

**RULES, ENACTMENTS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
BUDGET MEETING  
HELD IN ROOM #318 OF THE  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Members: Chairman Sullivan, Legislators Albano & Castellano**

**Thursday October 7, 2021  
(Immediately following Economic Development Budget Mtg beginning at 6:30pm)**

The meeting was called to order at 6:53pm by Chairman Sullivan who requested Legislator Castellano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Committee Members Albano, Castellano, & Chairman Sullivan were present.

**Item #3 – 2022 Budget Review**

**Legislature – Account 1010 (pages 1-2)**

Legislator Albano questioned if line 54313, Books and Supplements, is spent toward the end of the year.

Legislative Clerk Diane Schonfeld stated yes, it goes toward the Code Book updates.

**County Executive – Account 1230 (pages 12-13)**

Chairman Sullivan stated the overall 2022 budget is fairly consistent as compared to 2021. He questioned line 54162, Consultants.

Commissioner of Finance William Carlin stated funding for two (2) studies was included in the 2022 budget, as was explained by County Executive MaryEllen Odell in her budget address. He stated the studies are related to Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the Putnam County Jail.

Chairman Sullivan stated as County Executive Odell mentioned, the Jail has the capacity to house 120 inmates however, there is currently an average of 40-60 inmates. He stated under New York State law the Jail must be fully staffed regardless of how many inmates there are. He stated the study will look into areas where money can be saved when the occupancy of the Jail is not at full capacity. He stated he believes this study will be money well spent. He stated the other study for the EMS is very important and will ensure the County has an adequate level of service.

Legislator Sayegh stated line 54162, Consultants, is an increase of \$100,000 as compared to 2021, however the County Executive's tentative 2022 budget as a whole increased only \$92,502 over 2021. She stated without these studies, the overall budget would be lower than last year.

Legislator Nacerino stated as County Executive Odell referenced in her budget address, bail reform is here to stay therefore the Jail may not be at full capacity anytime soon. She stated she sits on the Fire and EMS Advisory Board and this study is very important as there is less volunteerism and the major concern is that response times remain as quick as possible. She stated these are both significant studies that will have a real impact moving forward.

Legislator Montgomery stated line 54646, Contracts, was increased in 2021 from \$30,000 to \$50,000 to pay an individual to write press releases. She stated this line is back to \$30,000 for 2022. She questioned the need for this line now that the County Executive's Office has a Deputy County Executive, a full time confidential secretary, and another full time secretary; there are four (4) full time employees. She questioned the necessity of a contract line to pay someone to write press releases. She stated there are grant opportunities for studies of emergency services through New York State. She stated the Town of Philipstown commissioned a similar study utilizing grant money which covered the cost of the study and implementation. She stated it would be great to look into these opportunities before spending \$100,000 on studies.

Chairman Sullivan clarified that the \$100,000 budgeted in the Consultant line is for both studies, at \$50,000 each.

Legislator Montgomery stated the consultants have not been sought out yet, therefore the actual cost is unknown at this point. She questioned line 54640, Education & Training, as very little of the allocated \$13,000 was spent in both 2020 and 2021. She questioned if this line could be decreased since there is more online training being offered now and there is less of a need to attend the larger conferences. She stated this is \$13,000 per year for one (1) person; she is in favor of education and training, but she would rather see this money be put to better use.

Chairman Sullivan stated this budget line applies to multiple employees in the County Executive's office, not just one (1) person.

Commissioner Carlin stated in respect to the comments made earlier about line 54646, Contracts, most counties have a director of communications or a communications office however Putnam County does not so this budget line provides this function. He stated in terms of line 54640, Education & Training, the County Executive is on several boards that mandate attendance such as NYSAC and NACo. He stated those are two (2) very important organizations where counties encourage their officials to participate because they help our taxpayers. He stated in regard to the concern that not much was spent from the line in 2020, this will be seen throughout the budget because 2020 was an anomaly and there are wide fluctuations throughout the budget.

Legislator Montgomery stated by no means did she intend to reflect that she would not want to be part of these great organizations. She stated it would benefit the taxpayer if online communication could be used in place of physical attendance.

Legislator Castellano questioned if line 58001, State Retirement, is a moving target.

Commissioner Carlin stated yes, the cost is going down next year. He stated he will discuss this further at the Personnel Budget Meeting.

