

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318 OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Chairman Gouldman, Legislators Addonizio & Sayegh

Wednesday

March 14, 2018

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 P.M. by Chairman Gouldman who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Addonizio, Sayegh and Chairman Gouldman were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – February 13, 2018

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/Putnam County Economic Development Corporation/President Jill Varricchio

Putnam County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) President Jill Varricchio stated there is a new Chairman of the EDC Board Richard Weiss, who is principal partner of a wealth management firm. She stated she would like to meet with each of the Legislators to talk about feedback and interests of their communities and how the EDC may be able to assist and support what may be needed in the communities. She stated the EDC continues to bring thoughtful economic development to Putnam County. She stated with the additional funding this year they were able to hire an ad agency that will assist in bolstering the brand and enhance the social media platforms. She stated for every dollar a residential taxpayer pays to the municipality, it costs the municipality about \$1.19 to deliver services. She stated when a business pays a dollar to the municipality, it costs the municipality \$.31 to deliver services to the business. She stated it is compelling to bring businesses to the community because it impacts the entire way of life. She stated the EDC had 35 transactions with commercial real estate, with a value of \$26.32 million in 2017. She stated that is less than 2016, which was 40 transactions and a 10 year high. She stated she has a list of the transactions if anyone would like to see that.

Legislator Addonizio stated she would like to.

President Varricchio stated there were nine (9) transactions in Cold Spring, eight (8) in Carmel, six (6) in Mahopac, five (5) in Kent, four (4) in Brewster/Southeast, and three (3) in Patterson.

Legislator Scuccimarra requested clarification on what these numbers are.

EDC President Varricchio stated this is a breakdown of the 35 commercial transactions in the County for 2017. She stated the EDC posts a “Property of the Week” from brokers. She stated she had a sheet with the breakdown.

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

EDC President Varricchio stated there were commercial, residential, and industrial sales. She stated in 2016 there was a transaction that turned into the Guardian Veterinarian Animal Hospital that just opened in the Town of Southeast. She stated this is a good story. She stated there are around 50 vet techs and 15 Veterinarians. She stated it is a 24 hour facility. She stated they are looking for a good story in the 2017 transactions. She stated looking at trends of what has worked in the Hudson Valley, and there are accelerators or incubators for new businesses. She stated the EDC is targeting an accelerator for the western side of the County. She stated someone stepped up and offered their building as a potential site. She stated they did a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) process in November. She stated there is now a business plan and they are looking at how to structure it to maximize what they would like to do and interest monies that are needed. She noted grant money may be needed and the last resort would be County money. She stated her goal is to use this model to generate interest in what is happening in the western part of the County, and also bring people out of New York City that may be interested. She stated it is targeting importing and exporting. She stated they have enlisted the assistance of a consultant in Orange County. She stated the goal is to launch the accelerator in the next quarter. She stated another project is the Alliance for Balanced Growth that meets every month to speak about land use that is pertinent to Putnam County. She stated they have identified 247 vacant lands and have narrowed down the land that is most likely to be developed. She stated they have been targeting lands near Interstate 84. She stated they are putting together a Putnam Project Ready Committee to speak about what needs to be done to bring a parcel of land to life. She stated the hope is to bring parcels to municipalities to see how they can work together. She noted that municipalities have many small parcels that are not useable.

Legislator Addonizio questioned the definition of “small” parcels.

President Varricchio stated anything under five (5) acres. She stated Mount St. Mary College is trying to bring their advanced training for nurses. She stated there is also a business advanced degree program. She noted it is almost time for CFA (Consolidated Funding Applications). She stated the EDC continues to work with the Putnam County IDA (Industrial Development Agency), County Planning Department, Chambers of Commerce, commercial brokers, and various municipal stakeholders.

Chairman Gouldman stated President Varricchio has done a great job.

President Varricchio stated she would be reaching out to talk to the Legislators about their districts.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the expansion of Stewart Airport and the international flights coming in will have an impact on business and development in Putnam County.

President Varricchio stated there is a tourist element. She stated the tourists have the option to take a bus to New York City as soon as they get off the plane. She stated there is an effort to

encourage tourists to go to Woodbury Commons, including a proposed train station there. She stated the question is what Putnam County is going to do to get the tourists here. She stated the western part of the County would be a draw to tourists.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the EDC works with the County Planning Department.

