



**c. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A103/ Planning Dept./ Fund Repairs at Transit Facility using CARES Act & NYS Modernization & Enhancement Grant Funding (Also reviewed in Physical)**

Legislator Albano stated this is for the transit rehab project; it is money being moved into the correct line.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**d. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A104/ Highway/ Amend Capital Budget to Account for Surety Payment (Also reviewed in Physical)**

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**e. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A105/ Finance/ Amend Debt Service Budget to Account for Refunding Bonds Issued in 2021**

Commissioner of Finance William Carlin stated a refunding bond was approved in September, which saved taxpayer money. He stated this will record that transaction in the books.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**f. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A106/ Finance/ Amend Town of Carmel Marine Enforcement Budget (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Legislator Gouldman requested clarification on this item.

Commissioner Carlin stated the marine enforcement program is not only the County, but municipalities. He stated New York State requires that the larger municipality, which is the County, be the single point of contact for reimbursement. He stated therefore the towns give the County their bills which are packaged with the County's bills and sent to the State for reimbursement. He stated the County will receive the reimbursement in the form of one (1) check and the County will allocate what is due to the town. He stated the County is not paying for the Town of Carmel marine enforcement.

Legislator Sullivan clarified that the County acts as a pass-through and assists the town.

Commissioner Carlin stated that is correct, the County does this per the State requirement.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**g. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A107/ Sheriff's Dept./ Receipt of a Grant from Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center/ Establishment of Special Victim Unit Facility**

Commissioner Carlin stated the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center works closely with the Sheriff's Department to protect victims within Putnam County. He stated this is a five (5) year grant.

Ann Ellsworth, Executive Director of the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center stated they applied for a grant through the Violence Against Women Act and received \$50,000 per year for five (5) years. She stated in this grant they partnered with the Sheriff's Department as part of their larger domestic violence team, which includes the District Attorney's Office, Probation, and themselves. She stated they put money aside in their grant for the Sheriff's Department to contribute to creating a facility where victims can be interviewed in more of a home-like environment rather than in a police department. She stated the setting will be like a living room and will help victims feel more protected while providing their statement to law enforcement.

Legislator Albano stated the Putnam/Northern Westchester Women's Resource Center does tremendous work and really helps people within the community who are in need.

Executive Director Ellsworth stated it is important to work together with the Sheriff's Department. She stated Sheriff-Elect McConville has been part of the conversations and has assisted in looking for locations.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**h. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A108/ Finance/ Vacancy Control Factor April-December 2021**

Commissioner Carlin this is part of the year-end bookkeeping process.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**i. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 22A001/ Health Dept./ Account for NYS Health Fellowship Program Grant Award (Also reviewed in Personnel) (To be approved at the 2022 Organizational Meeting)**

Chairman Castellano stated the Health Department is looking to hire four (4) temporary employees through the State grant to help with the response to COVID-19.

Legislator Jonke stated as discussed at the Personnel Committee Meeting, these will be temporary employees and when the grant runs out the positions will end.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution for the 2022 Organizational Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #7 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T324/ Health Dept./ Costs of February-June COVID-19 Vaccination PODs Being Reimbursed 100% by ELC-ED (Enhanced laboratory Capacity-Enhanced Detection) Grant (Also reviewed in Health)**

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T324; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**Item #8 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T326/ District Attorney/ Cover Automotive Chargebacks (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T326; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**Item #9 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T333/ Dept. of Social Services/ 2021 Cooperative Agreement w. Sheriff’s Dept. for On-Site SPO at DSS (Also reviewed in Health)**

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T333; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #10 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T345/ Sheriff’s Dept./ Trauma Kits for SROs (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T345; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**Item #11 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 22T001/ District Attorney/ Moving Office Assistant Position from Part Time to Full Time (Also reviewed in Personnel) (To be approved at the 2022 Organizational Meeting)**

Commissioner Carlin stated the County will charge this to the State grant as long as it continues. He stated the grant notwithstanding, the workload necessitates the transition of this position from part time to full time.

Legislator Jonke stated this request came as a direct result of bail reform. He questioned if the grant money is guaranteed.

