

**RULES, ENACTMENTS, & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE
BUDGET MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318 OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairwoman Addonizio, Legislators Ellner & Nacerino

**Tuesday October 8, 2024
(Immediately following Special Rules Mtg. & Audit Budget Mtg. at 6:00pm)**

The meeting was called to order at 8:48pm by Chairwoman Addonizio who lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Ellner and Nacerino and Chairwoman Addonizio were present.

Item #3 – 2025 Budget Review

Veterans Service Agency – Account 6510 (pages 186-187)

Chairwoman Addonizio requested clarification on why \$1,000 was put into the tentative budget for line 54512, Loyalty Day when the requested amount was \$15,000.

Director of the Veterans Service Agency Karl Rohde stated they no longer have a Loyalty Day and he has suggested removing this from the budget. He stated the Putnam County Council VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) ran Loyalty Day and the State discontinued the program. He stated the \$1,000 in the budget line will be used for the Row of Honor.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned why line 54540, Radio Communications is not funded.

Director Rohde stated that budget line was connected to the vehicles however the department no longer has vehicles.

Legislator Nacerino requested clarification on line 51094, Temporary, because \$30,000 was requested but only \$15,000 was included in the tentative budget. She questioned if this was adequate.

Deputy Director of the Veterans Service Agency Tanya Pennella stated the reason for the \$30,000 request was to have an additional \$15,000 to bring in temporary help to assist with managing the projects such as the Row of Honor and Veterans Museum. She stated she and Director Rohde are busy throughout the year assisting veterans.

Director Rohde stated recently, the number of veterans coming in has been overwhelming.

Deputy Director Pennella stated the passage of the PACT Act in 2022 has expanded the eligibility for veterans to file a claim for their exposure during their service.

Legislator Nacerino stated she believes the additional \$15,000 for temporary is warranted.

Legislator Nacerino made a motion to increase line 51094, Temporary, to \$30,000; Seconded by Chairwoman Addonizio. All in favor.

Legislator Montgomery stated another upcoming project that the Veterans Service Agency may be involved in is Rev 250.

Outside Agencies

Chairwoman Addonizio stated the County Executive has kept all outside agencies at level funding for 2025. She stated full consideration will be given to all requests, but no decisions will be made this evening.

Second Chance Foods – Account 8516 (page 239)

Martha Elder, Executive Director and Co-Founder of Second Chance Foods stated they are a non-profit food rescue organization based in Brewster. She stated each week they rescue thousands of pounds of food. She stated the food is sorted, some is donated to other organizations, and some is kept and cooked to provide meals to those in need. She stated they serve a number of food pantries throughout the County and the Putnam CAP soup kitchen. She detailed their two (2) programs working toward breaking down barriers to food access, one of which was started with Chairwoman Addonizio in 2020. She stated in 2024, through the end of September, they have donated 6,300 meals and 168,000 pounds of groceries. She stated she has a vision of zero hunger in Putnam County and she believes with diverse funding and partnerships throughout the County that can be made a reality. She stated 2025 is the first year the County Executive included \$10,000 in the budget for Second Chance Foods. She stated this funding represents 1.5% of their budget for one of their programs in Putnam County. She stated their request was for \$30,000 and was hopeful the Legislature would consider higher funding.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification on the process for the outside agencies.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated the Legislature is reviewing the budgeted allocations in the 2025 tentative budget and will take requests into consideration.

Legislator Jonke thanked Executive Director Elder for her work and stated Second Chance Foods performs a vital function within Putnam County. He stated no matter what happens during this budget process, he suggested coming before the Rules Committee in 2025 so the Legislature can be better acquainted with the organization.

Legislator Montgomery stated there is a Budget & Finance Committee Meeting on October 17, 2024 and the Adopt the Budget Meeting on October 29, 2024 where motions can be made to move funding from subcontingency.

Libraries – Account 7410 (page 222)

President of the Putnam County Libraries Association Gina Loprinzo stated she is also the Director of the Brewster Public Library. She stated she is joined by directors of other public libraries in the County. She thanked the County for their continued support of the libraries, the funding provided by the County has enabled them to provide more resources to the community. She stated they requested a 2% increase for 2025. She highlighted the increased demand for electronic media and the increasing cost of providing it.

