

**NTS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
HELD IN ROOM #318  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Members: Chairman Birmingham and Legislators Ellner & Gouldman**

<b>Monday</b>	<b>6:30pm</b>	<b>June 16, 2025</b>
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The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chairman Birmingham who requested Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Ellner and Gouldman and Chairman Birmingham were present.

### Item #3 – Chairman’s Verbal Report

Chairman Birmingham stated his intention to have the Legislative Manual on the July agenda to perhaps go back to the 2024 version with the amendments made earlier this year included.

## Item #4 – Acceptance of Minutes – February 19, 2025

The minutes were accepted as submitted.

**Item #5 – Approval – Putnam Arts Council – Funding Recommendations – 2025  
Arts Link Community Regrant Program**

Chairman Birmingham thanked the Putnam Arts Council for their work and the process they have in place to fund other artists throughout Putnam County.

Executive Director of the Putnam Arts Council Joyce Picone stated the Putnam Arts Council received over \$91,000 in grant requests. She stated they approved 10 grants, which the County's contribution of \$14,000 will go toward. She explained that the grants are partially funded by the County and partially by the State, but the numbers in front of the Committee this evening represent the County portion only. She stated the projects receiving funding are located throughout the County and are various mediums. She stated the sculpture show at Tilly Foster Farm is receiving a grant. She stated this show brings people into Tilly's Table, and serves as an example of how art can be an economic driver. She stated Tompkins Corners Cultural Center is also a grant recipient for their 5<sup>th</sup> Annual John Cohen Memorial Concerts. She stated Hudson Valley InterArts in Patterson is a new grant recipient this year; they partnered with Friends of the Great Swamp for their project. She stated art is a representation of history, it is everywhere and is for everyone.

Chairman Birmingham stated his appreciation for the distribution of these grant funds in each part of the County. He questioned if the County funding leverages the State funding.

Executive Director Picone stated the County funding is taxpayer money, therefore she believes it is important to spread those funds throughout the County. She stated the State does inquire if the County has contributed to the projects. She stated a requirement of the grant is that the recipient must credit the County, which can leverage even more funding. She stated they make an effort to support different kinds of art and therefore different kinds of artists.

Legislator Gouldman stated he is happy to see funding going to Tompkins Corners Cultural Arts Center and encouraged everyone to attend the many programs they offer.

Executive Director Picone agreed and stated all their programs are run 100% by volunteers.

Tina Franzetti, bookkeeper for Putnam Arts Council, stated she wanted to make sure the Legislators understood where this funding was going and if there are any questions she is happy to provide any necessary information.

Executive Director Picone stated the programs are also audited. She stated they receive two (2) tickets from each recipient, and they send representatives to the shows and programs to perform their audit.

Legislator Ellner thanked Executive Director Picone for her hard work and collaboration with the County.

Executive Director Picone stated they usually receive their funding in two (2) installments, one in January and one in July but since this will be approved at the July Full Legislative Meeting, she will be requesting the full amount so it may be provided to the recipients.

Chairman Birmingham stated the process went longer than usual this year.

Legislator Crowley thanked the Putnam Arts Council. She stated she appreciates that different art forms are being funded. She stated she looks forward to seeing some of these programs.

Legislator Sayegh thanked the Putnam Arts Council. She stated art is the heart and soul of a community. She stated she appreciated hearing the heartfelt statements from the artists and community members about the impact art has on them at the March 17, 2025 Rules Committee Meeting.

Legislator Addonizio stated she is a strong supporter of the arts as they are so beneficial to everyone of all ages and abilities. She stated art therapy is a valuable tool for many individuals, especially Veterans.

Executive Director Picone stated they are offering free classes for Veterans; they are an underserved population in the arts world.

Legislator Russo thanked the Putnam Arts Council for their hard work and their patience with the process.

Legislator Gouldman made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

**Item #6 – Approval – Proposal from County Executive Byrne – Local Law to Amend Chapter 220, Article X, Entitled “Exemption for Qualified Members of Volunteer Fire Departments and Ambulance Corps”**

Chairman Birmingham stated he believes this is a good idea and he thanked the County Executive for bringing this to the Legislature’s attention.

Legislator Gouldman stated the volunteer Fire Departments and Ambulance Corps serve a vital function and are the backbone of each town. He stated membership has been declining and this type of legislation may incentivize more volunteerism.

Legislator Crowley stated it is increasingly difficult to find employees and volunteers in the first responder field, which is why it is so important to recognize the important work they do. She stated these individuals are volunteering for these positions out of the kindness of their hearts, for the love of their community and this is a way to address that hard work.

Legislator Ellner stated his support for this. He stated the reduction is 10% and in speaking with some volunteer firefighters, they have suggested the possibility of instituting a cap on the reduction. He stated some volunteers may see a much bigger savings depending on their taxes. He stated it may be something to consider in the future.

