

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

Members: Chairman Regan and Legislators Addonizio & Montgomery

**Wednesday May 13, 2026
(Immediately Following the Health Committee Mtg. at 6pm)**

This meeting was called to order at 7:44pm by Chairman Regan who requested Putnam County Sheriff Brian Hess lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Addonizio and Montgomery and Chairman Regan were present.

Item #3 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A030 – Sheriff’s Office – Receipt of Grant Funds from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women’s Resource Center

Sheriff Hess stated the grant was approved in the budget, and it is for the space utilized to interview victims. He explained this is money they got back from the Women’s Resource Center.

Legislator Montgomery stated she always appreciates the partnerships when they leverage County resources alongside a vital non-profit.

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

Item #4 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A032 – Sheriff – Repair 2 Automobiles in Patrol Fleet

Sheriff Hess stated both automobiles were involved with accidents with deer; once the insurance recovery comes in the budget will be replenished.

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

Item #5 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A036 – Sheriff – Record Remaining Expenditure and Revenues Related to Byrne State Crisis Intervention Programming Grant

Sheriff Hess stated the grant was started during the previous administration; they are looking to spend around \$500,000.

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

Item #6 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A037 – Finance – Receipt of SICG (Statewide Interoperable Communications Grant) Formula Grant

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

Item #7 – Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A038 – Emergency Services – Fund NYS Emergency Services IP Network Readiness Grant

Commissioner Oster stated this budgetary amendment is to accept monies from NYS for the consulting of their fiber optic network that provides operational functionality to the 911 center.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if this was a 5-year grant program.

Commissioner Oster stated yes.

Chairman Regan questioned if the selection of the vendor been done already.

Commissioner Oster stated yes, the vendor is NYSTEC, they are a technical consulting firm that a lot of the counties in NYS use.

Legislator Gouldman questioned the percentage of people that text 911 in Putnam County.

Chairman Regan stated they must keep conversation to the topic at hand, as there is a lot on the agenda for the night.

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

Item #8 – Approval – Fund Transfer 26T110 – Emergency Services – Development of Continuity of Operations Plan

Commissioner Oster stated he would like to invite Seamus Leary from Meridan Strategic Services to answer any questions they may have. He stated a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is a plan most government entities have in place in order to ensure that the essential functions of government continue in the event of an emergency or a hazardous condition. He stated it essentially designates who the lines of successions are, how funding is appropriated, and how things are purchased. He explained the existing COOP plan that is in place is severely deficient, with many sections non-existent or incomplete. He stated he does not have a Deputy Commissioner or an Emergency Manager, therefore does not have the manpower to designate facilitating the completion of the COOP plan.

Chairman Regan stated neither him nor Commissioner Oster were in their positions the year prior, but they are both commenting on the severe deficiencies that there are. He

questioned why Commissioner Oster would be coming before the Legislature for funding to do a continuity plan for the entire Putnam County Government.

Commissioner Oster stated he is responsible for the Bureau's COOP, but he thinks the Bureau of Emergency Services should make sure there is a County-wide plan.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if this item came before them previously, and what the result was.

Legislator Birmingham stated the item never made it out of the committee.

Chairman Regan stated last year \$25,000 had been requested but not approved because there were no answers provided. He questioned if Mr. Leary could answer if they have a contract with his company.

Leary stated his company is currently helping the county recover from the July 2023 flood.

Legislator Montgomery questioned where the plan is deficient.

Commissioner Oster stated the COOP has many pages blank, with no information entered, therefore the effectiveness of the plan is not very good. He explained the information that is listed is very outdated, with names that do not work for the county anymore.

Legislator Montgomery stated she is familiar with putting together similar plans on the Town level. She stated that is something mandated by the state, but it is not something they take money out of the general fund to do, and they do not hire a consultant to do it. She stated she believes the information should come from the employees.

