

**DUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Chairwoman Montgomery, Legislators Addonizio & Russo

Wednesday

5:30 p.m.

August 12, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chairwoman Montgomery who requested that Legislator Addonizio lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Addonizio and Chairwoman Montgomery were present. Legislator Russo was absent.

Item #3 - Proclamation – Recognizing the Putnam County Youth Bureau & Haldane School District on their Youth-Led 9/11 Memorials 2026

Chairwoman Montgomery presented the proclamation to Executive Director Janeen Cunningham, Deputy Youth Director Kimberly Realbuto of the Putnam County Youth Bureau, and Youth Bureau member and student Chloe Lex. The Putnam County Youth Bureau and Haldane School District were recognized for their youth-led September 11 memorials commemorating the 25th anniversary of the attacks and for their efforts to teach younger generations to remember the events of that day.

Director Cunningham thanked the Legislature and County Executive for the proclamation and invited the Legislators and public to attend the Youth-Led 9/11 Memorials.

Item #4 - Acceptance of Minutes – March 11, 2026 Meeting & April 8, 2026 Meeting

The minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #5 - Chairwoman's Report

Chairwoman Montgomery reported first on implementation of the food security initiative following the Legislature's recent approval of \$150,000 for Second Chance Foods and Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) and stated that an implementation plan was received from Second Chance Foods and shared with CCE, the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Office for Senior Resources. Next, she stated that NYS Office of Mental Health announced \$660,000 in funding allocated for county suicide prevention efforts, and that Putnam County would receive \$48,000 annually for the next two (2) years. Next, she described concerns regarding the upcoming federal health and benefit changes affecting Essential Plan coverage, and that a reduction in the federal share of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) would shift 50% of administrative costs to counties, placing additional demand on DSS. Next, she stated that the County should be monitoring funding risk and pursuing available State and federal resources, such as the federal Rural Health Transformation Program, for the Health Department and local partners.

Item #6 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A067 – Department of Health – New Early Learning Center Program

Public Health Director Rian Rodriguez stated that this request would cover costs associated

with establishing a new classroom, services and additional costs at the Early Learning Center (ELC).

Early Learning Program Supervisor Valerie Kurtz stated that the existing program is fully enrolled, has a waiting list and that it has become evident that that certain children are struggling and need a more structured setting before joining the inclusive ELC classrooms. She stated that she worked with NY State to develop a pilot class, that would have eight (8) students, one (1) teacher and two (2) aides to offer struggling students the opportunity to integrate first into art and gym classes, and then eventually move into the ELC. She stated this program would use the Carmel Central School District curriculum to help prepare children for Kindergarten and that parents have shown support.

Legislator Addonizio questioned enrollment in the pilot class and the waiting list.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz stated that the proposed program would open in September and already has four (4) children on the waiting list.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned the overall ELC waiting list and the expected completion date for the new building.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz stated that approximately 12 children are on the waiting list and that building completion is anticipated around December.

Legislator Sayegh questioned total enrollment, future capacity and budgeting for increased costs.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz stated that September enrollment is for 43 children in the ELC and eight (8) in the new pilot program, and that the new building would provide capacity for 97 children and accommodate the waiting list. She explained that the 2027 budget is being developed based on enrollment of approximately 70 students.

Legislator Crowley expressed support for the program and its benefits to local families.

Legislator Birmingham questioned whether offsetting education and transportation revenue reflected transportation savings and whether the per capita grant funding could cover other program expenses.

William Orr, Fiscal Manager of the Department of Health stated that the program received \$54,000 per child for eight (8) children to offset costs, and that transportation costs were allocated by percentage of how many kids will be on the bus for early intervention, preschool, ELC and the pilot program. He confirmed that funding could also cover other expenses such as office supplies and printing.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned opportunities to extend services to Legislative Districts 1 and 2, where children continued to face lengthy transportation times.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz stated that discussions were planned or underway with Mahopac, Putnam Valley and Haldane schools, and that expansion would require appropriate space.

Chairwoman Montgomery suggested exploring available space within school district buildings.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz supported exploring one (1) or two (2) classrooms integrated with universal prekindergarten on the western side of the County.

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

Item #7 - Other Business

a. Approval – Budgetary Transfer 26T201 – Department of Health – Early Intervention Care at Private Institutions and Special Education Itinerant Services (SEIS)

Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to accept additional; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Chairwoman Montgomery introduced the transfers, stating there is zero (0) fiscal impact.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz explained that several providers had discontinued early intervention group programs, leaving Los Niños in Valhalla as an available option, though travel is far for the 12 Putnam children served and the cost is approximately \$60,000. She stated that demand for assistive technology has increased for children with hearing, vision and communication needs.

Legislator Crowley questioned whether the new pilot program could expand as other providers have discontinued services.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz explained that she supports expansion, but State reimbursement and detailed annual cost-allocation requirements would require additional fiscal support to organize the budget.

Director Rodriguez stated that the program would serve as proof of concept and undergo evaluation, so that successful outcomes could be replicated where needed in the County.

Legislator Crowley questioned why providers had discontinued early intervention programs.

Early Learning Program Supervisor Kurtz cited reimbursement rates and NY State restrictions preventing occupational, physical or speech therapy from being billed during group-program hours have made the programs financially unsustainable for those providers.

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

b. Update - Putnam County Local Solid Waste Management Plan

Director Rodriguez reported that the final Local Solid Waste Management Plan was posted on the Department of Health's website for review by Legislators and the public, as formal approval would be requested next month.

Chairwoman Montgomery thanked Director Rodriguez and recognized Solid Waste Program Manager Dr. Savannah Usher for her work on the plan.

Item #8 - Adjournment

There being no further business, at 6:01 p.m., Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Mary Dechiaro.