program. She stated that we are working to find a solution. She stated that this year the County has the SRO program funded through to December 2013. She stated that if it was up to her she would go forward in to the next year with the SRO program.

Sergeant Cargain stated that it is his understanding that no one is looking to replace the current SROs, they want to keep what they have. He stated that Mahopac has put money aside to pay for the SPO Program. He stated that Putnam Vallley has asked for help from the County to fund an SPO Program.

Chair Gross stated that he is concerned about coverage for September of 2013 with regards to SPOs.

Legislator Albano stated that what is being looked at is increased security presence in our schools. He stated that there is no question that you will get more for your money when going with an SPO versus an SRO, in terms of actual bodies. He stated that he believes this should be decided by the voters of the School Budget and based on that then the School Districts can decide how they would like to handle the matter in their perspective Schools.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she works in a high school and she has firsthand knowledge of the SROs function in the school atmosphere. She stated that they are invaluable at the high school level. She stated that it was her understanding that a block of funding was going to be given to the schools and the programs set in place would be at the discretion of each school district because they know their needs. She continued to express her opinion on the individual schools being the ones who need to assess their district's needs. She stated that she does not understand how a unilateral decision can be made when there are different needs in different districts.

Chair Gross stated that they put the word out to all of the School Districts and only two of them responded. He stated that they made it clear what they wanted. He stated that they are reacting to those two districts. He stated that if they bring this back for consideration, he is concerned that there will not be a plan in place for the beginning of the School year, September 2013. He stated that this entire process will take time.

Chair Gross facilitated further discussion on this matter, with many options and projected scenarios mentioned.

County Executive Odell stated that she was surprised that the Governor did not recognize the pressure of this, what she would like to call another unfunded mandate. She stated that this is much more of a social matter, which we, as elected officials feel responsible to address. She stated that the task force did a noble effort. She stated that this conversation should be brought back to the State and request financial assistance. She stated she believes that an SPO program is inevitable looking at the economy and not seeing any big change in the positive direction anytime soon. She stated that if it is decided that the hybrid approach is the way that Putnam County decides to go. We may need to take a look at reformatting school security in its entirety. She stated that there was an excellent symposium on that in Westchester. She stated that there is a lot of conversation about security around the nation. Not only in schools, but also in public gatherings. She recommends that the County proceed

with caution and ask the Governor and State representatives for guidance and assistance in securing some funding revenue streams. Dr. Manko of the Mahopac Central School District has clearly stated that his district is committed to putting the SPO Program in his budget. Dr. Manko has also communicated that to Personnel Director Paul Eldridge.

Chair Gross referenced the correspondence backup for Agenda Item #7. He stated that the memos from County Executive Odell reported the funding announced to be distributed to the Putnam County School Districts as recorded in the New York State Governor Cuomo's budget. He stated that the funding is earmarked for specific school programs. He stated that would then in turn avail the school dollars that had been earmarked, prior to the Governor's announcement to be used towards another program.

Chair Albano stated that the SPOs are more cost efficient. He stated that the current SROs are all excellent. He stated that he does not believe this is a decision for the County to make. He stated that he believes it is up to the parents and the school districts. He stated that the County needs to decide what the dollar amount is that each district can be given. He stated that then it really is up to the district along with their parents to decide what they want to do.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated that she is troubled by the fact that there have only been two school districts involved at this time. She stated that she would like to make sure that the all of the School Districts are aware of the County's proposal.

Chair Gross stated that the school districts have expressed their wishes. Thus far the only districts looking to partner with the County are Mahopac and Putnam Valley School Districts.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he agrees with Chair Gross. He stated that he believes at this point a list of what the County is willing to cover and be responsible for should be compiled. He stated then the School Districts can decide what they want to do, based on that proposal.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she believes that the Committee should reach out to Dr. Sandbank with the proposal from the County and ask if she would like to change her original decision not to be a part of an SPO program. She stated that Brewster Central School District is committed to paying for their SRO through to the end of this school year 2012/2013. She believes that they should be allowed the flexibility to change their mind.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he recommends that a memo be sent from this committee to each Superintendent stating the proposal from the County regarding a proposed SPO program and request that they contact the County if they are interested in partnering. He stated that he agrees with County Executive Odell in that the School Districts have been given money by the State, allowing them to dedicate some of their funding towards this proposal.