Commissioner Oster stated in regard to the hazard mitigation plan, the County is also working on a hazard mitigation plan and they do in fact have a subcontractor as a consultant, the cost is over \$100,000 to assist with the plan and that is funded through a grant. The funding transfer they are requesting is funds that come from a salary which is partially funded through a grant.

Legislator Birmingham stated he was present the year prior for the previous discussion and Commissioner Oster's description gives much more clarity. He stated during emergency purchases, he wants him to get whatever resources needed without worrying how to get them. He questioned that if this department already has staffing issues, is this the best department to handle the COOP.

Commissioner Oster stated as for staffing issues, they are in the second round of interviewing for the Deputy Commissioner position. He stated he thinks it is important to have this plan in place, along with one central department that can oversee the entirety of the plan and make sure that it is completed to its fullest extent.

Legislator Birmingham stated 30 years ago when he was Deputy County Executive, they were able to make purchases using a county voucher.

Commissioner Oster stated they cannot rely on printing out a voucher in the case of the computers being down. He stated there is a plan for if the 911 Center goes down, they need backup plans for all departments. He explained there needs to be plans to help citizens no matter the circumstances.

Legislator Crowley stated she is in full support of this, other surrounding counties all use consultants for COOP plans. She explained Dutchess County has saved \$27 million from having COOP plans throughout all their departments.

Chairman Regan stated that his hesitation comes from the individuals that work for Emergency Services are very competent and should be able to fulfill almost everything that is being asked in the proposal.

Mr. Leary stated he was the County Emergency Manager for Orange County during Hurricane Irene, and they did not have a COOP in place, and they had to spend a lot of unnecessary time figuring out the essential functions.

Legislator Russo stated she supports Commissioner Oster's request, it is a \$20,000 request for the entire County's emergency services.

Legislator Addonizio stated she is in favor of the budget transfer, and she believes it is important to note that the fiscal impact is zero.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if the COOP is specifically for the Bureau of Emergency Services or for the entire County.

Mr. Leary stated they are going to create a core plan that provides the overall strategy and essential functions for the County. He explained some departments are more complicated than others, but they will create a general template for each department to fill out and if they need help, they will get assistance.

Legislator Sayegh questioned if once the plan is complete, the Bureau of Emergency Services will take the plan to the other departments to be filled out.

Mr. Leary stated they will be creating the plan itself and each department will be given a template to fill out, and that will be incorporated into the main plan. He stated he is happy to help each of the departments individually.

Commissioner Oster stated that in his opinion, it will significantly reduce the amount of work that the Bureau has to do in order to facilitate getting a complete plan from the County, they will be the collectors of information from each department and combine that into one plan. He stated the template to be filled out by each Department would be provided by Meridian..

Chairman Regan stated he is hesitant to have an outside company handling this. He stated that logic would point him to believe the \$20,000 is just the initial cost and there will be further costs.

Mr. Leary stated the \$20,000 cost is for the County-wide COOP and there would be no further cost.

Legislator Birmingham questioned if they could go a little more in detail about succession planning.

Mr. Leary stated that typically they come up with a series of questions for the County, such as the roles in each Department and a few layers of leadership.

Legislator Birmingham stated a lot of that is already in place.

Commissioner Oster stated he has previously asked the same questions to Mr. Leary and was assured a full plan would be provided.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what the time frame of completion is.

Commissioner Oster stated the time frame is about 8 weeks.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if they are considering that the staff and department can take the next steps on their own or if they will need more money to do that.

Mr. Leary stated there is no agenda and the next steps are just to demonstrate what other services are out there.

Commissioner Oster stated, with the future proper staffing, most of the “next steps” can be done by the Deputy Commissioner.

Legislator Birmingham questioned how the vendor was chosen before requesting money.

Commissioner Oster stated he met him at an event and thought his skills would be helpful.

Chairman Regan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. Legislator Montgomery voted no.

