

**RULES, ENACTMENTS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
Held via Audio Webinar Pursuant to Temporary Emergency Orders**

Members: Chairman Sullivan and Legislators Albano & Castellano

Thursday

6:00pm

June 18, 2020

The meeting was called to order via audio webinar at 6:03pm by Chairman Sullivan who lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Committee Members Albano, Castellano, & Chairman Sullivan were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – May 14, 2020

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 - Discussion/ Board of Elections/ Impact of COVID-19 on 2020 Elections
a. FYI/ Board of Elections Annual Report**

Chairman Sullivan thanked Board of Elections Commissioners Anthony Scannapieco and Catherine Croft for joining the meeting tonight. He stated he would like Commissioners Scannapieco and Croft to provide an overview on how their work has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commissioner Croft stated when the State shut down, most of their staff began working from home. She thanked the IT/GIS Department for getting their employees set up to work from home within two (2) weeks, which was a big help. She stated Commissioner Scannapieco and the two (2) Deputy Commissioners were in the office. She stated the Putnam County Board of Elections (BOE) did not really fall behind; unlike some other BOEs throughout the State that fully shut down. She stated they have weekly conference calls with the New York State BOE and they have kept up with all the Executive Orders that have been issued. She stated the primary election being held Tuesday, June 23, 2020 is a combination of the regular primary and the presidential primary, which was originally scheduled for April 28, 2020. She stated normally, there are 22 polling sites in Putnam County however many of the sites have denied the use of the facility due to capacity limitations and the inability to follow restrictions that are in place. She stated therefore, there are now 11 polling sites. She stated absentee ballot application forms were sent to all eligible voters with a postage paid envelope. She stated currently, a total of 5,689 mailings were sent and they received approximately 3,800 back so far. She stated in terms of poll worker and voter safety, they have worked with the Bureau of Emergency Services to obtain personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizers for each poll site. She stated they will also be sterilizing the tablets between each use. She stated also, pens used to cast votes will be given to the voter so they are not used by multiple people. She stated in terms of the Board of Elections office, they received a Federal grant of \$131,000 which allowed them to put up plexiglass shields around their desks and front counter. She stated they had prepared for a big voter turnout before the pandemic hit, so they fortunately had

enough envelopes on hand to deal with the absentee requests. She stated 21,000 absentee ballot application letters were mailed out to the democrats through their vendor. She stated the 6,000 letters that were sent out for the local republican, independent, and SAM (Serve America Movement) primary were done in-house because they had the necessary resources. She stated they have kept track of all COVID-19 related expenses, which is currently at \$91,000. She stated this number may not be entirely accurate as it accounts for items that may not have been used yet. She provided the example of 10,000 absentee ballot sets that are accounted for but have not yet been used. She stated these expenses should be covered by the grant mentioned earlier.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated Governor Cuomo releases new changes to be made with short notice before they are to be implemented. He stated there is a lot of work to be done and they brought back all employees including two (2) part time employees. He thanked the two Deputy Commissioners Andrea Basli and Kelly Primavera for their hard work during this time.

Chairman Sullivan requested clarification on the process of receiving the ballots through the mail.

Commissioner Croft stated the process has been made easier as they have obtained an automatic envelope opener. She stated on Memorial Day Weekend Commissioner Scannapieco picked up the absentee ballot applications from the Post Office and it took many hours just to open them. She stated they have since rented a machine that mills the envelopes open, making the process much faster. She stated for example, today there were about 200 pieces of mail and they were opened in less than five (5) minutes. She stated their software vendor upgraded the absentee ballot system, which has cut the time it takes to input the information in half. She stated when the absentee ballot applications come in, they try to send out the ballots to eligible applicants within 24 hours. She stated she believes the General Election in November will also be impacted by COVID-19 and she is glad to have had this opportunity with the primary election to learn how this process will work.

Chairman Sullivan stated this has been a good test run.

Legislator Albano stated the audio was muted earlier and questioned how many absentee ballots were mailed out.

Commissioner Croft stated 5,689 ballots have been mailed out and they have received back 3,889.

Legislator Castellano questioned if the number of absentee ballots received is higher than normal for a primary election.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated absolutely.