**County Clerk – Account 1410 (pages 24-25)**

County Clerk Michael Bartolotti stated the biggest thing to highlight is that a personnel position is being eliminated for 2022. He stated since 2019 when the Clerk's Office switched to the new software vendor they realized a great deal of efficiencies with the recording of land records and filing of court documents. He stated they had a retirement earlier this year and have been operating well with that vacancy, even considering that real estate is the busiest it has been in a very long time. He stated the work is being processed with the assistance of the software programs. He stated there is another vacant position right now that was just vacated due to a retirement. He stated that position is going to be kept for 2022 to make sure the office can operate and then it will be addressed in next year's budget cycle. He stated everything else has been kept similar to the prior year. He stated the County Clerk's office has been working to have more information available online. He stated hopefully by early next year every deed image from 1812 to the present will be available on their system which can be accessed by the online search. He stated while they have been very busy with land records, they believe it is a temporary anomaly and is not prudent to adjust revenues at this point.

Chairman Sullivan stated he is happy to hear that the technology the County has invested in has resulted in efficiencies that have resulted in reduced human costs. He thanked County Clerk Bartolotti for saving the taxpayers money and for making it easier to access information.

Legislator Albano questioned if having documents available online reduces the storage of paper copies.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the older libers that are handwritten are already archived and reproductions were made years ago. He stated they will be able to save space in the Clerk's Office by sending documents to records. He stated there are some books that are over 100 years old and they are archived and kept safe as they are a piece of history.

Legislator Montgomery thanked County Clerk Bartolotti for the work he did to keep the County Clerk's Office, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and Records Center open during the COVID pandemic. She questioned the \$13,750 in line 54989, Miscellaneous as only about \$5,000 was spent this year.

Deputy County Clerk James McConnell stated the Miscellaneous line Legislator Montgomery is referring to is in the DMV budget and is used for the sale of the EZ Pass tags and there is a matching revenue line.

Legislator Castellano questioned if the County Clerk's Office is utilizing the same system to schedule appointments as the DMV. He also questioned if the County Clerk's Office will continue to use the appointment system.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the appointment system will definitely be kept in place for the DMV. He stated for the time being, they will continue to make appointments for the County Clerk's Office as well. He stated no one is ever turned away, sometimes someone without an appointment will need to wait until an employee is available but they are always taken care of. He stated in order to keep everyone safe they do not allow there to be too many people in the office at one time. He stated most people actually compliment the appointment system because they are given undivided attention during their transaction and it makes the process go faster. He stated there is a strong possibility the appointment system will be used permanently at least for the more complicated types of transactions.

Legislator Castellano stated the Westchester County Clerk's Office has been using the same appointment system as well.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated Deputy County Clerk McConnell was instrumental in implementing the appointment system and Director of IT/GIS Thomas Lannon found the program and set it up soon after. He stated there are now about 20 counties in the State using the same system for their DMV.

### **Motor Vehicles – Account 1411 (pages 26-27)**

Chairman Sullivan questioned how the appointment system is working in the DMV.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated they are now through the COVID backlog and they are less than a week out for appointments. He stated they do accept emergency walk-ins. He stated they recently implemented having a staff member in the lobby at the table to help customers by pre-checking their forms. He stated the appointment system has been working very well and has made for a much better experience for both customers and staff. He stated this has been a positive outcome of the COVID pandemic.

Chairman Sullivan questioned how many customers are seen per day.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the DMV takes about 200 appointments per day, not including dealer work or walk ins.

### **Records Management – Account 1460 (pages 36-37)**

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the budget for 2022 is similar to 2021. He stated the Records Center is working on scanning all possible documents. He stated they have recently gotten equipment to help with digitizing documents from a shared grant with four (4) towns and two (2) villages. He stated they are looking into the capability of making the digitized documents accessible to the public if necessary.

Chairman Sullivan clarified that the County Records Center stores documents and records for towns and villages.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated that is correct. He stated when the Records Center opened in the 1990's it was one of the first cooperative records centers in New York State. He stated documents are stored and managed for every County department, almost all towns and villages in Putnam County, and a few school districts and towns outside of Putnam County. He stated they began the initiative to digitize the records and they applied for and received four (4) shared services grants with various towns and villages throughout Putnam County.

Legislator Gouldman questioned line 52130, Computer Equipment, which had not been funded in the past few years.

