

**HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Chairwoman Montgomery, Legislators Addonizio & Russo

Wednesday

6:00PM

February 11, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairwoman Montgomery who requested Legislator Addonizio to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Addonizio and Russo and Chairwoman Montgomery were present.

Item #3 - Discussion – Update – ARPA Allocation to People USA and Stabilization Center Alternatives

Chairwoman Montgomery provided background on this item and stated that she sent a memo to the County Executive Byrne on January 29, stating that it was crucial for the Legislature and public to understand the Administration's assessment of the next steps for the People USA and stabilization center project, as well as the status of the APRA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds, in light of the Carmel Planning Board's recent unanimous denial decision for the project. She stated that the Administration responded today, and that her concern is to ensure that the federal funds are still used in a manner consistent with their original purpose of supporting public health. She stated that she was expecting to have a more well-rounded discussion about the ARPA funding and the contract at this meeting, as the County Executive and executive leadership were invited to the meeting tonight.

Commissioner of Finance William Carlin stated that as the stabilization center location was voted down, and in his opinion, as County Executive Byrne made clear, in respect of home rule, there needs to be a pivot in the use of this funding. Commissioner Carlin stated that with ARPA deadlines, funds must be spent in 2026 and so finding a new location in time isn't feasible. He explained the three-step process in progress, where step one is working with People USA, our Law and Finance departments, and the APRA consultant, to audit claims and bills to get a final number. He stated that step two is the reallocation of funds, which is limited to open, approved projects and that he expects to return next month with a reallocation plan, that will likely include infrastructure projects. He stated that step three would happen next and if other resources are allowed to be freed up, a plan could possibly be developed by Department of Social Services and the Administration to enhance mental health services.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if the process to terminate the contract with People USA has been initiated.

Commissioner Carlin stated he didn't know, but it has been explored in meetings and is being worked toward.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated she doesn't believe the money can be spent until the contract is terminated, which will take time. She questioned if The United States Department of Treasury ("Treasury") had been notified.

Commissioner Carlin stated that this has nothing to do with Treasury, as it's currently an internal matter and so Treasury is only notified when it is reported.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated that this must involve Treasury and be reported to them, as the funds are allocated for public health, in two different categories. She stated her understanding is that the funds cannot simply be moved to infrastructure, and that at the time the funds were allocated, a need was identified and the public was led to believe the \$2.5 million would be spent on public health.

Commissioner Carlin restated that the options for spending are limited, and that Treasury will be addressed when the next quarterly fiscal report is issued.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned what the open ARPA projects are.

Commissioner Carlin stated he'd have to look at the list, but most are infrastructure and if these funds were reallocated to infrastructure, they would have to be spent by September 30.

Legislator Addonizio questioned how many approved projects are available.

Commissioner Carlin stated that there are roughly seventeen or eighteen approved projects, with the majority being infrastructure, of which the Legislature is aware through resolutions.

Legislator Birmingham questioned if the ARPA consultant could provide a list of the projects and stated that he would like the Legislature to be part of the reallocation process. He stated that if there is no option for these funds to be used for public health, he suggests that the Legislature adopt a capital reserve fund and take the funds out of contingency to be used for similar public health projects, as there is a large, unassigned fund balance.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the funding cannot be used for public health and instead for another open ARPA project, such as paving, then can funds that would have been for capital projects be used for mental health.

Commissioner Carlin stated that is correct but explained the issue is that the stabilization center funding cannot be repurposed to another mental health project that is not already open.

Legislator Regan questioned whether there is an avenue for an appeal or extension, since we are dealing with Treasury.

Commissioner Carlin stated there is not.

Legislator Crowley stated that there was a similar situation with the Sheriff, for the Axon project, where funds could be backfilled in the same way so that they are used rather than losing the federal funding.

Legislator D'Angelo stated that mental health is a serious issue in Putnam County, which more time should be spent on. He stated that the location of the stabilization center was a major issue in his district and he is glad the planning board decided not to move it forward. He questioned if the Fair Street paving project is an open ARPA project.

Commissioner Carlin stated yes, and it's being explored.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if other locations were considered aside from the Carmel location and that this is why she would have wanted the ARPA consultant or other members of the Administration present to be able to answer.

Commissioner Carlin stated he was unsure, but there would not have been enough time anyway to go through another Planning Board process.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated she would like to know if other sites were considered; there's still eleven months to spend the funding, and that she knows of sites in her district, including Philipstown, that are ready to go. She stated wanting to see the language that mentions the funds need to be spent only on open ARPA projects, as she is very familiar with the federal documentation, and perhaps there is an appeal available. She stated that it is her understanding that the contract termination process with People USA has not been started yet, and so, in her opinion, using the \$2.5 million to help people in need is still on the table.

Item #4 - Discussion – Department of Health – Community Health Assessment and Improvement Plan 2026 Presentation and Brief on PFAS Pilot Program

Rian Rodriguez, Public Health Director stated that he hopes this session reviewing the community health assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) is informative and collaborative and will result in strategies that are impactful to the health and wellness of Putnam County residents.

