

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairman Jonke, Legislators Addonizio & Gouldman

Thursday **6:30p.m.** **February 13, 2025**

(Protective Mtg. to Immediately Follow)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Chairman Jonke who requested Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Addonizio, Gouldman and Chairman Jonke were present.

Item #3 - Approval/Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes - October 15, & November 12, 2024

Chairman Jonke stated the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/ Reclassification of the Position Title of Commissioner of Health to Public Health Director/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Chairman Jonke stated Personnel Officer Eldridge was present to speak to this request.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated at the Personnel Meeting in December 2024, he indicated that the Commissioner of Health position would need to be reclassified to a Public Health Director. He stated that for a County under 250,000 population a Commissioner of Health or a Public Health Director is permitted. He stated the County has been recruiting a Commissioner of Health for some time. He stated there was a good candidate, but at the last minute the individual decided not to take the position. He stated he has been in constant communications with the New York State Department of Health. He stated after the withdrawal of the Commissioner of Health candidate in December of 2023, the County advertised for both a Commissioner of Health and a Public Health Director. They had no candidates for the Commissioner of Health, but they received very good candidates for the Public Health Director position. He stated as a side note, prior to 2005 Putnam County always had a Public Health Director. He stated the Law does require a County with a Public Health Director also have a Medical Consultant. He stated with that in mind during the 2025 budget process funding was put into sub contingency to pay for a Medical Consultant. He stated the County has an excellent candidate for the Public Health Director position. He stated the reclassification approval of the Commissioner of Health position to a Public Health Director, is being requested, in order to move forward with this process. He repeated there are sufficient funds, along with the funds in sub contingency to also engage a Medical Consultant. He clarified the reclassification would not go into effect until after the Public Health Director candidate is confirmed. He stated the Finance Department is working on the necessary finances. He stated the Commissioner of Health position has been funded through year end of 2025, so there will be a savings.

Chairman Jonke stated to be clear, there will be a savings in salary between the Commissioner of Health position and the Public Health Director position. He continued by stating there will need to be a Medical Consultant, so in total it will end up costing the County approximately \$40,000 more per year.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated the current Commissioner of Health, Dr. Nesheiwat, will be the Medical Consultant.

Chairman Jonke questioned if Dr. Nesheiwat, as the Medical Consultant, will be working on a contractual basis or be an employee.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated that it is up to him. He stated New York State does not have any ruling on that. He explained New York State's only requirement regarding this is that with a Public Health Director there also be a Medical Consultant.

Chairman Jonke stated financially it would cost less for the County to pay Dr. Nesheiwat as a consultant.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated that is correct, because there would not be the added cost for benefits. He stated it is up to the Legislature as to what they would approve. He stated, but Dr. Nesheiwat has expressed that he would like to stay as an employee of the County.

Legislator Addonizio offered the hypothetical scenario that Dr. Nesheiwat decided he does not want to take the position of Medical Consultant. She questioned how difficult would it be to find another Medical Consultant and what would that salary be.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated he cannot speak to the salary amount as it has been approximately 20 years since the last time the County recruited for a Medical Consultant. He stated in terms of finding a candidate, he would not think it would be that difficult of a task. He stated it is an on-call position.

Chairman Jonke questioned if the Public Health Director position is a Civil Service Title or is it a Term position.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated it is a Term position, just as the Commissioner of Health position is. He stated specifically it is a six (6) year term position.

Chairman Jonke questioned if it is a six (6) year term position that starts from the date of start.

Personnel Officer Eldridge spoke to how some of the term positions in New York State have a set date that is the official start date. He stated the Public Health Director, just like the Commissioner of Health starts on the day the person is hired.

Legislator Crowley offered another hypothetical scenario. She stated what would happen if sometime during this year, after the Public Health Director is in place Medical Consultant Nesheiwat decides he needs to leave the position and move to Florida, what would happen.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated New York State would allow a period of time for the County to find a new Medical Consultant.

Legislator Crowley stated there has been a lot of discussion on the challenge in filling the position. She requested confirmation that the County would not be put in a predicament or the taxpayers.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated the challenge has been in filling the Commissioner of Health position. He stated additionally Dr. Nesheiwat has said that he would not leave the County in a bad position, he would work with the County until everything was in place.