Deputy County Clerk McConnell stated that funding will be used to update a computer used for scanning.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the existing computer is not able to handle the scanning equipment efficiently.

Deputy County Clerk McConnell stated also included in that budget line is funding for additional monitors, which will also increase efficiency with scanning.

#### **Law Department – Account 1420 (pages 28-29)**

County Attorney Jennifer Bumgarner stated the Law Department budget for 2022 is not much different than in 2021. She stated one of the biggest changes is to line 54125, Legal Services, where she added about \$50,000 for next year. She stated while she does not anticipate additional litigation or cases coming in, she does need additional help with cases already in the office. She explained that there are several vacancies in the Law Department; two (2) have been filled and the individuals will begin working soon, and she is going to leave the First Deputy County Attorney position vacant for a while. She stated the biggest area of the law that she needs the assistance with is with respect to the real property files. She stated the two (2) individuals who were just hired do not have real property experience, nor do the existing employees. She stated she has real property experience and she has been working on those files to move them along, however it is not sustainable for her to handle the real property transactions on top of her regular caseload. She stated despite the fact that \$50,000 was added for this purpose, the vacancy in the First Deputy County Attorney position will provide plenty of money to sweep back into the general fund. She stated also, as far as administrative staff is concerned, that will be reduced as well because she is going from 3½ individuals to just three (3) next year and one line has been removed. She stated funding in line 54682, Special Services, is allocated off and on as it is difficult to predict when it will be needed. She stated this line is for judgement and lien searches that come up in files; most of the time it is used for appraisals. She stated there was no funding in this line for 2021, and \$2,500 was added for 2022.

Legislator Albano stated the Law Department has a lot of moving parts and he is impressed with this conservative budget.

Chairman Sullivan stated it can be difficult to find employees for government positions, especially attorneys, since the private sector generally offers higher salaries. He stated outsourcing some of the work makes sense.

Legislator Jonke agreed that it is a wise move to outsource the real property work.

### **Board of Ethics – Account 1430 (10200000) (pages 31-32)**

Legislator Montgomery stated the Board of Ethics is a volunteer board. She questioned if the annual report had been received from the Board of Ethics. She stated she has previously requested conflict statements for the members of the IDA from the Board of Ethics. She questioned what the Board of Ethics does.

Commissioner Carlin stated the budget for the Board of Ethics is used for a portion of the salary for the Confidential Secretary to the Personnel Director because they perform the work for the Board of Ethics. He stated it is a completely volunteer board.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if this will be discussed at the Personnel Budget Meeting as well.

Commissioner Carlin stated if the Personnel Committee so chooses.

Legislator Montgomery stated it is important to see an annual report when considering annual budgets. She stated she has requested an annual report for the past two (2) years.

### **Board of Elections – Account 1450 (pages 34-35)**

Board of Elections Commissioner Cathy Croft stated the biggest increase for 2022 was in line 54560, Equipment Rental Lease. She stated half of the voting machines were replaced with leased machines this year and the other half will be replaced next year. She stated the Board of Elections is also getting a portion of a dedicated IT employee which will be very helpful, especially with the concerns around cyber security. She stated there will also be a second early voting site in Philipstown that will be open for this year's election.

Chairman Sullivan stated the Board of Elections is so dependent on technology and having the IT person will be a great help.

Legislator Albano questioned the steady increase in line 54560, Equipment Rental lease.

Commissioner Croft stated in the past the Board of Elections would purchase the machines and they had a life expectancy of five (5) to 10 years.

Legislator Albano questioned if the leasing amount will be consistent each year moving forward.

Commissioner Carlin stated the lease is for three (3) to five (5) years. He stated eventually, all the machines will be leased and they will be paid for each year, similar to leasing a vehicle. He stated leasing is better because technology keeps changing, and there could be mandates implemented down the road. He stated leasing also creates an obligation for the company to service the machines when needed.

Board of Elections Commissioner Anthony Scannapieco stated things surrounding the elections are changing daily.

Commissioner Croft stated the future is voting centers, which would allow a registered voter to vote at any voting location on election day. She stated this is similar to how early voting works; they use print on demand ballots.

Legislator Castellano questioned if it has been difficult finding poll workers for election day and the early voting days.

Commissioner Croft stated she believes the hardest part is finding election workers and training them. She stated the workload on the staff is incredible.

Commissioner Scannapieco stated many of the poll workers who have worked each year are older and are hesitant to work this year because of COVID.