Commissioner Croft stated yes, in 2016, which was also a presidential election year, there were just over 1,000 absentee applications sent in for the primary. She stated there has certainly been an increase; the numbers are more similar to the 2016 general election.

Legislator Castellano questioned how the employees are being kept safe and the workspace sanitized while processing the incoming mail.

Commissioner Croft stated when the COVID-19 pandemic began it was when the petitions were being filed and she used gloves to process the documents. She stated now, she constantly washes her hands. She stated gloves are available for employees who would like to use them. She stated they also have the hand sanitizer available that came from New York State.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what the breakdown was for the absentee ballots between the presidential primary and the local primary elections.

Commissioner Croft stated they received 2,989 absentee ballots for the presidential primary and 259 absentee ballots for the local primaries including the two (2) Legislative races, the independence primary in Putnam Valley and the SAM primary.

Chairman Sullivan clarified that the polling sites are going to be open on June 23, 2020 for the primary election.

Commissioner Croft stated yes, there are 11 polling sites that will be open. She stated voters were notified where their temporary polling site will be for this primary election only. She stated signs will also be posted at poll sites that are usually used redirecting the person to the temporary poll site.

Legislator Addonizio stated she represents a small area in the Town of Patterson and there was some confusion as to where those residents would vote. She stated she is glad that a sign will be posted at the Patterson Rec Center redirecting voters to the Kent Town Hall.

Commissioner Croft stated they have made some other changes as well. For instance, usually there is one (1) coordinator per poll site however there will be two (2) coordinators at each site for this primary election who will be ensuring social distancing is being maintained. She stated these coordinators will also be able to direct voters to the proper location.

Legislator Sayegh stated with the COVID-19 pandemic, voting this year is confusing. She stated the school districts sent out absentee ballots and she believes residents are comingling the elections, not realizing they are able to go to the poll site to vote in the primary election. She stated early voting is also available at the Board of Elections.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated the times for early voting vary each day and the schedule can be found on their website.

Commissioner Croft stated there has not been a big turnout for early voting.

Legislator Sayegh confirmed that the primary election on June 23, 2020 will be held at the 11 polling sites throughout the County.

Commissioner Croft stated that is correct. She stated everyone is being encouraged to wear a mask, and a mask will be provided if a voter arrives without one. She stated they have been told by the New York State Board of Elections that they cannot stop someone from voting if they are not wearing a mask. She stated if a voter does not wear a mask, there are precautions that need to be taken within the poll site. She stated she would like to recognize the Mask Makers Guild who donated 200 cloth masks for the poll workers.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the procedure for voting has changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Commissioner Croft stated for the most part it is the same. She stated they will have people stand six (6) feet back from the table when they provide their name and address, they will then sign the tablet which will be sterilized between uses. She stated the privacy folders and booths will be cleaned between uses as well. She stated they have plenty of equipment to keep the area clean while in use. She stated they will also be cleaning the poll sites the following day.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Commissioners Croft and Scannapieco for providing this information. She stated she went to the Board of Elections for early voting and everyone was very friendly and helpful. She stated in the 2019 cancellation summary, there were 2,375 inactive voters who were purged. She questioned what the criteria is for purging and who makes that determination.

Commissioner Croft stated mail check cards are sent out once a year and when they come back or when they receive the national change of addresses, they put voters who have moved onto the inactive list. She stated they then have to wait for two (2) Federal elections. She stated there is a process followed to ensure the person can be purged. She stated if an individual was purged and comes to vote, they can obtain a court order to allow them to vote.

Legislator Montgomery stated 939 individuals were categorized as "other or incomplete." She questioned what this entails.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated they also check the obituaries to remove any registered voters who may have passed away.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if there is a "deceased" category.

Commissioner Croft stated if registration forms are sent in with key information missing, they go into the “incomplete” category. She stated because Putnam County is small, they are able to reach out and go that extra step to try to make sure everyone can vote. She stated in keeping with that, Election Law always has a cutoff date for absentee ballot registration, which was June 16, 2020. She stated they usually accept applications until the Saturday before the election and send the ballot out that afternoon. She stated however, this will not be done for this primary election.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would like to commend Commissioners Scannapieco and Croft and their staff for all of the hard work and effort they have put forth during these unprecedented times.

