

**SPECIAL - PHYSICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**40 Gleneida Avenue Room #318**  
**Carmel, NY 10512**

**Committee Members: Chairman Ellner, Legislators Crowley & Jonke**

**Monday** **August 25, 2025**

(Immediately Followed the 5:30p.m.: Eco Dev, Rules & Audit Mtgs. Special Full followed)

The meeting was called to order at 7:26p.m. by Chairman Ellner who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Crowley, Jonke and Chairman Ellner were present.

**Item #3 – Discussion/ Reconsideration/ Approval Stipulation – Inclusion of Parcel “Reinmaker Farm East LLC” in the Putnam County Agricultural District/ Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi (Tabled at the 8-20-25 Phys Svcs Mtg)**

Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi stated this matter was discussed rather extensively at the August 20<sup>th</sup> Physical Services Meeting. She stated if there are additional questions they will need to be addressed in Executive Session.

Chairman Ellner stated at the start of the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting he questioned if Attorney Abissi was functioning as Legislative Attorney or as the County Law Department Attorney, and her answer was both.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi confirmed that was correct. She stated at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting there was no other Attorney present from the County Law Department. She stated at tonight’s meeting First Deputy County Attorney John Cherico from the County Law Department is present and represents the County Law Department and she is functioning as the Legislative Attorney.

Chairman Ellner stated he would begin by reading an excerpt from the Physical Services Meeting of June 16, 2025:

*Chairman Ellner questioned Senior Deputy County Attorney Pasquale about start ups.*

*Senior Deputy County Attorney Pasquale stated it is a subjective standard. He stated the Legislature can discuss and determine whether they believe the property meets the standard of what they would consider a legitimate start up.*

*Chairman Ellner questioned whether any start up is eligible for inclusion into the district regardless of how far along they are in terms of construction.*

*Senior Deputy County Attorney Pasquale stated that is correct and it is up to the discretion of the Legislature.*

Legislator Sayegh questioned when the LLC was formed for Reinmaker Farm East.

Jamie Spillane, from Hogan, Rossi and Liguori Attorneys at Law, representing Reinmaker Farm East LLC stated it was formed when the property was acquired about 1.5 to 2 years ago. She stated the principal is the same as the prior, Reinmaker LLC.

**At 7:31p.m.** Chairman Ellner made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss Pending Litigation; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

**At 8:05p.m.** Chairman Ellner made a motion to come out of Executive Session; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Chairman Ellner stated there was no action taken in Executive Session. He requested if any members of the public had any comments.

Christine Nastasi, Chair of the P.C. Agricultural & Farmland Protection Board, stated there was not much more that she wanted to add to this matter, since speaking to this matter at the August 20<sup>th</sup> meeting. She stated for the purpose of the record, no one from the Ag Board was notified of this meeting. She stated comments were made during the discussion of an earlier Committee Meeting discussion that the Legislators spoke to the importance of fairness, continuity, transparency and treating everyone the same. She stated that she hopes that everything that comes before the Legislature is treated in that way. She reiterated and spoke to an email that she received on Monday, July 2, 2025, at 7:30p.m. from the Director of Real Property Patricia McLoughlin, and she read the email into the record. In summary the email was asking what her (Director of Real Property Patricia McLoughlin) vote was on the Lepler property because Director McLoughlin was asked to attend a meeting that Mr. Lepler was having with County Executive Byrne in the morning along with Commissioner of Planning, Development and Public Transportation Barbara Barosa. She stated in her opinion it was unethical of the County Executive to have that meeting. She stated that she is aware that several other Farm owners in the past have requested meetings with the County Executive and they were denied. She continued to speak to the different categories of horse boarding farms citing Section 301 of the Agriculture and Markets Law, which is what the Ag Board members followed in their review of the applications. She spoke to her interpretation of what the term “Start Up” means and what she believes the State’s purpose is for that term.

Legislator Sayegh requested that the Law Department provide their interpretation of the term “Start Up” as it is used in the Agricultural and Markets Law. She questioned specifically could they be included in the Ag District on day 1.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi stated it can be a proposal or up to two (2) years of operation. She stated at any point during those two (2) years a farm could become compliant. She stated for Equine operations there is a one (1) year limit to get the required number of horses if your required type of Equine operation requires a specific number of horses. She stated other than that all the other requirements have up to two (2) years to become fully compliant, that is the definition of a “Start Up”. She explained that is why the statute has the wording “proposed or up to two (2) years in operation”.

Legislator Sayegh stated she thought there was a two (2) year requirement, and an Equine Farm had to have horses on the property.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi stated that was a misunderstanding.

Legislator Sayegh requested confirmation that is the reason why this request for approval has been submitted to the Legislature and Attorney Abissi's recommendation is to make that right.

Senior Deputy County Attorney Heather Abissi stated that it was correct.

Crystal Stowell, Putnam Valley stated she wanted to express her concern about another Special Meeting about a matter that was tabled just five (5) days ago. She stated while other Farms have waited months to get on the Agenda it appears one individual has been given exceptional access to Public Officials and priority in scheduling Special Meetings. She stated at the last meeting the Legislature heard from members of the Farming Community, including herself, cautioning the Legislature from starting a dangerous precedent. She stated a yes vote tonight will be perceived as the Legislature yielding to pressure. She stated she fully supports "Start Up" Farms being included in the Ag District and has spoken to that many times. She stated she believes the integrity of the process is more important than anyone (1) individual. She stated she believes the Legislature this year has followed the letter and intent of the law voting in alignment with the recommendations of the Ag Board. She continued to speak to her hope that the Legislature will not vote in favor of this matter. She stated that the Commissioner of the State Agricultural and Markets has the final authority on whether a Farm is approved for inclusion, regardless of whether the Legislature approves it. She stated it is her opinion that this Farm will not be approved by the Commissioner. She stated that she believes the County needs to make it a priority to amend Resolution #139 of 2007 - Agriculture District Inclusion Criteria.

Legislator Jonke stated it was his opinion that the last speaker was completely out of line. He stated the speaker spoke to integrity and special meetings, the meeting tonight was at the result of a Lawsuit. He stated the Legislature is brought in to address the matter of the Lawsuit.

Andrew Wulken, Resident Putnam Valley, stated he had not planned to speak but felt compelled to. He stated that we all know why we are here, it's not because of the Lawsuit, it is because of who it is. He stated that he was told that there would be votes against his Ag District Application for Clara Patunga Farm because some Legislator(s) did not like his personality.

Cassandra Roth, Patterson and Pawling, spoke to past incidents related to a previous Lawsuit (Honovich vs County of Putnam). She stated there needs to be continuity and consistency with this process. She stated that would avoid people from being upset. She stated she does wish the Legislature was given the time to amend Resolution #139 of 2007.

Legislator Jonke made a motion to Approve Stipulation – Inclusion of Parcel Reinmaker Farm East LLC into the Putnam County Agricultural District; Seconded by Legislator Crowley.

Roll Call Vote:

Two - Ayes

One - Nay Chairman Ellner

Motion Carried

**Item #4 - Adjournment**

There being no further business at 8:27 P.M. Chairman Ellner made a motion to adjourn;  
Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.