Legislator Ellner stated when this was first presented it was presented as a savings. He stated based on the information this evening, there will be now two (2) employees with legacy costs which will equate to approximately \$60,000 more than what is currently being paid, he is not comfortable with that. He stated also the County will be losing a degree of prestige. He stated we will be losing someone who has direct contact with the people in New York State who are also M.D.s. He stated if the County was willing to take on an additional \$60,000, why wasn't the salary for the Commissioner Health position increased when the County was advertising for the position.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated the salary was increased during the search. He stated he does not believe he said there would be cost savings.

Legislator Ellner and Chairman Jonke stated they both recalled that when Personnel Officer Eldridge presented this proposed change, it would result in a cost savings.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the Masters of Public Health (MPH) is a requirement for a Public Health Director as it was for the Commissioner of Health, which Dr. Nesheiwat was in the process of getting it.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated there has been some confusion and discussions in the State. He stated at this point it is not a requirement.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Reclassification of the Position Title of Commissioner of Health to Public Health Director; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/ Confirmation of the Appointment of the Public Health Director of Putnam County/ County Executive Kevin Byrne

a. FYI/ Memorandum Response From: Personnel Officer Eldridge To: Legislator Ellner's Memorandum of January 21, 2025, Re: Appointment of the Public Health Director

Chairman Jonke introduced and welcomed Mr. Rian Rodriguez, M.P.H., proposed candidate for the Public Health Director position.

Rian Rodriguez thanked the Legislators for welcoming him to the meeting. He began by stating first and foremost he is the father of two (2) beautiful children, a daughter who works for the Yonkers School System and a son who is a Senior at the Brewster High School. He is an Epidemiologist by training. He stated his Masters in Health is in Epidemiology, from the New York Medical College. He has over 30 years of experience in health care delivery. He understands these are big shoes to fill. He stated he is confident in his ability to do the job. He stated that he comes from of the largest academic research centers in the world, Columbia and Memorial Sloan Kettering, where he worked about two decades as an oncological researcher. He stated he was a National Director for the American Cancer Society. He stated he currently serves as the Director of Clinical Quality for a managed care organization, Women's Health First, which has 2million members. He stated in terms of scale what he does right now is much larger.

Chairman Jonke questioned how many employees work in the Health Department.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated he believes 57.

Chairman Jonke questioned how many employees Mr. Rodriguez has supervised in a given time.

Rian Rodriguez stated he has supervised over 150 employees at a time.

Chairman Jonke stated in the backup he read that Mr. Rodriguez wants to address health disparities and improve health outcome for underserved individuals in communities. He questioned in addition what is his broader plan.

Rian Rodriguez stated Putnam County has been doing a very good job and it reflects in the State rankings. He stated that the County could use an optimizer. He stated there are some health industries that could use some improvement, and he has the skill set that can bring Putnam County's Health Department to the next level.

Legislator Addonizio stated she was impressed with Mr. Rodriguez's qualifications. She requested that he speak to the outreach work he did with Patient Navigation with the Harlem Model.

Rian Rodriguez stated he was part of the original team that developed patient navigation, which is a very trendy phrase today. He stated the original intervention was to look at a community, look at survival rates and come up with an intervention that would ultimately improve their health outcome. He continued to speak to the patient navigation process.

Legislator Crowley thanked Rian Rodriguez for attending the meeting and addressing all of the questions in addition to the wonderful skillset he will be coming to Putnam County with. She stated she is very impressed with the diverse communities he has worked in. She stated when she was pregnant with triplets, she had to go to a hospital in New York City, because there were no hospitals in the area who could handle triplets. She believes Rian Rodriguez will be a huge asset to Putnam County.

Legislator Birmingham welcomed Mr. Rodriguez. He stated in the last census Putnam County was ranked as the 25th wealthiest County in America, out of 3,000 somewhat Counties in the Country. He stated there is still a significant portion of Putnam County's population that is under the poverty level and underserved. He stated both people who have lived here for generations and those who have recently arrived. He stated after receiving the backup on Mr. Rodriguez from the County Executive and the County's Personnel Department he did some additional research. He stated he was heartened to read that you did research in respects to patient navigation in underserved communities. He stated the primary reason we are here as government is to serve our underserved population as well. He stated he found that very encouraging.

Rian Rodriguez expressed his appreciation for those comments. He stated that he has had a well established career and serving as the Putnam County Public Health Director would serve as an amazing bookend. He stated that he is a resident of Putnam County. He stated he is not coming into this area as a stranger.