EDC President Varricchio stated she works with Senior Planner Barbara Barosa in the Planning Department. She stated Senior Planner Barosa is very helpful and is having a workshop coming up to go over all the requirements for the shared services mandate.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Resident, questioned if President Varricchio has heard anything about the sale of Garden Street School in the Village of Brewster.

EDC President Varricchio stated she is not aware of any deal on the table.

Item #5 - Discussion/Putnam County Visitors Bureau/Executive Director Bruce Conklin
a. Update/PCVB Progress

Putnam County Visitors Bureau (PCVB) Executive Director Bruce Conklin stated the website is at 94% search engine optimization. He stated when it is fully optimized they will start broadening the search terms. He stated the optimization means that it will start showing up on the search engines and will be prioritized higher. He stated the website is getting about 1,100 hits a month. He stated overall 72% of the hits are new visitors, which shows that people are finding the website. He stated they are advertising the website through newsletters and social media. He stated they are still in the process of educating event organizers on how to go on the website and create events themselves. He stated through an RFP (Request for Proposals) the PCVB travel guide is finished. He stated the travel guide is more of a conversational piece and is not the typical size. He stated there is no advertising within the guide as to not detract from what Putnam County has to offer. He stated he chose this size for the guide because it is more cost efficient for mailings, as it is only \$.71 to mail. He stated he has already had over 500 individual requests for the guide to be mailed out, along with numerous bulk orders from visitor centers. He stated the PCVB is contracted with three (3) companies that distribute the guide. He stated it is currently being distributed in 120 locations in New Jersey, along with locations in Eastern Pennsylvania, along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, all of the Westchester Metro North stations, and Interstate 87 in the three (3) major visitor centers up to Albany. He stated unfortunately he did not have the money to print in the quantity that the visitor centers usually receive so he printed as many as possible and hopes to do a reprint. He provided some copies of the visitor's guide.

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. All in favor.

Chairman Gouldman questioned how many were printed.

Executive Director Conklin stated 30,000.

Chairman Gouldman questioned how many did Executive Director Conklin want to print.

Executive Director Conklin stated probably 60,000. He stated it is the first time in years that Putnam County has had a travel guide so there is no stock anywhere.

Chairman Gouldman stated he likes the size of the guide. He questioned if it is available online anywhere.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is now available on the website. He stated there is also a form where people can request a guide sent to them.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if the guide is available in rest stops along the highway and since they are not the usual rack size, would they be in a different spot.

Executive Director Conklin stated they are and they would be with the bigger books. He stated hopefully after the reprint they can start putting them in areas in western Connecticut.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if the pictures in the guide are stock photos.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is a mixture. He stated the PCVB has a contract with the Putnam County News and Recorder who took some pictures. He stated the PCVB also had photos in house. He stated he also searched online and found stock photos.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if there is a listing of golf courses in the guide.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is in the back. He stated not everything could be listed as there are only 24 pages.

Legislator Albano questioned if the guide is in Grand Central Station.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is not because Grand Central is very expensive to distribute in. He stated they are looking into New York City, but it is expensive and was not feasible at this time.

Legislator Jonke questioned if the guide was printed by a printer in Putnam County.

Executive Director Conklin stated they were not. He stated the PCVB put out an RFP and had to take the lowest bid due to the matching funds guidelines. He stated it is a New York printer.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if it is feasible to track where the website hits are coming from.

Executive Director Conklin stated Google Analytics allows him to see where the traffic is coming from. He stated in a month or so he will be able to pull demographic statistics.

Chairman Gouldman suggested checking quarterly to see where the market is.

Executive Director Conklin stated the website is the main hub for information. He stated everything is linked to the partner websites. He stated they have spent a good amount of time and money on the website so they are looking to get the most out of it.

Chairman Gouldman questioned which month was the most active for the website.