Legislator Sayegh requested clarification on the notification that was sent to voters regarding the polling site they will be using for this primary election.

Commissioner Croft stated letters or post cards were sent to voters notifying them where their polling site would be. She stated their website also has comprehensive information.

Legislator Sayegh stated it can be difficult for senior citizens, hopefully they are voting via absentee ballot.

Commissioner Croft stated senior citizens often utilize absentee voting. She stated one of the reasons that the Governor mandated the postage paid mailings was so people did not have to go to the post office to purchase stamps. She stated she would also like to commend the post office, as they have been very helpful throughout this process.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated originally, this primary was for the legislative districts and the judge position. He stated everything then had to be redone when the presidential primary was rescheduled. He stated changes were constantly being made throughout this process.

Chairman Sullivan stated a lot of additional work was required for this primary election and he thanked both Commissioners Scannapieco and Croft and their staff for all the hard work that has already been done and the hard work that will be required moving forward.

Item #5 - Discussion/ County Clerk Bartolotti/ Impact of COVID-19 on Operation of County Clerk’s Office & Department of Motor Vehicles

County Clerk Michael Bartolotti thanked Chairman Sullivan for the opportunity to speak to the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the County Clerk’s Office and the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). He stated they have tried to be as dynamic as possible through the increased use of technology and coming up with new ideas to make sure residents could be served properly and efficiently. He stated he is very

thankful for his staff, who have really gone the extra mile during this. He stated he would address the County Clerk's Office and the DMV separately.

County Clerk's Office:

County Clerk Bartolotti stated when this began the Governor' Executive Order that mostly impacted the County Clerk's Office was the closure of the courts throughout New York State, which halted all actions other than emergency petitions. He stated the County Clerk's Office had to come up with a mechanism to address that. He stated with respect to items such as pistol permits, they were not deemed essential by the courts therefore they were not addressed until the judges were able to return at the end of May. He stated everything else in the County Clerk's Office never stopped. He stated after everything was shut down in the middle of March, the Clerk's Office was closed to the public. He stated land records were still coming in that needed to be reviewed and placed on record. He stated since there was still work to be done, they utilized technologies they already had to electronically file the records. He stated they a drop box was put outside of the County Office Building and they had two (2) staff members in the office at a time to take care of anything in the drop box or that was sent through the mail. He stated other staff members were provided laptops to be able to electronically record documents from home. He stated things were kept moving very well throughout this time. He stated to prepare for reopening, they had plexiglass put up on all of the counters. He stated the staff will also be wearing masks and they have cleaning supplies to properly clean the office. He stated when it came time to open back up, he worked with Director of IT/GIS Tom Lannon, who found a great scheduling software. He stated customers can go onto the Putnam County Clerk's Office website, pick the transactions they need, a date, and a time. He stated the guard at the doorway of the County Office Building are provided with the list of appointments for the day so they know who is supposed to be coming in and out. He stated these in-person transactions are being limited to those which need to be done while the individual is in office such as passports, pistol permits, or notary services. He stated there has not been a great demand for research time in the Record room because a good majority of the records are available electronically, however they do have a booking system for Record room time if needed. He stated the judges came back to the courts on a limited schedule at the end of May. He stated he has been in constant contact with the Office of Court Administration (OCA) through the State Clerk's Association to have a majority of documents available electronically. He stated being able to embrace the technology to keep things moving has helped to realize some efficiencies. He stated things are moving differently, but it is smooth. He stated the County Clerk's Office reopened last week and so far it has been working out. He stated work that has been backlogged is being reduced.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the courts have a specific opening date.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the courts have begun opening slowly throughout the month of May. He stated from mid-March through mid-May the courts were pretty much closed; it had to be a dire emergency application brought in to be addressed. He stated

for those items, court was being conducted remotely. He stated throughout May, other types of actions were able to be filed. He stated now, the courts are open for the most part; evictions, foreclosures, and consumer credits are not being addressed due to the economic impact of COVID-19 being a factor. He stated the courts are still conducting most of their work remotely. He stated it appears the courts are moving forward very well.

Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV):

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the DMV sees so many customers daily. He stated in the week leading up to the shutdown, the DMV implemented precautions as a result of the increasing threat of COVID-19. He stated he was at the DMV trying to maintain social distancing protocols with the line extending into the parking lot and they restricted the number of customers inside at once. He stated they were able to obtain personal protective equipment (PPE) for the staff members at the DMV and plexiglass was added to all the windows. He stated at that time, there was not a call for masks, but they had plenty of gloves for the staff. He stated the same scheduling software was utilized for the DMV to take appointments, which made a huge difference because it got rid of the need for a line. He stated after implementing this, the DMV was shut down in mid-March. He stated much like the work in the County Clerk's Office, there was still work to be done although public could not come into the office. He stated the New York State DMV had sent dealer work and private service bureau work to be completed and the Putnam County DMV had a drop box where dealer work was being submitted. He stated they kept a limited skeleton staff inside utilizing PPE to get this work done. He stated a few weeks after the shutdown, a colleague of his came up with a way to process new vehicle registrations for individuals via the drop box. He stated from mid-March when the DMV was closed up until this past Monday when it reopened, they were consistently working on all the items previously mentioned, which was instrumental in maintaining service to constituents. He stated the DMV opened to the public on Monday, June 15, 2020. He stated they have limited the transaction to those that are required to be done in person such as enforcement transactions, license renewals and upgrades, and learner's permit and CDL exams. He stated they are offering first time vehicle registration in-person, which gives the public the option to make an appointment if they wish, or they can use the drop box. He stated three quarters of the staff are working on in-person transactions and the other quarter are handling the drop box, which is the busiest it has ever been. He stated because the DMV is experiencing a backlog due to being closed for three (3) months, they are currently only accepting appointments of Putnam County residents. He stated he does not believe in this; he believes if a New York State resident needs to be served they should be. He stated he needs to prioritize Putnam residents at this point and he hopes this can be opened up to all customers in a few weeks. He stated an appointment can be made by going onto the Putnam County DMV website. He stated there are six (6) 15-minute appointments available throughout the day; for learner's permits they offer two (2) 30-minute appointments per slot throughout the day. He stated they are booked through the middle of next week. He stated the staff at the DMV are doing a phenomenal job and are seeing about 185-190 customers per day. He stated the drop

off work is placed in large plastic containers and there are anywhere from two (2) to four (4) containers each day to be processed. He stated this has worked out really well; the customers are happy with the appointment system and it is running efficiently. He stated he does not see the appointment system going away for the Putnam County DMV.

Chairman Sullivan thanked County Clerk Bartolotti.

Legislator Castellano commended County Clerk Bartolotti for the outstanding job being done. He stated he has heard positive feedback about the work being done in Putnam County, especially the DMV. He stated Westchester County is looking to utilize the same system that Putnam County is using.

Legislator Gouldman stated he is glad that the DMV is opening back up and people, especially 16-year-olds, can move forward with the process to obtain a driver's license.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated they had contacted the New York State DMV to inquire if it was possible to have new drivers take their written exam online. He stated they are booked well into July for permit appointments. He stated unfortunately, the road testing is handled by New York State DMV and they have not yet provided any dates when they will begin offering class D (standard driver's license) or M (motorcycle) road testing. He stated since there is a waiting period between when the permit is obtained and the road test can be scheduled, he hopes there will not be a tremendous backlog.

Legislator Sayegh stated she went to the County Clerk's Office to renew a passport the first day the office re-opened and it was very easy to make her appointment. She stated she also turned in license plates at the DMV using the drop off box. She stated the level of service is amazing given the constraints that COVID-19 has caused.

Legislator Montgomery stated an issue has been brought to her attention regarding cab companies that provide Medicaid transportation. She stated the primary company that was operating in Putnam County has been shut down. She stated her constituents utilize cab companies from Dutchess County as well and there is one that needs to put 20 cars back on the road but is having trouble getting through to the Dutchess County DMV to make an appointment. She questioned if the Putnam County DMV could help getting through to Dutchess County so this company can provide the Medicaid transportation as soon as possible.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated although the Putnam County DMV is accepting in-person appointments for Putnam County residents only, however the company could drop the registration applications through the drop box to have them processed. He stated he would be happy to work with them to process the documents as soon as possible.