Legislator Sayegh thanked Mr. Rodriguez for attending the meeting. She stated she was lucky enough to be a member of the panel who interviewed the candidates for the Public Health Director position. She stated Mr. Rodriguez was an amazing candidate. She stated he spoke a great deal about his medical experience and work in Sloan Kettering, which as a breast cancer survivor she knows how important that work is. She stated Putnam has a full-service Health Department: environmental health, rabies clinics, hazardous waste and recycling management, etc. In addition to facing a nursing shortage which is not specific to Putnam County, in fact all over the Country this is a challenge. She requested he speak to how he would handle that.

Rian Rodriguez stated he will part that question out. He expressed his congratulations to Legislators Sayegh on being a cancer survivor. He stated that he is a cancer survivor as well and he believes that informs his level of care. He stated as you have indicated there are other aspects to this position and to that he can say that he is a quick learner. He stated he is also a homeowner and faces the same concerns as the residents around the topics of water toxicity, and other environmental hazardous issues and he is a parent. He stated anyone who has dealt with cancer he believes has had discussions around environmental concerns. He stated although they are separate topics they should be part of the same discussion. He stated there is a lot of expertise that can be leveraged, and he is sure there is an amazing staff currently working in the Health Department. He stated his interaction with Dr. Nesheiwat thus far has been incredible, he would obviously look to him to leverage that expertise, and utilize that mentorship time. He stated what he does not know on day one, he can assure the board he will learn quickly. He stated in regards to the nursing shortage, which is not unique to Putnam County, he will look to some pipelines to ultimately identify nurses early on, perhaps to the end of their training. He stated there are

incentives being set up by the State and there is the 1115 waivers through the New York State Department of Health, which will dedicate some of that funding to improve the health care challenges, nursing being a primary focus.

Legislator Sayegh expressed her appreciation for Mr. Rodriguez addressing her questions. She pointed out that Putnam County does have an amazing Health Department Staff, and she knows that will be a huge help to Mr. Rodriguez as he steps into the Putnam County Director of Public Health position. She expressed her confidence in the fine job she is sure he will do.

Legislator Gouldman expressed that he was impressed with Mr. Rodriguez resume and found his background to be very interesting. He welcomed him and stated he looks forward to working with him.

Legislator Ellner stated he works in the water/wastewater industry. He stated Mr. Rodriguez mentioned Sloan Kettering. He stated he sold the entire recirculating research water system to them 20 plus years ago. He stated he would like to know Mr. Rodriguez's thoughts when it comes to drinking water in Putnam County. He stated Putnam County is diverse in that there are municipal water systems and a tremendous number of wells. He stated on the other side for discharge there are some wastewater treatment plants and then there are a lot of septic. He stated also the Town of Carmel had a pipe burst that evening on Fair Street, so the affected residents were notified of a boil water alert.

Rian Rodriguez stated water to him is very important, not only because it sustains us, and we all want healthy drinking water, it also provides pleasure and enjoyment. He stated so first and foremost we need to make sure that we have premier water, and he would look to knowledgeable individuals like Legislator Ellner. He stated he will find out what needs to be done to assure that we have clean drinking water now and into the future. He stated there is a lot going on these days and we want to make sure not only our food sources are healthy, but our water sources are healthy.

Legislator Ellner continued to speak to the water concerns present in Putnam County.

Brett Yarris, Resident of Carmel, stated the special needs population are both underserved and underdiscussed in terms of medicinal and behavioral health perspective. He questioned if Mr. Rodriguez has experience in that field and or plans to expand it. He stated as he said it is an underserved population, and it is also a growing population nationwide and here in Putnam County.

Rian Rodriguez stated yes, he has a lot of experience in that field. He stated that these are matters along with mental health that are being felt throughout the Country, so it is not specific or unique to this area. He expanded on his response. He stated in conclusion the good thing is that there is awareness and the need for addressing a multitude of topics in the medical field.

Brett Yarris, Resident of Carmel, stated another very big challenge is when the special needs population ages out of the school system services, again this challenge is being faced both nationwide and in Putnam County.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve the Confirmation of the Appointment of Rian Rodriguez as the Public Health Director of Putnam County; Seconded by Legislators Addonizio and Gouldman. All in favor.