Chairman Sullivan stated there are more days to hire people for now too because of early voting.

Commissioner Croft stated it is actually easier to find people for the early voting days because the hours are much shorter.

Legislator Castellano questioned if they will be short poll workers this year.

Commissioner Croft stated hopefully they will have enough poll workers.

### **Association of Counties – Account 1450 (page 45)**

Chairman Sullivan stated he believes this budget line, 54313, Books and Supplements, is for the County's annual dues to be a member of the New York State Association of Counties (NYSAC).

Legislator Montgomery questioned how this differs from the dues that were discussed at the Economic Development & Energy Budget Meeting.

Commissioner Carlin stated there are two (2) groups for NYSAC, one for NYSAC as a body and one for the NYSAC County Executive's Association. He stated next year, he will put them under the same budget.

Legislator Montgomery clarified that NYSAC is not included in the dues discussed at the Economic Development & Energy Budget Meeting. She stated it was mentioned that it was included.

Commissioner Carlin stated, no it is not. He stated the dues discussed at the Economic Development & Energy Budget Meeting was for the NYSAC County Executive's Association. He stated in the future both types of NYSAC dues and the dues for NACo will be grouped together.

### **Community Action Program (CAP) – Account 6450 (page 164)**

Chairman Sullivan stated all outside agencies received a 4% increase in their budget, which has not occurred in a long time. He stated he is very happy they will be receiving this increase.

Legislator Jonke agreed and stated the COVID pandemic created uncertainty for many organizations and he is glad to be able to provide this increase.

Legislator Montgomery stated during COVID, CAP remained open and continued to face the public every day. She stated their service grew exponentially and she is glad to see the 4% increase and she suggested bringing the County Contribution from \$12,480 up to a total of \$15,000. She stated they were really on the front lines.

### **Veterans Service Agency – Account 6510 (pages 166-167)**

Deputy Director of the Veterans Service Agency Art Hanley stated there are no major changes for 2022 as compared to 2021.

Commissioner Carlin stated each year funding is included in the budget, line 54455, Burials, for indigent Veterans who pass away. He stated this year an additional \$5,000 was included in this line. He stated hopefully it does not have to be used.

Chairman Sullivan stated his thankfulness for what the Veterans Service Agency does on a limited budget.

Legislator Addonizio thanked Deputy Director Hanley for the amazing work done by the Veterans Service Agency.

Deputy Director Hanley stated they love what they do and as long as they are helping Veterans each day is a good day.



## **Consumer Affairs/Weights & Measures – Account 6610 (pages 169-171)**

Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski stated the Consumer Affairs department weathered the COVID pandemic well and ended 2020 with over \$1 million in revenue and they are on track to do the same this year. He stated the biggest request they included in their 2022 budget is for a piece of equipment in line 52680, Other Equipment, to purchase an oil prover. He provided the Committee with a photo of the current oil prover and what a new one would look like.

Inspector of Weights & Measures John Lee stated the oil prover is used to test the meters on heating oil delivery trucks.

Director of Consumer Affairs Budzinski stated New York State will no longer certify the current oil prover.

Inspector Lee stated the current oil prover is at least 50 years old. He stated they got a quote for a new oil prover in June for \$37,000 so they included \$40,000 in the 2022 budget to cover any increase in cost.

Chairman Sullivan questioned if Consumer Affairs has been busy.

Director Budzinski stated yes, they have had a lot of renewals and electrical and plumbing have gone above and beyond.

Legislator Castellano questioned if the new credit card systems have been implemented in all gas pumps.

Inspector Lee stated there are six (6) stations that do not yet have the new credit card systems. He stated three (3) of them are waiting for the pumps to be delivered. He stated like many other things, it is taking a long time due to supply shortage.