Supervising Public Health Educator, Shanna Siegel stated that the CHIP presentation will be a brief overview of the status of health and wellness within the community. She stated that primary and secondary data was used to examine how Putnam County is doing overall, and that full reports are available on the county website. She stated that the data shows if Putnam County is doing better or worse than in the past, comparing it to surrounding counties and also to how the county is doing versus state expectations. She stated that some health issues important to the county, such as tick-borne illness is not highlighted here, if they are topics that don't align with NY State's prevention agenda. She stated that for the seven assessment topics presented, the goal was to receive community input through outreach, and then communicate findings with policy makers, agencies and the public. She proceeded in presenting the CHIP presentation attached.

She stated that the assessment shows economic stability and disadvantage underscored many findings over time, such as in healthy eating findings and food insecurity, which has gone up since 2021. She stated that reduced healthy foods access may be contributing to obesity rates and that healthcare access and cost is an ongoing issue. She stated that many community organizations are represented by the coalition of Live Healthy Putnam, which keeps the conversations on these critical topics moving forward.

Director Rodriguez stated the issue of residents not being able to access primary care contributes to a less healthy environment overall, an important issue resonates with him.

Legislator Crowley stated the New York Presbyterian Hospital stopped accepting NY State Health Insurance Program (NYSHIP), impacting county employees and leaving their only choice as Putnam Hospital Center.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated that insurance changes at Optum had many ripple effects too, impacting areas of the county.

She gave an overview of mental health and substance use findings from the assessment. She stated that adults self-reporting their mental health as fair or poor increased by 23% from 2022 to 2025 and that there was an increase in the three-year average mortality suicide rate. She stated that co-occurring disorders are a key part of the mental health conversation in Putnam County, including substance abuse, overdoses and suicide rates, and that economics, access to care, and food accessibility are all factors of mental health. She stated other findings of concern, including that alcohol and tobacco use in the County is high, 13.4% of students surveyed stated they rode with a drinking driver in the past thirty days and that that HPV vaccination rates are declining.

Director Rodriguez stated the importance of good primary care and that without it, it's harder to obtain good specialty care.

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to waive the rules and accept additional. Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel presented a flyer with QR codes that the public can use to see social media information in the topics covered in CHIP and also interact with a survey where they can rank the five health topics most important to them.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the flyer is on social media.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated not yet but it's on the Department of Health website.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the survey is only for County residents.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel confirmed that it is Putnam County specific.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if there is zip code information for economic stability from the assessment.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated it isn't available by zip-code, but there are state resource dashboards where you can see certain topics at a hyper local level.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the food pantries in Putnam County have had an increase of people going there.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated the Philipstown food pantry saw a 13.8% increase over 2024 and 177% increase since 2018. She offered to help get the reports from her contacts at the local food pantries to give to the Health Department.

Legislator Addonizio stated that post COVID, food access has become more difficult for families.

Legislator Crowley questioned whether the implementation of the breakfast and lunch programs within school districts has improved according to the survey.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated that it is too soon to tell, but they are awaiting new surveys from the schools.

Legislator Regan questioned if there is more current data being worked with in regard to smoking and drinking, as it seems that we are looking at data from 2014.

Public Health Director Rodriguez stated yes, and the behavioral risk survey would give the most recent data regarding marijuana, tobacco and vaping. He stated that other data sources are used but limited by the state's framework and that finding more recent data, like from the Sparks system, will be a focus going forward.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated that the data from a long time ago still shows trends with these issues and the assumption can be made, that with stress rising, substance abuse rates would increase in general.

Legislator Regan questioned how many suicides there were in the last 36 months where persons were known to have had interactions with the County.

Supervising Public Health Educator Siegel stated that there are two different ways that data is presented for substance abuse deaths and suicides, and that statistical data from the state was shared tonight for Putnam County residents, but the death may not have occurred in Putnam County. She stated that the coroner provides statistics on the deaths that occur in Putnam County and with data sharing agreements, cases can be discussed and insight gained into whether the victim had touch points within the system, so that they can learn more about how our systems can prevent these things in the future.

Legislator Regan questioned if restaurant inspections and gradings are done in Putnam County.

Public Health Director Rodriguez stated that all restaurants are inspected but grading is not done.

Legislator D'Angelo questioned if certain items could be limited, like junk food for residents using SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) to purchase food and stated perhaps resolutions could be proposed urging the state to do something along those lines.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated that the allocation of the \$2.5 million for the stabilization center aligns squarely with this presentation, being that the assessment shows worsening of the mental health crisis and substance use and suicide rates rising, and that further discussions should be in future Health Committee meetings.

Item #5 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A004 – Health Department – Funding for Private Wells PFAS Pilot Program

Public Health Director Rodriguez stated that water quality is an area of focus for the Health Department and The NY State Department of Health, Department of Conservation, and Environmental Facilities Corporation are preparing to roll out a private well PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), or “forever chemicals” testing and mitigation pilot program. This project will launch in a few counties at higher risk for exposure to access the need for a statewide program and the letter of intent was signed at the beginning of the year. He stated that Brian Stevens, Associate Public Health Sanitarian, is present to answer any specific questions regarding the rebate program itself.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated that this project does not create local taxpayer burden and is an important environmental protection measure, as most homeowners rely on private wells.