Item #5a- FYI/ Memorandum Response From: Personnel Officer Eldridge To: Legislator Ellner's Memorandum of January 21, 2025, Re: Appointment of the Public Health Director -Duly Noted

Item #6 - Approval/ Confirmation/ Appointment Director of the Office for Senior Resources/ Marlene Barrett/ County Executive Kevin Byrne

Chairman Jonke welcomed Marlene Barrett. He stated that the members of the Legislature are familiar with her work in the Office for Senior Resources. He allowed Marlene Barrett the opportunity to speak.

Marlene Barrett stated the interview for this position was one of the best interviews she has ever been on. She stated it was a dialogue on her past experiences working in the Putnam County Office for Senior Resources. She stated she started in the Office for Senior Resources, and has worked in the Department for 13 years. She shared that her employment in the Office for Senior Resources began in the role as a Caseworker. She then most recently held the position in the Office for Senior Resources as the Deputy Director for just under two (2) years, before this position. She started in this Department and plans to end in this Department. She stated she has seen the impact this Department has on the community. She stated we have a small community, many of the older adults served are connected in some way, family, friends and/ or neighbors. She stated there are amazing services offered, and she looks forward to continuing to offer them. She stated the Senior population will continue to increase in Putnam County, so we will need to acclimate to that fact. She stated she looks forward to working with the members of the Legislature and she looks forward to serving the older adults of the Putnam County Community.

Legislator Sayegh expressed her congratulations and stated she believes her knowledge of the department as a result of working her way up through it will serve her in this role and benefit the older adults in Putnam County.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve the Confirmation/ Appointment Director of the Office for Senior Resources/ Marlene Barrett; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Ratification of Civil Service Employees Association, Inc. (CSEA) Collective Bargaining Agreement/ First Deputy County Attorney John Cherico

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated there are four (4) collective bargaining units in the County. He stated three (3) of the Agreements have been settled and approved, this is the final one. He stated this is the largest unit, there are approximately 340 -350 employees in the CSEA unit, and that was part of the reason for it taking the longest to finalize. He stated negotiations began in the Fall of 2023, there were many proposals and concerns expressed by the CSEA. He stated they worked through them all and he believes there was mutual respect and understanding

between all parties during the negotiations. He stated the time period of the Agreement is five (5) years. He stated it is retroactive to January 2024 to the end of 2028. He stated the increases are documented in the agreement. He spoke to the calculation of the increases for the first year, explaining this was a unique approach agreed to. He stated there is a 2.75% increase in 2025, 2026, 2027 and through to December 2028.

Chairman Jonke requested confirmation that the handwritten notes will be cleaned up before the final contract is signed.

Personnel Officer Eldridge confirmed the document will be cleaned up. He stated what is in front of the committee is a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA).

Chairman Jonke stated he was glad to hear that. He stated he has no problem with the substance.

Personnel Officer Eldridge continued to explain how the handwritten notes occurred and were part of the submission.

Legislator Birmingham stated having worked in the County Executive's Office years back, he knows firsthand the give and take that goes on in these negotiations between the Union representatives and those representing the taxpayers, which is the Administration. He requested that the Personnel Officer highlight the give backs to the taxpayers.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated some of the changes were housekeeping. He stated the Administration wanted a variation of the work week, to meet the needs of our citizens. He stated as an example in the Office for Senior Resources (OSR) and the Youth Bureau the Union was asked that all titles have flexibility in the work schedule. He stated it would be an agreement between the employee and the Department Head. He stated the employees have always been great about that, but the Administration wanted it included in the agreement. He spoke to Comp Time. He explained the Fair Labor Standards Act allows accumulation of Comp Time up to 240 hours. He stated that is a lot. He stated the majority of this unit agreed to reduce the Comp Time maximum to 175 hours. He spoke to the details of the advantage to the taxpayers, and how the County is addressing the cases where employees currently have more than 175 hours. He stated there are only 18 employees who have more than 175 hours. He stated those employees were given the option to decrease the hours in 2025 or any hours excess of 175 on December 31, 2025, will be paid in January 2026 at the 2024 rate. He stated there were also amendments made to the topic of a Driver's record for those who drive for the County. He stated in the past they needed to notify the County of convictions. He stated the County has added that any summonses must be reported as well, it is mentioned on page 7. He stated item #27 there was a matter of Personal Time addressed and also the part about Health Insurance Buyout at the time of retirement was tightened up. He referenced resolution #304 of 2019 does document the current rates paid by the Retired County Employees.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve/ Ratification of Civil Service Employees Association, Inc. (CSEA) Collective Bargaining Agreement; Seconded by Legislators Addonizio and Gouldman. All in favor.