County Executive Odell stated that she would like to clarify something. She is not saying that the School Districts should pay for it because they got the extra money. She stated that her thought was, when she received the information from Governor Cuomo, she was surprise that there was no recognition of a hidden unfunded mandate facing the County with School Security. She stated that she would support a partnership with the training and liability.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he strongly recommends that a memo be sent out tomorrow to the Superintendents with a deadline date to respond.

County Executive Odell stated that there is an obvious cost to the liability of the numbers. She stated that the training cost will have to be calculated, even if they are planning to do the training in-house there will be a cost factor associated to it. She stated that she believes it was agreed that at the Task Force meetings that there would not be a funding of SROs; it would be a funding of SPOs.

Chair Gross stated that he agrees with County Executive Odell. He stated that he will have a memo sent out to the School Districts stating what the County is willing to be responsible for in reference to an SPO program.

County Executive Odell stated that she would recommend sending the memo out electronically and each Legislator approach their perspective School Superintendents to make sure they are aware of the offer being proposed by the County.

Chair Gross stated that he will make sure that is done.

Legislator Oliverio stated he would like a total cost per SPO.

Captain Velotti stated that he will work on pulling the numbers together.

Chair Gross facilitated continued broad discussion.

Deputy County Attorney Spadaccini stated that she would like to make some clarifications when drafting the letter to the Superintendents: the contract term for the SROs is the School Year not the calendar year. Also the wording of "liability" is too general. She stated it should be referred to as "workers compensation". She stated that she would like to suggest that she review the memorandum before it is sent out.

Legislator LoBue questioned if there is an inter-municipal agreement yet.

County Executive Odell stated that there will not be one until there is an agreement of what is agreed upon.

Chairman of the Legislature Othmer stated that he apologizes for the use of the word Task Force. He stated that he wants to have the focus kept on the fact that young children lives were taken away and destroyed by a maniac. That is why we are here, and trying to come up with a plan that will prevent that from ever happening again.

Ann Fanizzi, constituent, stated that she is a 30 year educator from the South Bronx. She stated that she was a teacher and an administrator. She stated that in the School District they dealt with drug abuse, gang violence and so forth. She stated that she is confused as to what will be the County's role and what will be the Districts roles. Also she is concerned with the comment made by Chair Gross in reference to the money being funded by the state for specified program, and that allowing the currently designated dollars, earmarked by the School Districts, be diverted to security forces. She stated we should remember that the mass

murderers were students at one time who were not provided the kinds of programs and services they needed. Those programs pre-k, early childhood programs are essential – urgent because that is where the formation of the child begins.

Chair Gross stated that he was not implying that the funding be taken away. He stated that he was referring to moving the dollars around. He stated that he taught in a High School for thirty-two (32) years and safety and security in a school is number one, in his opinion.

Arthur Singer, constituent, questioned what benefits would be involved unemployment insurance through the summer months, disability, please address that.

Chair Gross stated that the proposed SPOs would be hired on an hourly basis at \$20-22 dollars an hour. He stated that there will need to be backup SPOs hired to cover vacation and sick days. He stated roughly there has been a number of five (5) SPOs requested in preliminary discussions. There would need to be more like seven (7) or eight (8) hired so there are backups in place. He confirmed that a memo be sent out tomorrow to the Superintendents.

Item #6) FYI/Correspondence Date: From: Governor Cuomo Re Announcement of a “Budget that Puts Students First” – Duly Noted

Item #7) FYI/ (5) Correspondences Date: March 27, 2013 From: County Executive Odell To: Chairman Othmer and Legislators/Providing Total Dollar Increase in State Aid Announced for Putnam County Schools: Mahopac Central School District, Putnam Valley Central School District, Carmel Central School District, Brewster Central School District, Haldane & Garrison School District – Duly Noted

Item #8) Other Business - NONE

Item #9) Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:30P.M., Legislator Oliverio made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature- Diane E. Trabulsky