

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

Members: Chairman Birmingham and Legislators Ellner & Gouldman

**Thursday July 17, 2025
(Immediately following Health Mtg. & Physical Mtg. beginning at 5:30pm)**

The meeting was called to order at 7:19 pm by Chairman Birmingham who requested Legislator Ellner 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 provided an overview of this evening’s agenda.

Item #4 – Acceptance of Minutes – April 10, 2025

The minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #5 – Approval – Request Funding to CAREERS Support Solutions – County Contribution – Subcontingency – Requested by Legislator Ellner

Legislator Ellner stated CAREERS Support Solutions (CAREERS) is an organization that assists residents with disabilities find employment and strengthen their job skills so they can be as independent as possible while contributing to society.

Executive Director Tina Cornish-Lauria stated that is correct, they have been operating in Putnam County for over 35 years. She stated on average, they work with about 100 Putnam County residents per year who are intellectually and developmentally disabled or may have psychiatric issues. She stated they have several different programs to accommodate the various needs of their clients. She stated they provide assistance to residents of all ages and help them in each step of the job process. She stated she has been with CAREERS for 37 years and some clients have been there the whole time. She stated their annual budget is about \$340,000, which they fundraise for. She stated they requested \$30,000 from the County, and the past two (2) years the County has provided \$15,000.

Chairman Birmingham made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional handed out by Executive Director Cornish-Lauria; seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

Chairman Birmingham stated funding for the outside agencies was placed into subcontingency by the Administration in the 2025 budget process to be disbursed this

year. He stated there is currently about \$57,000 left in that budget line. He stated the resolution before the Committee this evening requests that the County Executive initiate a fund transfer for \$15,000 for CAREERS.

Legislator Gouldman stated \$15,000 was provided to CAREERS in the 2025 budget process and he questioned what the additional \$15,000 would be used for.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated they would put it toward meeting their overall budget. She stated there are about 350 total clients, but this money would be used specifically for Putnam County clients.

Chairman Birmingham questioned if it would be fair to say that this funding would allow for more programmatic work since it would otherwise have to be fundraised.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated yes, fundraising is time consuming.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if CAREERS could wait until the 2026 budget process, which begins in the fall.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated if she had to she could.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if a request was submitted for 2026.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated a request for \$30,000 has been submitted for the 2026 budget process.

Legislator Addonizio requested that Executive Director Cornish-Lauria provide an overview of the CAREERS thrift shop.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated they have a fundraising thrift shop on Route 52 which is run exclusively by volunteers. She stated they also have clients working there to develop job skills and give them experience to help them find a job. She stated all the items are donated and sold at very low prices; it is really a benefit to the community.

Legislator Crowley stated she was recently speaking with the Chair of the Mahopac Chamber of Commerce about compiling a list of businesses that hire individuals with disabilities. She questioned if this would be helpful for CAREERS to have as well.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated they do not have a pool of businesses that they fit their clients into. She stated when a client comes to them, they do an intake to figure out what they need and then they will seek it out in the community. She stated it is really on a per-client basis.

Legislator Jonke stated the 2025 budget process was a disaster. He stated the good people from these contract agencies spent time meeting with the Administration going over their funding request. He stated these agencies fill a need that is not filled by the

County and he is grateful for all the work being done by these agencies. He stated last year, many of these agencies were not funded in the 2025 budget, rather \$75,000 was put into subcontingency for the Legislature to distribute; it was like having 10 lions with only enough food for five. He stated asking CAREERS to wait until next year's budget is truly unfair. He apologized for the way this process is happening this year and stated his support of this request.

Legislator Sayegh stated CAREERS is a wonderful not-for-profit. She stated the services provided sound similar to Arc Mid-Hudson and questioned how they differ.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated Arc Mid-Hudson does a lot of residential support as well, where CAREERS is solely vocational and prevocational. She stated they also have a day-hab program where lower functioning clients get some community exposure before they are ready for an internship or employment position. She stated everything they do works toward strengthening the client's independence, confidence, and skillset so they are able to hold a job. She stated many clients gain this exposure and experience through volunteering with organizations in the community, which gives them a sense of worth while building their skillset. She stated one of the main differences between CAREERS and other agencies is that their clients remain with them for decades. She stated a person's disability does not go away once they get a job; they continue to need assistance.

Legislator Sayegh questioned how the funding would be made up for it did not come from the County.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated they would need to fundraise and apply for more grants. She stated recently, the staff went 8 years without a raise.

Legislator Sayegh questioned what exactly would be funded with this County contribution.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated it will go toward staff salaries.

Legislator Sayegh stated she is uncomfortable using tax dollars for salaries.