Item #9 – Discussion – Co-Responder Team Program – Transition and Future Direction – Sheriff Hess & DSS Commissioner Servadio

Chairman Regan made a motion to accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Putnam County Sheriff Brian Hess stated that, as part of the 2026 budget review, he evaluated all Sheriff's Office programs and determined that assigning a full-time deputy to the County Co-Responder Team (CRT) was not the most effective use of resources. He emphasized that mental health related calls remain a critical issue and that the Sheriff's Office will continue responding to incidents involving violence, threats, criminal activity, weapons, or other situations requiring law enforcement. He noted that while the CRT program provides valuable services, the deputy position is funded by the Sheriff's Office at an annual cost of approximately \$250,000 and that CRT responded to only about 3% of the County's mental health related calls during the review period. He further stated that deputies reported law enforcement involvement is necessary in only a small percentage of CRT responses, raising concerns about operational efficiency and cost-effectiveness. In addition, he cited concerns regarding the program's governance, including the lack of a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU), clearly defined leadership, and a unified command structure. He stressed that these concerns are not a criticism of the mental health professionals or deputies involved but rather reflect questions about program structure and accountability. He concluded that the Sheriff's Office remains committed to supporting mental health response efforts and collaborating with partner agencies to develop a more effective and clearly governed model, but that the current CRT structure does not justify the continued assignment of a full-time deputy, leading to the decision to end the Sheriff's Office participation in the program at the conclusion of the current grant period in June.

Chairman Regan stated that the additional information that was accepted was the original budget amendment request that was forwarded to the Legislature.

Commissioner of the Department of Social Services Sara Servadio stated the numbers from the mental health documents in 2024 differ than current. She explained it has been broken down by geographic location, the amount of mental hygiene orders written, hospitalizations, and the amount of children being engaged. She stated their numbers are much different than the numbers the Sheriff's Department has.

Legislator Addonizio questioned how they find the discrepancy.

Sheriff Hess stated his numbers came from the 911 center; they are the CAD calls.

Commissioner Servadio stated those numbers do not take into account all the times deputies and officers reach out to the co-responder team directly.

Sheriff Hess stated he would disagree with that.

Legislator Montgomery stated the Legislature recognizes the value of the work performed by the deputies and mental health professionals. She stated what matters to her is the apparent decision to end the program. She stated that it is about \$380,000 a year for the program, therefore they need to look into resources. She explained she is frustrated because a plan to keep the CRT active maybe in a different way is not being pursued. She stated the County's data reports the co-response team has been responding to 70

calls a month, and that data needs to be worked out. She is fearful that they are losing services throughout the County.

Sheriff Hess stated he has no problem with Legislative inquiries; there have been other issues with no inquiry by the Legislators. He stated there is real work to do and the numbers do not reflect the need.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes mental health workers should be in on those types of calls. She stated that the grant is being used to purchase another vehicle for the Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff Hess stated that is not true, it is a County vehicle and will be returned to the Department of General Services for future placement.

Legislator Birmingham stated he defers to Sheriff Hess about law enforcement issues, but he also defers to Commissioner Servadio for mental health issues.

Sheriff Hess stated there are other models to look into. He stated one of the challenges is day versus night tours, most mental health calls occur at night but the deputy is assigned during the day. He explained he does not think having a dedicated deputy assigned to this does not make sense.

Legislator Birmingham stated that there could be a possible IMA.

Chairman Regan stated perhaps the NYS Police would have the overlapping coverage.

Legislative Counsel Heather Abissi stated that the Sheriff does not want to devote a full-time patrol deputy to calls where there is no safety or criminal issue. She stated alternatively, to ensure the deputy's time is devoted to criminal matters, the mental health professional could join the patrol.

Legislator Addonizio stated Sheriff Hess previously stated he is open to exploring alternative models that may be a better fit for Putnam County.

Legislator Crowley stated she fully supports the CRT, she uses it a lot with her other job and it is very helpful.