Director of the Patterson Public Library Stephanie Harrison stated costs continue to grow and the libraries are purchasing all types of books including electronic books, paper books, large print books, etc. She stated costs are continuing to grow while their budget is staying about the same. She stated where an e-book or audiobook might cost a customer about \$10, it costs the library anywhere from \$75-\$100 per title and it is subject to licensing, meaning there is a time limit on how long the library can have it in stock. She stated many residents will go to multiple libraries, not just the one in their town, meaning the libraries really serve all of Putnam County. She stated there are also opportunities for all eight (8) libraries to share services, she provided an example of a comic book database they purchased for all libraries to access, which would have been the same cost for only one (1) of them to access. She stated the County funding really goes a long way to support the resources the libraries provide to residents of all ages.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated her support for the libraries and all they provide to our community.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would like to echo Chairwoman Addonizio's sentiments. She stated the libraries are such a fundamental resource that goes above and beyond books. She stated this budget procedure they are seeing this evening is new, she has never seen money be put into subcontingency for the Legislature to divide in her 12 years as a Legislator. She stated the objective for the budget meetings in the summer are to allocate the funding. She stated her strong support for the libraries.

Legislator Montgomery stated she will be voting to move the funding out of subcontingency at the Budget and Finance Committee Meeting.

Legislator Sayegh stated her support for the libraries. She stated the library provides services that save residents a great deal of money.

Community Engagement Police Advisory Board – Account 8514 (page 238)

Jenie Fu, member of the Community Engagement Police Advisory Board (CEPAB), stated she would like to take this opportunity this evening to highlight the role CEPAB plays in the community. She stated their mission is to strengthen trust between the community and law enforcement and ensure the County remains safe, inclusive, and collaborative. She stated since their formation in 2021 they have acted as a bridge between members of the community and the Putnam County Sheriff's Department. She stated they hold roundtables, meet with the Sheriff's Department, and hold annual culture fests. She stated they recently started a youth group. She stated to continue making meaningful strides they need financial support from the County. She stated the requested funding would allow them to increase their community outreach. She stated this would include more roundtables and smaller events throughout the County. She stated they would also like to establish a scholarship for high school students. She stated they are entirely self-funded, therefore additional funding would be greatly beneficial. She thanked the Legislature for their support and consideration.

Chairwoman Addonizio thanked Ms. Fu.

Putnam Arts Council & Contribution to Arts – Account 7560 (page 225)

Joyce Picone, Executive Director of the Putnam Arts Council, stated her appreciation for the County's support, they could not survive without it. She stated the Putnam Arts Council leverages State funds from the County dollars they receive. She stated art is for everyone and is a freedom of expression. She stated they have partnerships within the County including with CoveCare, Guardian Revival, the Putnam County Youth Bureau, the Putnam County Historian, Tilly Foster Farm, and Carmel Recreation. She stated they audit all 23 programs that receive grant funding through them. She stated the regrant funds go into each town within the County. She stated for every dollar spent, \$9 are raised through the arts. She stated this year they are expanding into podcasts and preschool programs. She stated they are honored to be among the outside agencies that receive County funding. She stated a 3% increase was requested for 2025 however in the tentative budget is level funding to what was received last year. She stated level expenses do not exist.

Chairwoman Addonizio expressed her appreciation for the Putnam Arts Council and what they provide to the community. She stated art is a form of therapy. She thanked Executive Director Picone for all of her work.

Legislator Jonke thanked Executive Director Picone. He questioned if the Putnam Arts Council has special needs programs.

Executive Director Picone stated yes, they do. She stated they work with Hudson Valley InterArts in Patterson. She stated they do offer classes for children who are neurodiverse in collaboration with the Youth Bureau. She stated they also offer pottery

classes to special needs individuals. She stated they are also open to creating classes to meet demand.

Legislator Ellner stated he would like to see a list of the organizations receiving grant funding through the Putnam Arts Council.