Legislator Montgomery clarified that although it is a Dutchess County company, they could utilize the drop box.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated since Putnam County does not have a Taxi & Limousine Commission, our DMV does not have TLC plates to provide, which could be an issue. He stated they can provide regular taxi plates.

Legislator Montgomery stated she will provide that information to the company. She thanked County Clerk Bartolotti.

Chairman Sullivan thanked County Clerk Bartolotti for the work being done.

County Clerk Bartolotti thanked the Legislators for their support during this time.

Item #6 - Approval/ Authorization for Intermunicipal Agreement with Westchester County to Organize and Implement Activities Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WOIA)

Legislator Albano stated this was originally put in place in 2014. He stated he is supportive of continuing this agreement.

Legislator Gouldman stated he has attended several quarterly meetings and they are very informational. He stated this is helpful to many Putnam County residents.

Chairman Sullivan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Continuing Temporary Suspension and Modification of Laws Relating to the Disaster Emergency

Legislator Montgomery stated she previously requested a resolution to request that the Governor extend Executive Order 202.1, which involved a host of things. She stated the original seven (7) page document included health care, telehealth, mental health, childcare, courts, etc. She stated during the process of waiting until this got on an agenda, she spoke with the Governor's office and she was told that a letter would be sufficient, therefore she wrote a letter to the Governor requesting that he consider extending this Executive Order. She stated by continuing the modifications, it will allow New Yorkers to have the tools to address this crisis even after the emergency declaration is lifted. She stated the changes made as a result have opened up many avenues to make life easier. She stated she has not yet received a response from the Governor's office, but she will keep everyone apprised of the status of her request. She stated Legislators can also send their own letter advocating the same. She stated she believes it is important to continue providing this flexibility so things like courts, corrections, school districts, health care, mental health providers, human service providers, nursing homes, unemployment, and families in need of childcare have the ability to get back on track. She stated this is essentially a request for the State to help local governments so they can help their constituents.

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

Chairman Sullivan thanked Legislator Montgomery for sharing this letter. He stated moving forward, Legislators can decide if they would also like to send a similar letter.

Legislator Jonke stated on the first page of the original proposed resolution states “during and after the State of New York is reopened”. He questioned if that means the extension would continue indefinitely. He stated at the end of the same paragraph it says “for the period:” however no period is defined.

Legislator Montgomery stated in her letter to Chairman Sullivan, she indicated since requesting the resolution Legislator Jonke is referring to be placed on an agenda, she spoke to the Governor’s Office, who relayed that a letter would be sufficient for this purpose rather than a resolution. She stated the letter is what is being discussed. She stated if the resolution is preferred, that is fine too.

Legislator Jonke clarified that a resolution is not being voted on.

Legislator Montgomery stated that is up to Chairman Sullivan.

Chairman Sullivan stated at this point, as Legislator Montgomery mentioned, the resolution is no longer necessary and a letter was sent instead. He stated therefore, the resolution was withdrawn.

Legislator Montgomery stated that is if the Committee chooses to withdraw the resolution. She stated she wrote a letter on behalf of her district as she believed it was an important message to get across to the Governor. She stated the Committee should feel free to move forward with the resolution.

Legislator Jonke stated he would be opposed to the resolution.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would like to wait to see the Governor’s response to Legislator Montgomery’s letter. She stated this needs to be looked at more in depth before any action is taken.

Chairman Sullivan stated he believes the letter Legislator Montgomery wrote was an effective way to reach out to the Governor. He stated the resolution was seven (7) pages long and covers many topics. He stated if any other Legislators would like to write a letter to the Governor as well, they could do so. He questioned if any Committee Member would like to make a motion to move the resolution forward. (There was no response from the Committee.) He stated the resolution will not be moved forward at this time. He stated he looks forward to hearing an update from Legislator Montgomery when she receives a response from the Governor.

Legislator Montgomery stated she would like to clarify that everything in the original resolution is also included in the letter she sent. She stated although the resolution was a longer document, the letter summarizes the resolution and touches on every aspect of Executive Order 202.1. She stated she would have been in favor of the resolution as well, but sent a letter after learning it would be sufficient.

Item #8 - Other Business – None

Item #9 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:21pm, Chairman Sullivan made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Beth Green.