Legislator Addonizio stated that, within the County there are a lot of lake communities, where wells and septic are within 100 feet of each other and that those homes are grandfathered, because there is no room on their lot to move them. She questioned if this program would help people in those situations.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated yes and that the program allows testing, where if the findings exceed the state standards, the homeowner can hire a plumber to install the treatment and be reimbursed up to a \$5,000 cap, with some exceptions. He stated that if there is not room for a sizeable system, the reimbursement cap is \$1,000 and if there is an option for community water hook-up, the cap would be \$10,000.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what the total cost to the homeowner would be.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated that would depend on the contractor used, and so the homeowner would have to pay the difference and is responsible for ongoing testing.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if we have the staff to manage this program, which includes inspection, oversight and testing.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated that NYS is doing the public education, and their contractors are doing the testing, and so our part is handling the reimbursement paperwork to send to the state and working on reimbursements. He stated that the state is doing the majority of the notifying of residents and mapping of impacted wells.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if the program has opened up to applicants yet.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated no, but it will in the first half of 2026.

Legislator Russo questioned if there was going to be a certain amount of people allowed to apply for testing.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated there is no cap on that for the year, but the full amount of funding is \$1.5 million. He stated that testing will be set-up only with the money for treatment reimbursement available on the back end, and if someone tests above the level, they have six months to have treatment. He stated if they then do not do treatment, the money goes back into the pool for someone else.

Legislator Sayegh questioned who is eligible.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated that any Putnam County resident who has a private well and water supply that is not currently regulated, which would include a transient well where a small business, like a deli, for example, would also have a private apartment upstairs. He stated community water supplies and big office plazas are already regulated.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if there are PFAS clusters that need immediate attention, such as lake communities.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens confirmed that the state has identified areas where larger supplies are regulated and PFAS was found in testing, and that there will be a mailing to target those areas.

Legislator Birmingham questioned if a test is positive, is the owner required to mitigate even if they do not have the finances beyond this reimbursement, and is the well history going to be found on a public database.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated that it is not required, and data would not be available to the public, but should be available to the Sanitarians of the Health Department.

Legislator D'Angelo questioned if there is a problem with a well system, could the program potentially cover an upgrade to that well system.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated yes, if the water exceeds the maximum contaminant level, the homeowner would hire a contractor to look into what specific treatment is needed.

Legislator D'Angelo questioned if this program is only for single family homes.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated no, it is for any private well.

Legislator D'Angelo questioned if the Legislature was responsible for approving applicants.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated no, it is the NY State Health Department.

Legislator D'Angelo questioned whether Sparrow Ridge and Fairways town home complexes in his district are part of this, as they share the same well and are doing major upgrades to meet the PFAS standards.

Associate Public Health Sanitarian Stevens stated that they are required to put on treatment and that is an issue totally separate from this.

Chairwoman Montgomery called forth Health Department Fiscal Manager William Orr to discuss the fiscal aspects of this program.

Legislator Montgomery questioned why there are disbursements and an increase of estimated revenues for the program of \$300,000 and not \$1.5 million.

Fiscal Manager Orr stated that it is \$1.5 million for five years, and if it goes over, we add money to it, and this is just a budget based on what is expected in the first year.

Public Health Director Rodriguez stated that the budget was allocated equitably over the five-year period, as we don't yet know what the uptake will be, and that this was just to get a baseline.

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Russo. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A009 – Department of Social Services-Mental Health State Aid Allocation

Sara Servadio, Commissioner of Social Services, Mental Health & Youth Bureau, stated that this is something done regularly throughout the year and that money being requested is being passed along to provider agencies.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned what agencies the funding is going to.

Commissioner Servadio stated that it is for housing and case management.

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval- SEQRA Determination Negative Declaration Putnam County Solid Waste Management Plan

Chairwoman Montgomery stated that she is excited about the plan and that there is a now dedicated Solid Waste Manager in the Health Department, Savannah Usher.

Barbara Barosa, Putnam County Planning Commissioner, stated she conducted the environmental review on behalf of the Legislature, as their declared intent to serve as lead agency was in back November and that she is here with a proposed resolution and a negative declaration for the adoption of the plan.

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Russo. All in favor.

Item #8 - Approval – Board of Health Reappointment – Luce

Chairwoman Montgomery stated Mrs. Luce filled a vacancy last December, and based on her resume, we are fortunate to have her.

Legislator Sayegh stated that she is a part of the Board of Health, and during the candidate interviewing process there were many very qualified candidates, which was great to see. She stated that in her opinion, Mrs. Luce is very qualified.

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #9 – Other Business - None

Item #10 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:43pm Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Dechiaro, Administrative Assistant.