Executive Director Conklin stated after he told this committee the website was live (September 14, 2017) it was very busy. He stated it is very busy when he does a marketing push, like the newsletter. He noted the hits are based off of home page visits, so if someone goes to the website via a link to an event page it does not count as a hit. He stated as the year goes along he will look into measuring metrics, where they are coming from, and what metrics will be valuable to continue to market and promote the message of visiting Putnam. He stated once he is able to get all the numbers together, he can show people how it is working and why the PCVB is moving in the direction they are moving in. He stated he has pushed to solidify the bond with the Hudson Valley Tourism Group, which is made up of 10 counties from Westchester and Rockland counties up to Albany County. He stated they meet once every other month. He stated he is doing this because Putnam is a small county surrounded by other counties who have resources that Putnam does not have. He stated by solidifying this relationship, they will push people that have an interest in things that are in Putnam to our area and vice versa. He stated he recently represented the Hudson Valley at the Travel and Adventure show in Philadelphia. He stated it was a great learning experience. He stated he will use this knowledge for trade shows in the area.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if there is any specific trade shows in the area that would be advantageous.

Executive Director Conklin stated he is looking into it. He stated at his previous job he made sure to go to the Working Women's Expo because in a lot of households women make the plans for vacation. He stated women are also more likely to stop and ask questions. He stated the 2018 marketing plan has not been solidified yet. He stated last year they were very focused on the website and travel guide. He stated this year he is focused on digital advertising such as search engine marketing or sponsored editorialized content on network sites. He stated he is trying to figure out what is most cost effective. He stated more people are getting rid of cable so he has put money towards commercials on streaming services instead of paying to have every commercial on just television.

Chairman Gouldman stated major league sports are doing something similar.

Executive Director Conklin stated there will be commercials in New York City.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if that is all five (5) boroughs or just Manhattan.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is Brooklyn and Queens for the commercials. He stated all five (5) boroughs would get digital commercials. He stated it would be too expensive to have the regular commercials played in all five (5) boroughs. He stated the PCVB successfully applied for 2018 matching funds program. He stated he did not anticipate the size of the increase in

funding though he did think it would increase due to Putnam tourism spending was up 6% in 2016. He stated he looked at all the past awards and conservatively guessed \$60,000 and they were awarded \$62,163. He stated New York continues to grow as a tourist destination.

Ms. Eckardt stated she did not see anything on the website about restaurant week, but it was featured on the Westchester and Dutchess county websites.

Executive Director Conklin stated he is working on updates for the website. He stated restaurant week is expensive to participate in. He stated he would put up information on which restaurants are participating.

Ms. Eckardt stated she saw a Cold Spring restaurant on the Dutchess County Tourism website. She questioned how much it cost to print the 30,000 travel guides.

Executive Director Conklin stated it was less than \$9,000, but does not have the exact number.

Armanda Famiglietti, resident, stated she has been to the website many times and created an event for the League of Women Voters fundraiser. She stated it was very easy to create the event.

Executive Director Conklin stated the goal was to make it as user friendly as possible.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if Executive Director Conklin oversees the event page.

Executive Director Conklin stated yes, he has to approve it.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if there is a spell check function.

Executive Director Conklin stated there is.

Legislator Castellano questioned why nothing has been posted about restaurant week.

Executive Director Conklin stated he just has not posted it yet.

Phyllis Hoenig, resident, questioned if there is a listing of places people can stay overnight.

Executive Director Conklin stated there is a listing on the website of all the Bed & Breakfasts and hotels.

Ms. Hoenig questioned if there are many Air Bed & Breakfasts in Putnam County.

Executive Director Conklin stated there is a fair amount but he does not have the exact numbers. He stated he wants everyone to know it is the 50th anniversary of the filming of the movie "Hello, Dolly" and there will be activities all summer long in the Garrison area, including a parade.

Legislator Scuccimarra questioned when the parade is.

Executive Director Conklin stated he believes it is June 16th.

b. Approval/Budgetary Transfer 18T036/To Adjust the 2018 Adopted Budget to the Actual Award

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to Approve Budgetary Transfer 18T036/To Adjust the 2018 Adopted Budget to Actual Award; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. All in favor.

Item #6 - FYI/Foreclosure Report – Duly Noted

Item #7 - Other Business - None

Item #8 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:26 P.M., Chairman Gouldman made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.