Item #8 - Approval/ Budgetary Transfer 25T032/ To Fund the 2025 Salary and Benefit Costs Pursuant to the Ratified Contract Agreement between Putnam County and the CSEA

Chairman Jonke stated this budgetary is to fund the CSEA Agreement, discussed under the previous agenda item #7. He stated it is in the amount of \$1,550,803.00. He stated these funds were budgeted during the review of the 2025 Budget, the money will come from Contingency. He stated this will also cover the retro pay of 2024. He recognized Commissioner of Finance Lewis for his diligence during the 2025 Budget process and calculated the estimated cost of this agreement and set the funding aside in the event this agreement did get ratified.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve/ Budgetary Transfer 25T032/ To Fund the 2025 Salary and Benefit Costs Pursuant to the Ratified Contract Agreement between Putnam County and the CSEA; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Legislator Ellner stated he hopes the buyout amount for an employee who chooses not to take the Health Insurance Plan is increased.

Chairman Jonke stated he agrees with Legislator Ellner, and hopes the Committee designated by the County Executive that is working on reviewing the County's Health Insurance Coverage will consider that.

Item #9 - Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 25A015/ Department of Social Services/Award from NYS Office of Children and Family Services to Child Advocacy Center/ Commissioner of DSS, Mental Health and the Youth Bureau Sara Servadio

Commissioner of DSS, Mental Health and the Youth Bureau Sara Servadio explained in mid-November of 2024 they learned of this grant and had 30 days to submit an application. She stated each County in New York State who submitted an application received the same amount of money. She stated there are very specific restrictions in terms of what the money can be spent on. She stated this budgetary request is to use the funds for an approved purpose, to compensate, as a one-time Retention Bonus, four (4) employees who work in the Child Advocacy Center.

Chairman Jonke stated the request is to give each of the four (4) employees just over \$3,000 (\$3,065.00).

Commissioner of DSS, Mental Health and the Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated the four (4) employees they are requesting the Retention Bonus for had to take on additional responsibilities during the past year and a half, due to a vacancy, which was reclassified and is currently filled.

Chairman Jonke stated Commissioner Servadio has a very special department and staff. He stated that he applauds her for recognizing that and taking care of them.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve/ Budgetary Amendment 25A015/ Department of Social Services/Award from NYS Office of Children and Family Services to Child Advocacy Center; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #10 – FYI/ Accident Report – Duly Noted

Item #11 – FYI/ Incident Report – Duly Noted

Item #12 – Other Business

a. Approval/ Fund Transfer 25T037/ Office Senior Resources/ Reallocate Salaries to Grant Funding/ Acting Director OSR Marlene Barrett

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Waive the Rules and Accept the Other Business; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Chairman Jonke stated a letter of necessity was submitted by OSR Acting Director Barrett. He stated there were personnel changes in the Office for Senior Resources and book keeping that needed to be amended in a timely manner.

OSR Fiscal Manager Thomas DeMarchi stated this request is to get the grant funds into the proper budget line. He stated he believes in terms of transparency, it is more favorable to have salaries allocated where they are being charged. He stated a portion is being charged in the account that they exist in, just not all of it.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Fund Transfer 25T037/ Office Senior Resources/ Reallocate Salaries to Grant Funding; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

b. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 25A005/ Health Department/ Adjust Personnel Services Budget to Reflect Changes in Health Department

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Waive the Rules and Accept the Other Business; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Chairman Jonke stated this is to adjust the funds to compensate the newly appointed Public Health Director. He stated there is a savings in 2025 of \$56,245.00.

Legislator Birmingham stated he believes it is a saving in 2025 because there are two (2) months that have already expired in 2025. He stated he believes it will be approximately a \$38,000 overall cost each year, which he is fine with, based on the gain for the County.

Chairman Jonke stated that is the point raised earlier by Legislator Ellner. He stated when this proposal was first made it was stated it would result in approximately \$70,000 savings. He stated in fact it will result in an almost \$40,000 additional cost.

Legislator Ellner stated it will probably cost closer to \$70,000 more, because each of the employees will be on the County's Health Insurance.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve/ Budgetary Amendment 25A005/ Health Department/ Adjust Personnel Services Budget to Reflect Changes in Health Department; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #13 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:36PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.