Chairman Birmingham stated the County has a specific contract with each agency and what the funds can be used for could be put into the contract.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria stated as a taxpayer, she would not want her money to go toward fundraising. She stated programming includes the staff providing the program and working directly with the clients.

Legislator Gouldman stated he did not realize CAREERS helped seniors as well and asked how many of their clients are senior citizens.

Executive Director Cornish-Lauria estimated there are about 20 Putnam County clients who are senior citizens.

Legislator Ellner stated the County is spending a great deal of money on the new Early Learning Center, which will service the same individuals who could benefit from this organization. He stated an additional \$15,000 for over 100 clients is a good investment.

Legislator Montgomery stated the unassigned fund balance is \$90 million. She stated CAREERS provides a service the County is unable to. She stated her full support for this proposal and hopes other agencies can be funded as well.

Legislator Russo thanked Executive Director Cornish-Lauria for her work. She stated she knows both employees and clients of CAREERS and she has seen the transformation with the support of this agency.

Legislator Crowley stated she would like to see the information submitted with their budget request.

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

Item #6 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25T189 – County Contribution to Putnam Recreation Programs and Habilitation – Requested by Legislator Jonke

Legislator Jonke stated he submitted this request. He stated the Executive Director of Putnam Recreation Programs and Habilitation (PRPH) is out of town and was unable to attend this evening. He stated he is familiar with this agency; they provide physical habilitation for children and adults with special needs. He stated the programs they offer provide physical activity and brain stimulation. He stated this is a service that is not provided by the County and they help a significant population. He stated PRPH submitted a request for an additional \$15,000 in the 2025 budget process and this request is for \$10,000. He stated the money in the subcontingency account has been designated for these agencies.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how much was provided in the 2025 budget for PRPH.

Legislator Jonke stated they received \$10,000.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if there is a contract line in the Health Budget for PRPH.

Legislator Jonke stated he believes they are involved with the Youth Bureau.

Legislator Sayegh stated there were some agencies who did not receive any funding in the 2025 budget and she is glad to hear from 2 agencies this evening.

Legislator Montgomery stated these agencies are providing services the County is unable to and it is important to note that there are many vacant positions within the County. She stated her full support of this request as this agency provides a vital services.

Legislator Ellner agreed with Legislator Montgomery. He stated because of those vacancies, an estimated \$8-\$12 million would be added to the fund balance.

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

Item #7 – Legislative Manual

a. Approval – Amendment of Legislative Manual – Public Comment During Legislative Sessions and Committee Meetings Prior to Taking a Vote

Chairman Birmingham stated Legislator Crowley brought this forward a few months ago for consideration. He stated this amendment to the Legislative Manual would provide the opportunity for members of the public to speak to agenda items prior to a vote being taken in a Committee Meeting and on any new business before a vote is taken at a Full Legislative Meeting. He stated this keeps the Committee process public and reserves the Full Legislative Meeting for approving or not approving the items that went through Committee.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the changes on page 2 should reference Special Full Legislative Meetings as well.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Conrad Pasquale stated the term “Full Legislative Meeting” would encompass both a Regular and Special Full Legislative Meeting.

Chairman Birmingham stated he is not opposed to making the language clearer.

Legislator Gouldman made a motion to amend the proposed resolution to include “Special Full Legislative Meeting” along with “Full Legislative Meeting” in the Rule Title and paragraph B; Seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

Legislator Sayegh requested clarification on allowing discussion and public comment during a Special Full Legislative Meeting. She questioned if a topic that was addressed previously would be subject to discussion and comment.

Chairman Birmingham stated there may be instances where the item on a Special Meeting has not yet gone through Committee, and in that instance public comment would be permitted. He referenced the proposed paragraph B. He clarified if a Special Full Legislative Meeting was held for an agenda item that had been previously considered, this rule would not apply.

Legislator Crowley requested clarification on paragraph C and questioned if each Chairperson would announce the time limit for public comment at the beginning of each meeting. She stated in her original proposal she specified that each person would have 3 minutes to speak and if time permitted, they would be able to speak again. She questioned how this would be navigated the way it is currently written.

Chairman Birmingham stated he believes it should be at the discretion of the Chair. He stated there are sometimes many members of the public that attend Legislative Meetings and sometimes much less. He stated determining an appropriate amount of time would be best to do the night of the meeting.

Legislator Crowley stated the most important thing is that there is public comment.

Legislator Sayegh agreed that the time limit should be left to the Chair's discretion at each meeting.

Legislator Montgomery stated the Chair can also address the members of the public during the meeting if their statement is going too long or is repetitive. She stated she is very happy this is being codified and the Legislature is committed to transparency.