Commissioner Servadio stated all of these conversations could have been discussed if the Department of Social Services was included in the comprehensive review.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if it has to be a deputy or if it could be an SPO, which would save money.

Sheriff Hess stated while yes it is cheaper, it would be difficult to find someone because they have restricted hours. If someone is having a mental health crisis, you do not need an officer.

Chairman Regan stated that sometimes the presence of a police officer prevents a situation from escalating.

Legislator Sayegh stated she really appreciates the job the deputies are doing. She thinks the CRT is meant to support these calls and do the follow ups.

Sheriff Hess stated yes mental health workers are much needed, but he does not believe a police officer needs to go on the follow ups.

Commissioner Servadio stated they did look at the times of day people call in crisis prior to setting up the schedule of when the team would be working and based on the snapshot and time that we looked at, it was best to do it during the day.

Legislator Sayegh stated they are all in favor of the CRT continuing. She questioned if there was any way for it to continue.

Commissioner Servadio stated the first deputy on the team was trained and experienced, she explained you cannot just throw any deputy on the team and expect it to work. She stated they would be willing to have an SPO.

Chairman Regan stated he would like to thank the both of them.

Sheriff Hess stated they have until June 30th to use the budget transfer.

Johnathon Cummings stated he has an extensive background in emergency services, he believes a lot of the issues discussed could be handled by proper call taking. He stated there is a limitation of what could be taken by CAD.

Chairman Regan made a motion to accept the budgetary amendment; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #10a – Other Business – Discussion – Letter of Necessity from County Executive Byrne – Requesting Legislature’s Consideration for County Participation in Article 78 and SEQRA Declaratory Judgement Action

Chairman Regan made a motion to waive the rules and accept the other business; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Legislator Birmingham stated outside of the Legislature, he is an attorney and his law firm represents the Village of Cold Spring as bond counsel. He stated there has been an initiation from the Village, therefore out of caution he will recuse himself from the conversation due to conflict of interest.

Chairman Regan stated County Executive Byrne requested that Putnam County join the town of Philipstown and the Village of Cold Spring in their article 78 and SEQRA litigation

related to the Hudson Highlands Trails Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS). He stated he would like to note that although the Legislature has been asked to consider County participation in litigation involving a potential taxpayer expense and legal exposure, the Committee has not been provided with the proposed Article 78 draft petition. He explained he looked for guidance from the Law Department, but as they do not possess either legal documents or case documentation, the County Attorney recommends the Committee consult with Legislative Counsel.

Chairman Regan made a motion to refer this matter to Legislative Counsel for review and analysis; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio.

Legislator Montgomery stated she has been aware of this project. She stated she does not have the Article 78 or the FGEIS.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if Chairman Regan read the letter from the County Attorney. She read the letter aloud dated May 11, 2026 from the County Attorney.

Cindy Trimble, resident, stated she would like to raise a fundamental issue of representation, accountability, and integrity regarding the Hudson Highlands Trail. She stated elected officials should engage when a project affects their constituents. She stated the Village of Cold Spring Board of Trustees identified and addressed the deficiencies in the FGEIS issued by the NYS Office of Parks, and those deficiencies are not minor. She stated Legislator Montgomery has not publicly addressed the concerns. She stated Legislator Montgomery should recuse herself.

Legislative Counsel Abissi stated a difference of opinion is not a conflict of interest, they also have not been provided with actual source documentation as to the nature of the project, or nature of the litigation. She stated she could not access the litigation without actual source documentation.

Chairman Regan called for a roll call vote on the motion made to refer this item to Legislative Counsel. Two Ayes: Legislator Addonizio and Chairman Regan. One Nay: Legislator Montgomery. Motion carries.

Town of Philipstown Supervisor John Van Tassel stated the Town needs to file by May 19, 2026.

Item #11 – Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Regan made a motion to adjourn at 9:25pm; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by PILOT Intern Molly Hall.