Executive Director Picone stated a list of grant awards from County funding is provided to the Legislature each year when the grant awards are approved. She stated the organizations and projects are selected by an independent panel through a competitive application process. She stated she would be happy to send a list of grant awards utilizing State funding as well.

Southeast Museum – Account 7564 (page 228)

Debbie Oswald, Director of Education and Programming at the Southeast Museum, stated she is a retired teacher from the North Salem school district. She stated in her role with the Southeast Museum she collaborates with the Brewster school district to bring local history presentations to the schools that align with the New York State social studies curriculum. She stated with the County funding they have been able to purchase a projector and screen, which will be used to show an oral history of the area directly from citizens, some of whom are no longer with us. She stated she has collaborated with the Putnam Arts Council on a concert celebrating the contributions of African American citizens throughout the history of the Hudson Valley. She stated she has also collaborated with the Putnam History Museum on a kickoff to Rev 250, the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, where they highlighted the contributions of women in the Hudson Valley. She stated they are also partnering with the Brewster Chamber of Commerce to showcase the history of business in Brewster.

Legislator Sayegh stated the Southeast Museum received their requested funding amount.

Putnam History Museum – Account 7562 (page 226)

Cassie Ward, Executive Director of the Putnam History Museum, thanked the County for their years of support which helps to fund two (2) full time and five (5) part time staff members. She stated in the past few years they have been successful at implementing County wide collaborations. She stated they host County wide exhibitions, such as the one on indigenous people which will be paired with heritage weekend, the first weekend of November. She mirrored Director Oswald's statements, speaking to their role in the Rev250 celebration. She stated through regrants from the Putnam Arts Council they were able to commission five (5) artists to create new works related to women in the Revolution. She thanked County Historian Jennifer Cassidy for working with the Museum and connecting them with organizations throughout the County. She thanked the Legislature again for their support. She stated over the past couple of years they have focused on expanding their reach to the whole County.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned why the Putnam History Museum requested an increase for 2025.

Executive Director Ward stated the increase was requested to help with increased utility costs.

Legislator Montgomery requested that a Committee member move to increase the Putnam History Museum's allocation to their requested amount for 2025.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated changes will be made for outside agencies in the future.

Discussion on the outside agencies continues on page 9.

County Clerk – Account 1410 (pages 29-30)
Motor Vehicles – Account 1411 (pages 31-32)
Records Management – Account 1460 (pages 42-43)

County Clerk Michael Bartolotti stated expenditures have stayed relatively flat. He stated land records bring in the most revenue in the County Clerk's Office, however the current market is not great, which results in a decrease of those records. He stated line 412551, Clerks Fees, shows these numbers and in 2024 \$900,000 was budgeted and they estimate that they will bring in about \$800,000 in revenue. He stated based on this, they budgeted their revenue more conservatively for 2025 at \$750,000. He stated as for the DMV, they fought for many years to get an equitable model for revenue sharing in respect to mail in and online transactions. He stated for the first time in 2024, the County DMV is collecting 10³/₄% revenue across the board. He stated this is less than they were receiving for in-office transactions, but it includes online transactions. He stated for 2024 they budgeted \$1.25 million in revenue for line 412552, Motor Vehicle Fees, and as of September they are very close to reaching that. He stated therefore, \$1.4 million in revenue was budgeted for 2025. He stated the Real ID deadline is coming up in May 2025 which will spark an increase in business.

Legislator Ellner questioned if revenue is generated from passports.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated yes, they get a \$35 fee for each passport application they handle. He stated they also make a good deal of revenue from the photos.

Deputy County Clerk Jimmy McConnell stated that revenue is included in the Clerks Fees line.

Law Department – Account 1420 (pages 33-34)

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned the opioid settlement monies.

First Deputy County Attorney John Cherico stated that is a portion of a large settlement that was received by the Department of Social Services (DSS), which they can use as they see fit. He stated he believes it is being put toward an attorney that would be in the Law Department but would do the work for DSS.

Legislator Montgomery stated she would like to see the opioid settlement money be put toward services.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the attorney would be a full-time position and if all of their time would be devoted to DSS.

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated yes, there is currently one attorney working for DSS and she is physically in that department; the same would go for this attorney position.