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

b. Approval – Amendment of Legislative Manual – Confirmation of Appointments of the County Executive

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

Chairman Birmingham reviewed and read the proposed resolution. He stated Personnel Director Paul Eldridge requested the second bullet point under paragraph a) be amended to add "to be maintained under confidential cover, not to be released to the public, pursuant to Public Officers Law §89(2)(b)(i)" to the end.

Chairman Birmingham made a motion to amend the proposed resolution to add this wording to the end of the second bullet under paragraph a); Seconded by Legislator Ellner. All in favor.

Legislator Ellner thanked Legislator Montgomery; having detailed information on appointees has been her concept all along. He stated his support for this.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if this would make volunteering on boards a more stringent task.

Chairman Birmingham stated this rule would not apply to various boards that members are appointed to; it relates strictly to employee nominations made by the County Executive.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Legislator Ellner. She stated it is the County Executive's authority to appoint who they would like and it is important to balance and work together. She spoke to rules followed by other counties. She stated some require 30 day written notice of appointments with 30 days for the Legislature to act, some have specific committees that review the appointments, and some interview the candidate themselves. She stated this is designed to ensure transparency and accountability.

Chairman Birmingham made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, with the aforementioned amendment; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

c. FYI – Resolution #124 of 2025 – Amendment of Legislative Manual – Live Steaming Legislative Sessions and Public Hearings – Duly Noted

d. Approval – 2024 Legislative Manual (As amended, see redline: with respect to adoption of Legislative Manual)

Chairman Birmingham stated proposed amendments to the Legislative Manual were made in January and since then it has been pointed out that some of those amendments are onerous. He stated Legislator Gouldman made the suggestion to go back to the 2024 Legislative Manual. He stated he would like to move that the 2024 Legislative Manual be adopted, including the amendments in #7a, #7b, and #7c. He stated the only other change he would suggest making to this version of the Legislative Manual is under Section II(B)(1)(f) which currently reads "Adoption of the Legislative Manual." He stated because the Organizational Meeting of the Legislature takes place at its first meeting in January, the adoption of the Legislative Manual does not first go through Committee before being voted on. He stated his proposal would be to replace this section with the following: "The next order of business shall be the presentation of the Legislative Manual as in effect during the preceding year. This Manual is the official guide to the rules, proceedings and practices of the Putnam County Legislature. The rules of the County Legislature for the preceding year as set forth in such Legislative Manual shall remain in force and effect until amended or revised following the submission of any amendments or revisions to one of the Standing Committees of the Legislature." He stated this would keep the Legislative Manual in place until further amended, which would only be done through the Committee process.

Legislator Gouldman stated this is a great idea.

Legislator Ellner clarified that the other changes discussed this year would not be included in the Legislative Manual. He stated he is uncomfortable with this because the Legislature approved changes that would no longer be in effect.

Legislator Crowley stated the changes made were done so at a Full Legislative Meeting where there was no public comment and there were certain issues that Personnel Officer Eldridge and the Law Department weighed in on. She stated the Legislature also voted to place a moratorium on some changes.

Chairman Birmingham stated those changes that had a moratorium placed on them will no longer exist.

Legislator Sayegh stated this document can always be changed throughout the year. She questioned how the adoption of the Legislative Manual would work since the wording is being changed to “presentation”.

Chairman Birmingham stated the current Legislative Manual would remain in effect until a change is made, which would be done so through the Committee process. He stated it would be amended as needed.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Conrad Pasquale stated Rules 24(B) would also need to be amended to keep it consistent.

Chairman Birmingham stated “and until formal adopt of the rules for the current year” in paragraph B should be stricken.

Legislator Montgomery stated her appreciation for the work Chairman Birmingham put into these proposals. She stated she is opposed to these changes because since she is not on a Committee, the only opportunity she has to propose any changes is during a Full Legislative Meeting.

Chairman Birmingham stated he understands this issue and perhaps there is a work around.

Legislator Ellner stated one of the main issues is that the Legislature does not have their own counsel. He stated this would have been much easier with routine access to Legislative Counsel.

Chairman Birmingham suggested leaving Section II(B)(1)(f) the way it is for now.

Legislator Montgomery agreed.

Chairman Birmingham made a motion to approve the 2024 Legislative Manual with the three rules in items #7a, #7b and #7c; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. By poll vote: Two Ayes: Chairman Birmingham and Legislator Gouldman. One Nay: Legislator Ellner. Motion carries.

Item #8 – FYI – Litigation Report – Duly Noted

Item #9 – Other Business – None

Item #10 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 8:31pm, Chairman Birmingham made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Beth Robinson.