

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318 OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Addonizio & Montgomery

Tuesday

5:30pm

July 23, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Addonizio, Legislator Montgomery, and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – May 16, 2019

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/Designation/Putnam County Tourist Promotion Agency/ “I Love New York” Matching Funds

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is to designate the County as the Tourist Promotion Agency for the purpose of receiving the I Love New York Matching Funds.

County Attorney Jennifer Bumgarner stated she has been in constant contact with the Director of the State Tourism Department. She stated part of the I Love New York application starts in August. She stated in order to move forward with the application, a new tourist promotion agency must be designated. She stated since the County is considering bringing someone in house to move forward, then designating the County itself is necessary. She stated the Law Department will be the contact and move forward with the application until someone is hired to lead tourism. She stated the candidate list has been narrowed down to four (4). She stated a committee was formed to sit in on the interviews and includes: Legislator Nacerino as Chair of the Personnel Committee, Finance Commissioner Bill Carlin, Personnel Director Paul Eldridge, Deputy Commissioner of Highway John Tully and General Manager of Putnam County Golf Course Mike McCall. She stated item #5 on the agenda is necessary to move funding into an internal tourism department. She stated the County is still waiting on the State and Putnam County Visitors Bureau (Visitors Bureau) to work out the State’s part of the I Love New York funds and return it to the County. She stated part of this resolution being considered is approving the application for the I Love New York 2020 funds, as required.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if Finance Commissioner Carlin reached out to the Visitors Bureau for an accounting of what funds they have remaining.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated he did send that request but there has not been a response yet. She stated the State Counsel is speaking with the Visitors Bureau Counsel about wrapping everything up.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if the County needs to wait until the Visitors Bureau is dissolved before proceeding.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the County does not need to wait.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if there is oversight to see if the I Love New York funds are spent.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the State has advised her that the Visitors Bureau has not spent any of the 2019 I Love New York funds.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what happens to those funds.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the County would receive the full amount, which will have to be spent by December 31, 2019.

Legislator Jonke requested clarification on the lack of spending by the Visitors Bureau.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the State has indicated they have not spent any of the funds. She stated she was contacted by a magazine about an advertisement that the Visitors Bureau usually places but has not. She stated the County placed the advertisement without the I Love New York logo, because they could not use those funds yet. She stated she is confused as to how they have not spent any of the money yet.

Legislator Montgomery noted that there have already been radio ads as well.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated she suspects that the Visitors Bureau's funding reporting is lacking.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated it makes sense to bring tourism in house since historically, there have been problems with accountability.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the previous tourism directors have been appointed by the County Executive.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the Visitors Bureau Board selects the Director.

Legislator Montgomery questioned who appoints the board.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated they are volunteers.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the Visitors Bureau is a private, non-profit agency.

Legislator Montgomery stated this has been a failing organization since the current Administration has been in office. She stated she is hesitant to move forward with this. She stated it has moved too fast. She stated she would like to see the funding given to each town.

She stated the towns are very frustrated that they do not receive any of the money. She stated there has been poor oversight of this agency by the County Government. She stated she is not comfortable handing authority over it to the County Executive, based on her understanding of how the past heads of the agency have been selected.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated from a legal perspective the County Executive had no authority to appoint anyone to a separate non-profit organization. She stated those people were selected by the Board.

Legislator Montgomery questioned where the Board came from.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated they are local volunteers.

Legislative Counsel Robert Firriolo stated it is a non-profit recognized by the State. He stated the County has nothing to do with its creation.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated that is partly why the County Executive and Legislature have been frustrated with how the organization has been running, without any authority to change it. She stated the County went to the Board and urged them to make changes, but they indicated they would not make any changes.

Legislator Albano stated this is the right move because the Visitors Bureau did not want to honor the contract that the County put forth. He stated the County should act quickly so the available funding can be spent.

Legislator Nacerino reiterated that the County Executive did not have anything to do with selecting the Board or past Directors.

Legislator Albano stated on the topic of the towns, they are encouraged to bring ideas to the County.

Legislator Castellano stated he was stunned that the previous Visitors Bureau Director would not come before the Legislature when requested. He stated the previous directors came before the Legislature frequently. He stated he suggests that the new Director comes before the Legislature six (6) times per year.

County Attorney Bumgarner stated the plan is to have a charter change to create a Tourism Department within the County. She stated requirements can be added to the charter change. She stated the current draft has the requirement as at least quarterly and at the request of the Legislature.

Legislator Castellano stated he was confused by the marketing choices of the Visitors Bureau, such as where the visitor's guides were placed. He stated the Legislature was told that it was too expensive to put the guides in Metro North locations.

Legislator Montgomery stated Metro North does not require payment for marketing to be placed.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is part of the problem.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes this is moving too fast. She stated the County will not lose the funding.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the County will lose the funding if a new Tourist Promotion Agency is not selected. She stated she believes most other counties have a tourism department.

Legislator Montgomery questioned where the funding for the signs promoting the events at Tilly Foster comes from.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated that is not a tourism question and maybe it can be addressed by the Physical Services Committee.

Legislator Castellano stated the I Love New York funds have to be spent outside the county, so those signs could not be from those funds.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is not moving too fast, it was also discussed by the Personnel Committee.

Legislator Montgomery suggested that this should be approved by the Personnel Committee because it is creating a position.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated it is only designating the County as the Tourist Promotion Agency.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Approval/Designation/Putnam County Tourist Promotion Agency/ "I Love New York" Matching Funds; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. Legislator Montgomery abstains. Motion carries.

Item #5 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 19A050/Funding for a County Department of Tourism

County Auditor Michele Sharkey stated the Visitors Bureau budget is being allocated to fund the Tourism Department.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if there is any fiscal impact.

County Auditor Sharkey stated it is a positive because there is \$20,000 going into contingency.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to move Budgetary Amendment 19A050 to the Audit & Administration Committee; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. Legislator Montgomery abstains. Motion carries.

Item #6 - FYI/Unemployment Report – Duly Noted

Item #7 - Other Business – None

Item #8 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 6:02 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn;
Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.