## **Putnam Arts Council – Account 7560 (page 199) Contribution to Arts – Account 7560 (page 199)**

Director of the Putnam Arts Council Joyce Picone recognized the organizations they fund and stated she is proud of how they pivoted during COVID to keep their programs running and remain connected with the community. She stated many performances were done remotely via Zoom, which was quite an expense for many organizations. She stated the Putnam Arts Council worked with them and shifted some of their finances to help keep the programs running. She stated many of the people involved are volunteers and it would have been easy to throw in the towel and wait until next year, but they persevered and kept working. She stated the Putnam Arts Council has seen an influx of people from New York City who are interested in being involved with the arts, including teaching. She stated there have been a lot of partnerships for exhibitions and she works a lot with Putnam County Tourism. She stated there are some exhibitions held outside of the County, which allows Tourism to advertise and widens the audience and brings people into Putnam for other shows. She stated they

worked with the Southeast Museum as well and held an *Art in the Pandemic* exhibit, to which they received an overwhelming response. She stated in 2022 the Putnam Arts Council will potentially be partnering with the Putnam County SPCA (Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) to hold a fundraiser for them. She stated they are also in the planning stages of a show of Veterans work. She stated they would also like to feature art work of inmates to shed a light on the fact that everyone, no matter their circumstance, has art within them. She stated they are also working on a mural on Building 4 at Tilly Foster Farm. She stated along Route 6 across from the firehouse in Mahopac they are working with a photography group who have printed their images on vinyl to hold roadside shows. She stated they are also working with the Parks and Recreation Department to bring sculptures to parks within Putnam County. She stated the Putnam Arts Council received \$14,000 in additional funding from the State to support live performances, as they suffered greatly during the pandemic and they increased their regular allocation from \$40,000 to \$44,000. She stated for every \$1 spent on the arts, \$9 is indirectly raised.

Chairman Sullivan stated the Putnam Arts Council does outstanding work.

Director Picone thanked the County for their support.

Legislator Montgomery stated the arts inject over \$6 million into the Putnam County economy. She stated the Putnam Arts Council is one of her favorite things about Putnam County and she would love to see the County contribute even more. She stated arts are the driving force in her Legislative district.

### **Constitution Island Association – Account 7560 (page 201)**

Transportation Manager Vincent Tamagna stated Constitution Island is where the County's Bicentennial was celebrated and since that time he has become Chairman of the Constitution Island Association. He stated \$3.5 million was invested in an education center and over \$5 million has been invested in the Warner sisters' house. He stated the Constitution Island Association has been around for over 100 years, beginning in 1916. He stated they have operated on a shoestring budget, especially since COVID because their annual fundraisers have been cancelled. He stated they are planning a big opening in 2022 and will launch the Little America program, which brings in 4<sup>th</sup> grade students from schools in the area. He stated the history of the Warner sisters and Constitution Island is amazing and has endless educational opportunities. He stated when they were in the midst of renovations, they found that Constitution Island was a significant piece of land to Native American tribes and it is documented in the journals of Christopher Columbus. He stated when President Abraham Lincoln passed away, the Warner sisters displayed a funeral flag at the Cold Spring train station while the funeral train was passing. He stated that flag was located and is being restored.

Chairman Sullivan stated this is a fascinating piece of history.

Mr. Tamagna stated he is looking forward to people coming to Constitution Island. He stated all of the furnishings have also been returned to the Warner sisters' home.

Chairman Sullivan questioned what the County Contribution, line 54950, will be used for.

Mr. Tamagna stated it will be used primarily for the education program and for the tour guide. He stated when the schools visit they are not charged. He stated they do apply for grants throughout the year.

Chairman Sullivan stated this is money well invested.

Mr. Tamagna stated the funding also goes towards the partnership with the Putnam History Museum. He stated the tour of Constitution Island is about three (3) to four (4) hours. He stated the Putnam History Museum and Boscobel both offer lengthy tours as well and in working together, they can move visitors from location to location. He stated perhaps this would encourage visitors to stay a couple of days, which would boost tourism to the area.

Legislator Addonizio questioned when Constitution Island will be open for tours.

Mr. Tamagna stated they will be opening April 2022.

#### **Cooperative Extension – Account 8750 (page 214)**

Executive Director of Putnam County Cornell Cooperative Extension Stefanie Hubert expressed her sincere gratitude to the County for the 4% increase received this year. She stated since she became Executive Director almost three (3) years ago, she has seen the partnerships strengthening with the County as a whole as well as departments within the County. She stated the collaboration that Putnam County Cornell Cooperative Extension has formed with Putnam County Tourism and the Parks and Recreation Department has been helpful to get more visitors and programs into the County, especially to Tilly Foster Farm. She again conveyed her appreciation for the support received from the County.

Chairman Sullivan thanked Executive Director Hubert for all of her hard work.

**Item #4 – Other Business – None**

**Item #5 – Adjournment**

There being no further business at 8:11pm, Chairman Sullivan made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Beth Robinson.