

**PERSONNEL BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM 318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512
Members: Chairman Jonke & Legislators Nacerino & Sullivan**

Thursday

6:30PM

October 14, 2021

The meeting was called to order at 6:32PM by Chairman Jonke who requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Nacerino, Sullivan and Chairman Jonke were present.

Item #3 – 2022 Budget Review

Personnel Dept. -1430 (Pages 30 – 32)

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated a longtime employee of the County who worked in his department retired in 2021. He explained that retirement resulted in a lot of changes throughout his department. He explained the testing for the Sheriff's Department and Corrections Department is done by his office. He stated that is a significant responsibility of his department. He stated that the tests in March of 2020 were cancelled due to COVID-19. He stated the tests were conducted in September of 2020 and in May of 2021. He stated the May 2021 test was for the regular Deputy Sheriff Officer positions, there were 826 candidates who came and took the test. He stated 11 classrooms and the cafeteria was used in the School. He stated they administered the exam in 2 shifts. He stated the County did have to pay the school custodians and monitors. He stated the fee to take the Officers Exam is \$60. He stated that helps to offset the costs to administer the exam. He continued to speak to the responsibilities of his employees. He stated there were pay increases recommended which he submitted for employees in his department, due to the fact that the CSEA union employees received their step increase, etc. and he is trying to keep the salaries in line with the management and PUMA employee salaries.

Unemployment Insurance – 9050 (Page 217)

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated there were approximately 40 County Employees who had fraudulent Unemployment Claims submitted in their names. He stated fortunately the County was able to stop the fraudulent claims. He stated most of the County Employees contacted his office, which then his office contacted the NYS Department of Labor. He stated just a few of the claims got through, fortunately the Federal Government provided the reimbursement.

Accident/Health Insurance – 9060 (Page 219)

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated the County is in the New York State Health Insurance Program referred to as NYSHIP, more commonly referred to as the Empire Plan. He stated NYSHIP is the program and Empire is one of the two (2) plans. He stated there is the Empire Plan and the Excelsior Plan. He stated Putnam County has always had the Empire Plan. He stated for 2021 the rates went up approximately 5%. He stated the funding for of this is spread throughout the budget in all the Departments. He stated all the County Employees and Retirees contribute to their Health Insurance plans, no less than 10% and no more that 30%. He stated in some circumstances a dependent survivor of an employee may pay more than 30%. He explained he and Commissioner Carlin work together and project what the increase will be, based on specific factors. He stated the County is not notified of the exact rates until around Thanksgiving, well after the time that the County's Budget is accepted.

Chairman Jonke invited any Department head present to address the Committee if they would like.

Youth Bureau – Youth Court (Pages 82 – 83)

Director Youth Bureau Janeen Cunningham stated in her budget they did make two (2) requests that were approved. She stated they requested an upgrade from a Typist position to a Senior Typist. She stated they requested a part-time Youth Aid position an hourly rate increase from \$10/hour to \$15/hour. She stated she is very thankful for the approval and support of these items. She stated the Youth Bureau is a small department of only five (5) full-time employees, this support is much appreciated.

Health Department Immunizations – (Page 41)

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated there is an upgrade to Senior Public Health Program Assistant, which is really a reclassification. He explained based on the duties the employee is doing and the guidelines of CSEA, there needed to be a change in the title, which equates to a reclassification. He spoke to a reclassification.

Health Department Nursing – (Page 42)

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated there is a reclassification – upgrade to Office Assistant II -Grade 7, CSEA employee.

Health Department - Drinking Water Supply – (Page 43)

Director of Environmental Health Services Shawn Rogan spoke to the different upgrades and new positions requested in the Health Department's different divisions. He began with the upgrade to Public Health Sanitarian Trainee. He stated in the review of the position that currently exists, Public Health Technician, it was learned that it is an antiquated titled. He stated people start working beyond that title within a year of working in the Health Department. He stated Putnam County along with Westchester County, Dutchess County and New York State Department of Health are transitioning to the entry level position being the Public Health Sanitarian Trainee.

Health Department - EHS – (Page 44)

Director of Environmental Health Services Shawn Rogan began by speaking to the Upgrade to Senior Public Health Engineer. He explained this employee has been fulfilling the duties since approximately July of 2019 when the Director of Engineering retired. He stated this person is the only Professional Engineer (PE) in the department.

