

PUTNAM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
KEVIN M. BYRNE

MEMORANDUM

April 1, 2025

To: Chair Amy Sayegh, Putnam County Legislature

Cc: Members, Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board

From: County Executive Kevin Byrne

Re: March 31, 2025 Memorandum: "Schedule Agriculture Farmland Protection Board Meeting"

Chair Sayegh:

I am in receipt of your March 31 memorandum titled "Schedule Agriculture Farmland Protection Board Meeting."

The Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board is an advisory adjunct to the county Legislature, whose duly elected members appoint the Board and recommend their terms. There are currently two vacancies on the Board, including the Board's former volunteer chair who was removed by the Legislature's Chair on New Year's Eve last year without any communication with the County Executive's Office.

I include that December 31, 2024, legislative memo for your convenience, where it states: "Please note that the power to appoint and/or remove from the Board remains with the Legislative Chairperson and Ms. Apicello always has the opportunity to express her interest to a future Chair." To date, these vacancies still have not been filled by the Legislature.

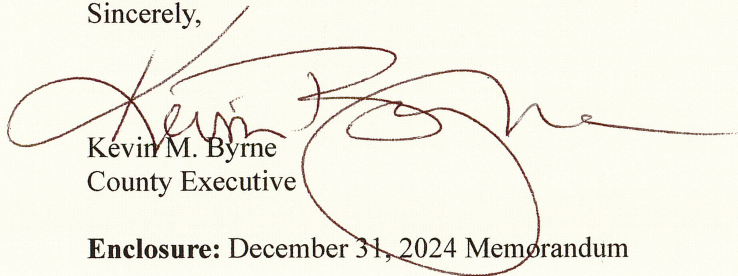
The New York State Agriculture and Markets Law goes into more detail: "*The chairperson of the county legislative body shall appoint* to it two qualified persons for terms of two years each, two qualified persons for terms of three years each and two qualified persons for a term of four years. Thereafter, the appointment of each member shall be for a term of four years [*italics added*]." Section 302 (1)(b). Other members of the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board include the Commissioner of Planning, Development and Transportation, the Director of Real Property Taxes, and the Soil and Water District Manager. These individuals are on the Board, not by Executive appointment, but by virtue of their position in the County, in compliance with the New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Section 302(1)(a).

To assist in clarifying any misunderstandings, the Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board is a non-executive body; my office has no independent authority to declare, announce, or otherwise schedule a meeting by Board members. That said, I am pleased to share with you and all Board members, copied on this memo for convenience, that I am already on record supporting, even encouraging, the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board to meet in 2025.

I shared this publicly at this office's "Future of Farming Roundtable" held on March 21 in Putnam Valley. All members of the Legislature were invited, but only four of the Legislature's nine members chose to attend and observe the discussion. Fortunately, it was recorded and has been published on the County's website for all to see (accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/@putnamcountygov/videos>). If you have not done so already, I recommend reviewing the video so that you can listen to its participants from the state Farm Bureau, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Westchester and Dutchess counties, in addition to both current and former Putnam County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board members. The roundtable offered wide-ranging views on what future steps our county may take to update its 2004 Farming Protection Plan, Agricultural District, Agricultural Assessment Program, and other policies to reflect or incorporate the best practices of our neighbors. Personally, I found it very helpful.

I hope that this explanation clarifies the issue.

Sincerely,



Kevin M. Byrne
County Executive

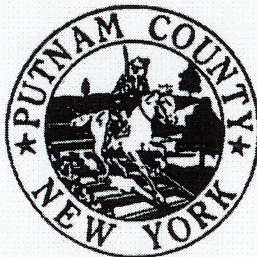
Enclosure: December 31, 2024 Memorandum

KMB/lr

THE PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE

40 Gleneida Avenue
Carmel, New York 10512
(845) 808-1020 Fax (845) 808-1933

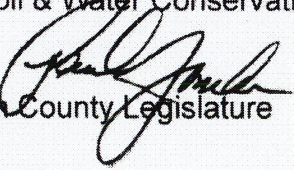
Paul E. Jonke *Chairman*
Amy E. Sayegh *Deputy Chair*
Diane Schonfeld *Clerk*
Robert Firriolo *Counsel*



Nancy Montgomery	Dist. 1
William Gouldman	Dist. 2
Toni E. Addonizio	Dist. 3
Ginny Nacerino	Dist. 4
Greg E. Ellner	Dist. 5
Paul E. Jonke	Dist. 6
Joseph Castellano	Dist. 7
Amy E. Sayegh	Dist. 8
Erin L. Crowley	Dist. 9

MEMORANDUM

TO: Neal Tomann
Putnam County Soil & Water Conservation District Manager

FROM: Paul Jonke
Chairman, Putnam County Legislature


CC: Jocelyn Apicello

DATE: December 31, 2024

RE: Putnam County Agriculture & Farmland Protection Board

Please be advised that, in my role as Chairman of the Legislature and in accordance with New York State Agriculture and Markets Law Section 302, I am removing Jocelyn Apicello from the Putnam County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board effective immediately. I thank Ms. Apicello for her time on the Board, but I believe this to be in the best interest of Putnam County.

Please note that the power to appoint and/or remove from the Board remains with the Legislative Chairperson and Ms. Apicello always has the opportunity to express her interest to a future Chair.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.