Legislator Ellner questioned the increase in line 54125, Legal Services.

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated the Law Department had to request a \$150,000 fund transfer this year for outside counsel. He stated in addition to the Harris Beach firm who is largely handling the unprecedented Arben litigation. He stated they were paid \$214,000 in 2023, \$153,000 in 2024 to date with a large balance outstanding. He stated in addition to that, there are several firms the County is utilizing for employee disciplinary matters. He stated the question had been raised previously if those matters could be handled by the Law Department. He stated all employee disciplinary matters are referred to the Law Department by the Personnel Officer after attempts have been made to address the matters internally. He stated the Personnel Officer directs the Law Department to send these cases to outside counsel therefore they do not have the ability to handle it internally. He stated in many cases, because employees are involved there would be very clear conflicts of interest for the Law Department to be involved.

Legislator Ellner questioned if the caseload would be more manageable if the Law Department were fully staffed.

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated he is hoping so. He stated the Law Department has not been fully staffed during his tenure; there are still two (2) vacant attorney positions.

Legislator Jonke stated every other department head attended their respective budget meeting to review their 2025 budget. He questioned where County Attorney Compton Spain is.

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated it is his understanding County Attorney Spain had a medical issue.

Legislator Montgomery stated a \$50,000 increase in legal services is not unheard of; there was a \$68,000 increase in 2022.

Legislator Ellner questioned if there is an estimated end date for the Arben litigation.

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated they are well into discovery and are past the halfway point. He stated the case is going before Judge Grossman who is aggressive in moving cases along. He stated it will probably at least another six (6) months. He stated he would like to address budget line 54313, Books and Supplements. He stated this is not for physical books, it refers to the legal research services they use, they have a contract at Westlaw and the County received a discounted rate.

Judgement & Claims – Account 1930 (page 53)

First Deputy County Attorney Cherico stated the budgeted amount of \$250,000 was predicted based on the deductible for settlements.

Legislator Castellano questioned why the requested amount was \$350,000.

Deputy County Executive James Burpoe stated that correction was made after a clarification from Risk.

Board of Elections – Account 1450 (pages 40-41)

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned if line 52630, Computer Equipment, was for the E-Poll Books.

Catherine Croft, Board of Elections Commissioner, stated that is correct.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned the increase in line 54646, Contracts.

Kelly Primavera, Board of Elections Commissioner, stated the contract line is used for software and moving companies.

Legislator Nacerino questioned line 52120, Office Equipment. She stated this is the first year it has been funded.

Commissioner Primavera stated that line will be more chairs or tabled needed for elections.

Consumer Affairs/Weights & Measures – Account 6610 (pages 189-190)

Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski stated the budget for 2025 is level. He stated the last three (3) years Consumer Affairs has generated over \$1 million in revenue.

Outside Agencies

Legislator Jonke stated it is unfair that after months of preparing this budget, the County Executive gave all the outside agencies level funding and sent them to the Legislature. He stated the Legislature has not had the same amount of time to review and vet the paperwork these agencies submitted. He stated the Legislature has had this budget for one (1) week. He stated all these outside agencies are fighting over \$75,000 that was put into subcontingency; that is not the way this process is meant to work. He stated it is the County Executive's job to determine which agencies get what. He stated rather, a letter was sent to the outside agencies telling them to come before the Legislature if they could. He stated this is unfair to the outside agencies and it is unfair to the Legislature.

Chairwoman Addonizio agreed. She stated she would like to hear the County Executive's reasoning for budgeting the funding this way.

Legislator Nacerino agreed and stated she does not believe this was an effective, efficient, or fair way to budget. She stated the onus is on the County Executive, that is why he meets with these agencies one-on-one to determine what he will put in the budget. She stated the Legislature is doing the County Executive's work.

Garrison Arts Center – Account 8517 (page 240)

Boscobel – Account 8518 (page 241)

Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival – Account 8519 (page 242)

Chairwoman Addonizio stated these organizations requested funding for the first time for 2025 and none were funded.