Director of Environmental Health Services Shawn Rogan stated the next position requested is Public Health Sanitarian Trainee- Grade 15. He stated the mandates and emerging health issues, such as lead poison prevention, blue-green algae, COVID etc. continue to increase and are added to the existing list the department address. He stated we are faced with more and more that needs to be done. He stated this new position will allow them to plan for continuity of operations for the future. He continued to speak to this position.

Director of Environmental Health Services Shawn Rogan stated the Office Assistant – Grade 5 position. He stated it is a Spanish speaking Office Assistant position. He stated that position, once filled, will replace a vacancy in the department.

Highway – Facilities (Page 49)

Deputy Commissioner John Tully spoke to the position approved by the Administration, Journeyman Plumber- Grade 13/ Step 1. He explained this is a new and much needed position. He explained that the County brought back a Senior Plumber who had retired on a part-time basis, so there is an overlap.

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated for a long time the County worked with only one (1) plumber. He stated he is in full support of the request.

Deputy Commissioner Tully stated the upgrade to Master Plumber was worked on with the Personnel Department. He stated they focused on the trade positions to structure a ladder in the areas of HVAC, Carpentry, Plumbing in the 2022 Budget.

Highway – Parks (Page 81)

Deputy Commissioner Tully spoke to the approved positions in the Parks Division. He explained there continues to be additional responsibilities added to this department. He stated there are 12 new miles of bikeway that the County will be responsible for. He stated the additional positions will offer a great deal of flexibility in the management of the daily responsibilities. He explained the Parks Division provides training for employees to climb the ladder to become certified CDL Drivers and move into the Highway Division. He stated this provides a quicker path when there is a vacancy in the Highway Department.

Sheriff – Civil (Page 24)

Undersheriff Cheverko spoke to their request to put the Sergeant position back in the Civil Division. He read a letter of support for the position from Civil Captain Lisa Ortolano, who was unable to attend the meeting. This is a position that was removed from the 2021 budget. The request was not granted by the Administration.

Legislator Montgomery stated she was surprised not to see this position restored to the Civil Division, as the County is in good financial shape. She stated it is a needed position, and she is not sure why it was ever defunded last year. She stated there were many memos sent last year supporting and explaining the need for the Sergeant position and again this evening we heard it all reiterated in the letter read by Undersheriff Cheverko. She stated she hopes the Legislature restores the funding for this requested position.

Chairman Jonke requested clarification on a statement the Sheriff said recently at a public event. He stated the Sheriff said he was having a hard time employing deputies because he needs three signatures: Personnel Director Eldridge, Finance Commissioner Carlin and County Executive Odell, signatures the Sheriff is having difficulty getting.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated he believes that is in reference to positions in the Corrections Department. He stated there are a number of vacancies. He stated he believes this goes back to the Jail population. He stated the positions are being held up by the Vacancy Control Committee. He stated the committee is made up of the Personnel Director, Finance Commissioner and County Executive. He stated that he has signed off on them. He stated as he understands it, they have not signed off because of the possible changes that may occur relative to mandatory staffing. He stated it is a topic that has been discussed at the NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) meetings.

Undersheriff Cheverko stated in the Corrections Facility there are mandatory staffing requirements. He stated currently the Corrections Department has five (5) vacancies. He stated the shifts must be covered and are being covered, resulting in overtime costs.

Chairman Jonke stated there were additional statements made by the Sheriff at the public forum the other night. He stated it is unfortunate that Sheriff Langley did not attend this meeting as he wanted to tell the Sheriff directly that his comments were misleading, reckless and untruthful. He provided examples of his support of the Sheriff's Department as a Legislator. He stated he believes the Sheriff owes him an apology. He continued to speak to this matter.

Legislator Nacerino echoed Chairman Jonke's comments. She stated she has a record of all the approvals for the Sheriff's Department, during Sheriff Langley's tenure. She stated she believes it is unfair and a false narrative that is being portrayed by the Sheriff.

Undersheriff Cheverko stated he will pass the message along to the Sheriff.

District Attorney (Page 2)

District Attorney Robert Tendy spoke to the demand on the Assistant District Attorneys (ADA) in his department. He spoke to some of the specific scenarios that have occurred in his office.

He stated the job of an ADA has always been a labor intensive job. He stated since NYS has passed new discovery laws, an ADA's responsibility and time on a case, especially in the beginning has increased. He continued to speak to different actions that must be taken by an ADA. He stated he requested increases in his budget. He stated he wants his ADAs to know that the job they do is valued and appreciated and provide them compensation that is in alignment to the cost of obtaining a law degree. He stated he has lost ADAs from his department because of the salaries. He stated something needs to be done about this.

