

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

Members: Chairman Gouldman, Legislators Addonizio & Sayegh

Monday **October 15, 2018**
(Immediately Following Add'l Rules Budget Meeting at 6:00 P.M.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 P.M. by Chairman Gouldman who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Addonizio, Legislator Sayegh, and Chairman Gouldman were present.

Item #3 - 2019 Budget Review

Tourist Promotion Agency – Account 6410 – Page 162

Putnam County Visitors Bureau (PCVB) Executive Director Bruce Conklin stated the operational portion of their budget will remain flat for the year. He stated he has been looking into how to streamline what they do more efficiently in order to add more resources without increasing costs. He stated he anticipated an increase in Line 54621 which is the Matching Funds program from the State, but the State wound up increasing it even further to approximately \$68,000. He stated this means more funds for advertising.

Legislator Scuccimarra clarified that the County matches that funding from the State.

Executive Director Conklin stated yes, the County must match to remain eligible for the program.

Legislator Addonizio noted that the estimate from the State is \$68,192.

Executive Director Conklin stated a new aspect of the program in 2019 is that the State will now require a commitment letter from the PCVB stating that the County is committed to matching their portion.

Legislator Sullivan requested clarification on Line 54664, entitled Advertising.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is used for advertising within the county. He stated the customer base of the PCVB is outside the county, and all of the I Love New York funds have to be used outside of the county.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if any funds have been spent so far in 2018, because the 2018 Actual figure on Line 54664 states there has not.

Executive Director Conklin stated the bills still need to be submitted to the Auditing Department.

Legislator Nacerino questioned what advertising has been done.

Executive Director Conklin stated there have been ads in local newspapers and the PCVB partnered with local events.

Legislator Nacerino questioned how the PCVB website is doing.

Executive Director Conklin stated it is doing well. He stated there are more visitors every month, including breaking 4,000 unique hits last month. He stated he encourages the businesses and events to update their information on the website.

Legislator Nacerino questioned how he conveys that message to the businesses and event organizers.

Executive Director Conklin stated he brought awareness to it when the website launched. He stated he is in contact with all the chambers of commerce. He stated when he speaks with event organizers he walks them through the process of updating on the website.

Legislator Jonke questioned how many Visitors Guides were printed.

Executive Director Conklin stated 30,000 were printed.

Legislator Jonke questioned how many have been distributed.

Executive Director Conklin stated he spoke with the distributors a few months ago and some were halfway through their supply, while some were 75% through. He stated they are on target for when the contract will renew. He stated he kept 5,000 guides and he is down to approximately 500.

Legislator Jonke questioned if any of the distributors are in New York City (NYC).

Executive Director Conklin stated they are not in NYC yet because the distributor there is very expensive.

Legislator Jonke questioned where they are being distributed.

Executive Director Conklin stated at all of the Westchester train stations, along the New York State Thruway, all entrances from Pennsylvania, and a good portion of northern New Jersey.

Legislator Jonke questioned if there are people visiting from Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Executive Director Conklin stated he gets requests for the guides from all over. He stated there are many people who come to Putnam County for the Fall foliage. He stated there have been many big events in Putnam County. He stated the PCVB is trying to pull people through the Hudson Valley. He stated when the current contracts expire, the distribution plan will be

reevaluated. He stated the next step is to reach out in the parts of Connecticut that border the County.

County Executive MaryEllen Odell stated other counties are posting tourist sites on highway signage. She requested Executive Director Conklin consider this initiative on Interstate 84 and the Taconic State Parkway, particularly for Tilly Foster Farm & Educational Institute and Putnam County Golf Course.

Executive Director Conklin stated he would look into how that could be accomplished.

County Executive Odell stated the County could design and manufacture any necessary signage. She requested that Executive Director Conklin facilitate discussions with the State on the process and regulations for posting the signs.

Legislator Sullivan stated that is a great idea. He requested Executive Director Conklin update the Committee when he has more information on the process.

Chairman Gouldman questioned if Executive Director Conklin can track the number of hits on the PCVB website.

Executive Director Conklin stated yes, and he can see detailed demographics for the previous month.

Chairman Gouldman questioned where most visitors to the website are from.

Executive Director Conklin stated he can look more into that because, as of now, he only has a broad idea of where the visitors are. He stated it also depends on how the person's computer is set up, such as if they have anti-tracking software. He stated the easiest way to gauge interest is by who requests copies of the Visitors Guide because they provide their city, state, and zip code. He stated the website is now showing up on the first page of Google searches for anything in Putnam County.

Chairman Gouldman stated he recently took the train from Cold Spring to Manhattan and there was standing room only due to the young people who had come up from NYC. He stated he spoke with many of them and they said they wanted to come up to see the country.

Executive Director Conklin stated some advertising is done in NYC, but it is very expensive. He stated he is trying to figure out which advertising is working, so he can pursue more advertising there. He stated the TV commercial plays there, along with Townsquare Media radio stations playing ads. He stated there is a lot of internet advertising.

Chairman Gouldman questioned what kind of internet advertising.

Executive Director Conklin stated there are banner and email ads. He stated Hudson Valley Magazine has a lot of NYC-based readers looking to travel out of the city.

Legislator Sullivan questioned how expensive it is to advertise in NYC.

Executive Director Conklin stated in areas outside of NYC it costs around \$2,300 to run a full page ad in a publication that goes to 80,000 homes. He stated it could be double or even triple that cost in NYC.

County Executive Odell suggested working with and partnering with the MTA (Metropolitan Transportation Authority) on advertising. She suggested if Executive Director Conklin has a specific contact at the MTA, to bring these ideas to them.

Executive Director Conklin stated the MTA has an advertising schedule. He stated the PCVB and MTA cooperated on the “Hello Again, Dolly” Festival. He stated he will work more closely with the MTA.

Sheriff Robert Langley stated at least 700 people come up from NYC on the weekends.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if the 4,000 hits on the website in September was an increase over the usual number.

Executive Director Conklin stated it was an increase. He stated the hits were usually around 3,000 but there was a sharp increase in August and September. He stated this is why he encourages event organizers to contact him to have their events on the website.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated the website is nicely done and easy to navigate.

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to move the Tourist Promotion Agency budget into sub-contingency; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #4 - Other Business

a. Economic Development Corporation – Account 6420 – Page 163

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to move the Economic Development Corporation budget into sub-contingency; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #5 - Adjournment

There being no further business, at 6:54 P.M., Chairman Gouldman made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.