

**SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
CALLED BY THE CLERK AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN  
HELD IN ROOM 318  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Tuesday**

**September 24, 2019**

(Immediately following Personnel & Audit Committee mtgs. starting at 6:00 P.M.)

The meeting was called to order at 7:33 P.M. by Chairman Castellano who requested that Legislator Montgomery lead in the Pledge of Allegiance and Legislator Addonizio lead in the Legislative Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Montgomery, Gouldman, Addonizio, Nacerino, Albano, Jonke, Sayegh, Sullivan and Chairman Castellano were present. Also present was Legislative Counsel Firriolo.

Item #4 – Approval/ Rescind Resolution #162 of 2019 /Director of Real Property Tax Services was next.

Chairman Castellano stated that this matter was discussed earlier this evening at the Personnel Committee meeting.

Legislator Addonizio stated that many of her constituents were disappointed that the error occurred. She stated that there have been many remarks made that Putnam County is incompetent. She believed that we needed information moving forward and clarification on why it happened and how it can be prevented from happening again so we can reassure the public.

Legislator Albano stated that he doesn't see any facts that would come into play that would make him think differently. He stated that it appears to be a complex situation; however, he does not believe any action is necessary at this point. He believed things would be moving smoothly in the future and if there are any glitches they will be addressed.

Legislator Sayegh stated that she is struggling with this. She stated that at this point she does not know what happened and whether or not it was a computer glitch or human error. She stated that she does not know if she is in favor or someone losing their job; however at the same time we owe it to the taxpayers to find out what happened. She explained that the rescinding resolution gives the opportunity to look into this to make an informed decision.

Legislator Montgomery stated that the Legislative prayer we just read states: “with clear insight and deliberations of our wisdom”. She stated that her clear insight says that we do not know the facts and she believed this was too harsh. She explained that we received correspondence from one of our local town Supervisors which states that we have an opportunity to send a message to the Putnam County employees, however is that message when mistakes are made you will be will be treated with swift and harsh punishment, or are we going to learn from those mistakes and move on? She stated that she does not approve of this rescinding resolution.

Legislator Sullivan stated that we all want to get to the bottom of this and that is why we are waiting until we find out what happened. He stated that we owe it to the taxpayers to be as transparent as possible. He stated that it is our job to make tough decisions and do the right thing when taxpayer's monies are at stake. He stated that we are all hopeful that the report states that everything was properly done. He stated at that point we would re-appoint Lisa Johnson to the position. He stated that until we get a clear understanding of what happened, how it happened and how it will not happen again, we have a responsibility to the taxpayers showing them that we have done our homework and we are making a decision based on the facts.

Legislator Nacerino disagreed with Legislator Montgomery's perspective. She believed that we owe it to the public to do our due diligence and find out where the error lies. She stated that nobody was losing their job or getting fired; all these speculative conclusions were erroneous. She stated that we are elected to make informed decisions based on facts and to represent the people of Putnam County and work in their best interest.

Legislator Jonke stated that this is more about timing. He explained that we have a problem and want to put this on pause to find out what happened. He believed that we had a responsibility to do that.

Legislator Gouldman stated that Lisa has been very helpful to the residents of Putnam Valley, the Supervisor, the Clerk and the Tax Assessor. He stated that the timing of this matter is the worst situation. He stated that because of this he will vote to rescind the resolution and hopefully there will be no issues moving forward and we'll figure out where we go after the study done.

Legislator Albano stated that he respected his colleagues. He stated that we need to know what happened and look into this. However, based on what he believed was the worst case scenario and best case scenario, he stated that he still would not do this. He stated that based on the work done in the past and the response he has received from that office; he stated that he would still not change his direction in this. He stated that it was a mistake.

Chairman Castellano stated that this is a strange scenario of events that occurred. He stated that clearly we do not know what happened. He believed that to not take that into consideration and request a forensic audit or evaluation, we would not be doing the right thing for the taxpayers. He stated that it was made clear tonight at the Personnel meeting what the County Executive would like to see happen moving forward. He stated that simply because of the timing of this, he believed that we needed to pause and take a look at what happened. He believed nothing would happen as far as personnel. He stated to take the personnel issue out of this based on the County Executive's strong statements tonight through Commissioner of Finance Carlin. He believed that we need to do our due diligence for the taxpayers of Putnam County and to make sure this never happens again. He explained that he was fine with reconsidering the appointment in the future as long as he has a definitive answer of what happened and hopefully he is 100% confident that it will never happen again.

Legislator Montgomery stated that the resolution does not indicate why we are rescinding the confirmation of appointment resolution. She believed that this did not make any sense. She stated that we can do all those things we said without having this resolution.

Chairman Castellano explained that the County Executive made the appointment and the Legislature confirmed the appointment. However, he stated that in the timeframe that we have, there is an opportunity to go back and look at it again. He stated that he does not have an issue with this resolution.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to move the following; seconded by Legislator Addonizio.

#### **RESOLUTION #216**

#### **APPROVAL/ RESCIND RESOLUTION #162 OF 2019/ DIRECTOR OF REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES**

**WHEREAS, pursuant to New York State Real Property Tax Law Section 1530 and Putnam County Charter Section 4.03, there shall be a Director of Real Property Tax Services that shall be appointed by the County Executive subject to confirmation by the County Legislature; and**

**WHEREAS, County Executive MaryEllen Odell informed the Legislature of her intention to reappoint Lisa Johnson to the position of Director of Real Property Tax Services for the County of Putnam pursuant to Sections 3.03 and 4.03 of the Putnam County Charter; and**

**WHEREAS, by resolution number 162 of 2019, the Putnam County Legislature did confirm the reappointment of Lisa Johnson to fill the position of Director of Real Property Tax Services for a six (6) year term commencing October 1, 2019, and**

**WHEREAS, the reappointment of Lisa Johnson has not yet taken effect; and**

**WHEREAS, the Personnel Committee of the Putnam County Legislature has had occasion to reconsider this reappointment and now recommends rescinding its prior approval thereof; now therefore be it**

**RESOLVED, that the Legislature hereby rescinds resolution number 162 of 2019; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that the Legislature hereby declines to confirm the reappointment of Lisa Johnson as the Director of Real Property Tax Services for the County of Putnam, pursuant to Section 4.03 of the Putnam County Charter.**

**BY ROLL CALL VOTE: SEVEN AYES. TWO NAYS – LEGISLATORS ALBANO & MONTGOMERY. MOTION CARRIES.**

#### **Item #5 – Recognition of Public on Agenda Items**

There was no one from the public that wished to speak.

#### **Item #6 – Recognition of Legislators**

Legislator Albano asked for this issue to be addressed as quickly as possible.

There being no further business, at 7:46 P.M., Chairman Castellano made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.