Chairman Jonke stated in discussing this topic in the past, District Attorney Tendy said he would come up with a five (5) year plan. He questioned if that has been done.

District Attorney Tendy stated he had sent out a plan just before COVID. He stated of course it was not addressed, and rightfully so. He stated he did resubmit it to the County Executive, Finance Commissioner and he thought the Legislature as well, he will check that. He stated it was a comparison of his office to other offices. He stated he would like to come up with some kind of agreement well before the next budget so his ADAs know what their financial future will look like. He stated he requested modest increases. He stated he is requesting the Legislature approve all of the requests he has in his budget. He stated over the past six (6) years his office has given to the County and various agencies over \$300,000 plus from the Asset Forfeiture Funds.

Chairman Jonke stated there are six (6) raise increase requests in the District Attorney's budget. He questioned how many of them are for attorneys.

District Attorney Tendy stated all but one (1). He stated the non-Attorney position is his Chief of Staff. He spoke to the varied job responsibilities of his Chief of Staff and how the position provides support to the entire District Attorney's Office.

District Attorney Tendy spoke to the justification behind his request for the increase he submitted for his Chief Assistant District Attorney. He stated she carries out many responsibilities, more than your average Chief Assistant. He continued to speak to his request.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification in a few of the positions. She stated she believes the request presented by District Attorney Tendy was in line with the salaries of surrounding Counties ADAs. She stated also considering the other raises included in this 2022 Tentative Budget and what salaries that have been given over the years, she supports the District Attorney's request.

Legislator Sayegh stated she believes it is important to provide competitive salaries in an effort of retaining talented employees.

District Attorney Tendy stated he appreciates Legislator Sayegh's recognition of the value of retaining employees. He stated a lot of time goes into acclimating each employee to his office.

Legislator Sullivan recognized District Attorney Tendy for being present and advocating on behalf of his employees. He stated he appreciates all the information District Attorney Tendy

provided regarding the roles of his staff members. He stated in his role as Legislator, he relies on the recommendations of the County's Personnel Director, Commissioner of Finance, and the County Executive. He stated they know the day-to-day operations of the County Employees more than the Legislators do. He stated he respects the recommendation they have put forth in the 2022 tentative budget. He expressed again his appreciation to the District Attorney for his passionate plea on behalf of his employees.

Legislator Montgomery stated to Legislator Sullivan's point, is there a reason why some of these raises were given and some were not given by the Administration.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated consideration was given as to how the proposed increases would impact other employees in similar professions.

Chairman Jonke facilitated further discussion.

Department of Law (Page 11)

Senior Deputy County Attorney Anna Diaz stated the request for an increase to the Deputy County Attorney position is because the new hire that will be joining the Law Department has four (4) years of litigation experience. She stated the previous Attorney that was in that line, took the position right out of law school.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is the same situation as was discussed about the District Attorney's Office. She stated these salaries need to be competitive, but we face the challenge of fiscal responsibility at the same time.

Office For Senior Resources (OSR) – RSVP (Page 73)

Director of the Office for Senior Resources Michael Cunningham spoke to a new position that was approved in the 2022 Tentative Budget. He stated as a result of a retirement of a long-time employee in the OSR Department provided an opportunity to look at restructuring. He explained the justification for the proposed Senior Center Manager position and the increase to the existing Senior Center Manager. He stated there is no fiscal impact to the OSR budget, there is a net savings.

Soil and Water (Page 18)

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the Environmental Planner, vacant position, when filled will still have the responsibility of Climate Smart.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated he does not have the answer. He will get back to her.

Legislator Montgomery stated she would appreciate that. She stated for the record other Counties have a separate budget line for Climate Smart.

Planning Department (Page 86)

Legislator Montgomery stated she is speaking to the proposed FTA Program Manager Position. She stated she has a hard time giving a position that received a 20% increase last year warranting more money this year. She stated she does not know what warranted a 20% increase last year and another increase for this year.

Legislator Nacerino stated she recalls the funding approved last year for this position was through a grant, there was not a fiscal impact. She stated the amount of money was predetermined.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the stipend or grant is allocated every year. She stated she read the grant, and it stated it was a one-time allocation. She stated with the Personnel Director Eldridge present he could confirm that in the job description of the Transportation Manager it includes that the person in the position work with stakeholders, which would include MTA etc. on transportation projects.

Legislator Castellano questioned since the County Union Contract have been settled, what is the total impact, across the board on the 2022 Tentative Budget.

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated he would have to provide that information, he did not have it with him.

Item #4 - Other Business

Item #5 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 8:17 PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Sullivan. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.