Legislator Nacerino stated these are esteemed non-for-profit organizations within the County that enhance the culture of Putnam County. She stated she is unsure why they were not funded if the Administration met with them. She stated this budget process is supposed to conclude at the end of October, but the Legislature is being forced to bring these outside agencies back for consideration. She stated she does not understand this leadership at all. She stated the Legislature should be able to finalize the budget, but they are unable to do that with this money in contingency. She questioned how the Legislature is expected to pass the budget with this money unassigned. She stated this is bizarre.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the money can be moved out of subcontingency this evening.

Legislator Jonke stated a recommendation can be made to the Committee.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated there is only \$75,000 in subcontingency.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if \$75,000 adds up to what the requests were.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated the requests were about \$150,000.

Legislator Montgomery stated she has paperwork from these organizations that she would be happy to share. She stated she got them directly from the organization.

Legislator Jonke stated the Legislature was not provided with that paperwork and he is not comfortable cherry picking which organizations get funding.

Legislator Nacerino stated meeting all requests carte blanche is not the correct way to do this either. She stated it is important to understand each consideration and then make a decision. She stated it would be foolhardy to just divide the funding amongst the organizations. She stated the Legislature will have to bring these organizations in next year and decide how to divide the \$75,000. She questioned the management choices made here.

Legislator Jonke stated those agencies should come to the Legislature in 2025 to discuss 2026 funding. He stated it is not fair to these organizations; this is not the process.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the plan is to invite the outside agencies to come next year to discuss their work and funding.

Commissioner Lewis stated he can forward their budget documents.

Legislator Nacerino stated that is not the process we should be following. She stated this is a bad precedent being set. She stated this work should not be done after the fact when the Administration met with these agencies for this very process to take place.

Legislator Jonke stated he saw a letter received by an outside agency from the County Executive thanking them for participating in the budget process, notifying them their funding was kept level to the prior year, and this is the beginning of the process. He stated that is not true, the Legislature's review of the budget is the end of the process. He stated it is not right to email organizations on the day of the Legislative Meeting to encourage them to attend. He stated that is not the way this process needs to work. He stated it is not fair to the people who run these agencies, and it is not fair to the Legislature. He stated the fact that all organizations received level funding means they were given no consideration, which is terrible.

Deputy County Executive Burpoe stated the Administration reviewed the documents submitted by each agency. He stated some have millions of dollars in their bank account, therefore they were left at level funding or zero. He stated the Administration is willing to work together to improve the process moving forward.

Legislator Montgomery stated with all due respect, just because an organization has money in the bank it does not mean the County should not fund them.

Cooperative Extension – Account 8750 (page 247)

Chairwoman Addonizio stated an increase of \$10,000 was allocated.

Legislator Crowley stated Executive Director Stefanie Hubert sent a letter explaining her absence this evening.

Legislature – Account 1010 (pages 1-2)

Legislator Montgomery questioned exactly what the legal services line is for.

Legislator Jonke stated \$50,000 was allocated for outside counsel if necessary.

Legislator Nacerino stated it is a safeguard.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if outside counsel was obtained by Legislator Jonke.

Legislator Jonke stated Legislator Montgomery is referring to outside counsel assigned by the County Law Department.

Legislator Montgomery clarified that due to a conflict with the Law Department, the Legislature was assigned outside counsel and that outside counsel is assigned by the Law Department.

Legislator Crowley questioned what firm this allocation is for.

Legislator Jonke stated it is not for any firm specifically, it is a budgeted allocation for 2025. He stated this discussion does not happen when other departments have large allocations.

Legislator Montgomery stated her lack of trust and requested a member of the Committee move to remove it.

County Executive – Account 1230 (pages 13-14)

Deputy County Executive Burpoe reviewed increases in their printing and postage lines, as a result of more things being mailed out.

Legislator Naceirno questioned what is being mailed out.

Deputy County Executive Burpoe stated mailings are being sent.

Legislator Naceirno questioned line 54210, Vehicle Leasing.

Deputy County Executive Burpoe stated that is for the vehicle used by the County Executive.

Item #4 – Other Business – None

Item #5 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 10:20pm, Chairwoman Addonizio made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Beth Robinson.