Legislator Addonizio stated her support for this and clarified that the 10% reduction is on County property taxes only and is not related to school taxes. She stated there are so many great people doing this hard work.

Legislator Sayegh stated this is only a reduction of County property taxes and she hopes other municipalities might follow suit. She questioned what the total impact of this might be.

Chairman Birmingham stated an analysis could be done after the first year of the program. He stated the cost of this reduction will be much less than a paid fire department and ambulance corps.

Legislator Sayegh stated the cost shifts to the other taxpayers, but the value of the service they receive is far greater than the cost.

Legislator Ellner stated it is important to note that only individuals with 20 or more years of service will be eligible for this reduction.

Legislator Crowley questioned if this reduction would be given to two (2) eligible homeowners of the same property or who might be receiving a similar exemption.

Chairman Birmingham stated the authority to provide this exemption comes from the State and he does not believe anyone would be penalized.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what the average county portion of a property tax bill is in Putnam County. She stated it is a small portion, therefore this 10% is not a large amount of money.

Legislator Jonke stated this only applies to volunteer firefighters and ambulance corps members who are volunteering outside of the town where they reside. He stated that could make it difficult to get an impact statement, although he believes it would be insignificant because most volunteers serve in the town where they live. He stated there is nothing stating that two (2) homeowners could not both receive it. He stated he is in favor of this, it is a great way to acknowledge our volunteers.

Legislator Russo stated her support for this exemption. She stated she knows multiple volunteers who reside in the town of Patterson but volunteer in neighboring Brewster.

Tom Regan, resident of Brewster, stated a report by the Firefighters Association of New York estimated paid fire departments would cost an additional \$4.7 billion in the State budget. He stated this is a 10% reduction in the assessment of the property. He stated the State amended the original proposal by allowing eligibility for individuals residing in one town and volunteering in another. He stated this must be approved by all taxing agencies; as a representative of the Brewster Fire Department he went before the school board, Fire Commissioners, Town, and County. He questioned the five (5) years of service requirement and stated that other taxing agencies are requiring two (2) years of service. He stated when recruiting volunteers, notifying them of this exemption after two (2) years of service is a real incentive, whereas five (5) years is not as impactful. He stated after 20 years of service, the volunteer or their widow(er) does not have to reapply each year, they automatically receive the 10% reduction.

Chairman Birmingham questioned how this logistically works, if the volunteer files their necessary paperwork with their assessor's office.

Mr. Regan stated yes, each year by March 1<sup>st</sup> they would need to file their paperwork and prove their membership for the previous year. He stated the County of Putnam is the only taxing agency that still has the five (5) years of service requirement; all other taxing agencies require two (2) years of service, which seems like a reasonable amount of time. He clarified that this is not a 10% reduction in taxes; it is a 10% reduction in assessment.

Chairman Birmingham stated he would like to move this forward this evening and the requirement for years of service can be adjusted in the future if necessary.

Legislator Ellner suggested changing the requirement from five (5) years to two (2) years before moving it forward.

Legislator Ellner made a motion to amend Second 220-66 E. from "...five (5) years of service" to "...two (2) years of service"; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman.

Chairman Birmingham stated a motion has been made and seconded; he called for discussion on the motion to amend the requirement from five (5) years of service to two (2) years.

Legislator Jonke questioned Senior Deputy County Attorney Pasquale if Real Property Tax Law 466 allows the County to change this requirement of years of service.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Pasquale stated he will look into that before the Full Legislative Meeting on July 1, 2025.

Chairman Birmingham stated the amendment can be passed to the Full Legislative Meeting this evening and if there are any issues it can be changed back prior to the Full Meeting.

Legislator Crowley agreed with putting this forward and then getting the answers.

Mr. Regan stated he is confident the County has the option to choose the requirement for years of service.

Legislator Jonke stated he is in favor of amending it to two (2) years if it is possible.

Legislator Ellner made a motion to amend Second 220-66 E. from "...five (5) years of service" to "...two (2) years of service"; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Chairman Birmingham made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution as amended; Seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

#### **Item #7 – FYI – Fund Transfer 25T151 – Board of Elections – Clear Ballot BDF Creation**

Chairman Birmingham stated item #7 and #8 both pertain to the Board of Elections, however Commissioners Croft and Primavera were unable to attend this evening as they are currently working on early voting. He stated these will both be reviewed by the Audit Committee as well.

**Item #8 – FYI – Fund Transfer 25T166 – Board of Elections – Pro-rated Tenex License/Support – Duly Noted**

**Item #9 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A051 – Finance – Funding for Putnam County SPCA to be Recouped via NYS SAM (State and Municipalities) Grant**

Legislator Sayegh stated this is pass through funding for the Putnam County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PC SPCA).

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

**Item #10 – FYI – Litigation Report – Duly Noted**

**Item #11 – Other Business – None**

**Item #12 – Adjournment**

There being no further business at 7:13pm, Chairman Birmingham made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Beth Robinson.