Commissioner Carlin stated it is supposed to be, but we will see what the outcome of the State budget is.

Legislator Jonke stated the State is requiring more work out of the District Attorney's Office and he hopes the State provides the funding for it and it does not become another unfunded mandate.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution for the 2022 Organizational Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #12 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 22T002/ Finance/ Funding for EMS Contract Relating to Ambulance Services per the Awarded RFP (Also reviewed in Protective) (To be approved at the 2022 Organizational Meeting)**

Chairman Castellano stated this fund transfer is in the amount of \$40,467, which was originally put in subcontingency.

Commissioner Carlin stated the RFP (request for proposal) was in process at the time the budget was developed. He clarified that because this fund transfer effects the 2022 budget, it is required to be approved in the 2022 fiscal year.

Commissioner of Bureau of Emergency Services Ken Clair stated Chief of Emergency Operations at Ambulnz, Michael Witkowski is present this evening to address outstanding questions.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated he has been working in emergency services for 38 years, the last six (6) years have been with Ambulnz. He stated he has brought this organization to the Hudson Valley when the opportunity arose. He stated there have been many questions that he would like to address. He stated the "underbidding" of the contract was questioned. He stated Ambulnz is a national company operating in 26 states and has been built on the premise of changing and disrupting healthcare. He stated Ambulnz is a healthcare organization with two operations; providing ambulance services and mobile urgent care services. He stated the RFP was specific to EMS response and they submitted their proposal to the County. He stated the original RFP was too expensive therefore the County then came back and asked all bidders to re-submit their bid on a modified review, which Ambulnz did. He stated their costs of operations are significantly less than an organization that is operating only in a small area. He stated Ambulnz did not underbid; they included their full budget with their submission. He stated there were questions regarding bringing in employees from the outside. He stated all current providers working in the County were offered pay match or pay increase parity and their seniority would be maintained. He stated the benefits offered by Ambulnz are similar to the existing company. He stated they received some responses to their offer and those employees were hired. He stated in order to be able to begin working on January 1<sup>st</sup>, they opened their employee search outside of Putnam County into areas in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. He stated they have received a great response and they have the necessary paramedics and EMTs to fulfill the contract. He stated while there are employees from other localities, he wanted to clarify that there is no one from California as had been rumored. He stated in regard to the vehicles, they immediately started to source

vehicles once awarded the contract. He stated the Ambulnz organization buys about 250 ambulances per year and in June they placed an order for 50 ambulances and they received only three (3). He stated they have a priority with several ambulance manufacturers. He stated they obtained two (2) brand new four (4) wheel drive ambulances, one (1) of which is already at the Putnam County Bureau of Emergency Services. He stated the fly cars are all Ford Explorers and they will be completed and delivered by next week. He stated they are fully staffed and ready to begin work. He stated it was agreed upon that the County would have the opportunity to vet all employees being brought in, which has begun and there have been multiple orientations done with more coming up in the next week. He stated all employees will have been given the opportunity to learn the County. He stated the vehicles are equipped with navigation, which they are looking to connect to the County's CAD (computer aided dispatch) system so calls will automatically be linked to the vehicle and navigation will begin. He stated all vehicles utilize GPS location devices, which the County will have access to. He stated the vehicles are monitored 24 hours per day at their national operations center in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. He stated all vehicles are equipped with forward, path, and cab facing cameras. He stated the use of lights, sirens, and speed are all monitored in real time. He stated there are currently several pilot programs being tested throughout the country where Ambulnz is providing mobile health services, which is integrated through the 911 system. He stated the patient is treated in place rather than being brought to an emergency room. He stated there is a camera system where a physician is giving orders to the health care provider at the scene and they will follow up with the patient over the course of the following few days. He stated this is a better and safer system, especially with the ongoing COVID pandemic. He stated they have been in touch with the local Ambulance Corps and he has met with a few of them and they are in the process of finalizing agreements. He stated Ambulnz has made an agreement with the County that they will negotiate. He stated if the ALS (advanced life services) intercept agreement was legally in place, they will be happy to sign it. He stated if the agreement is not in compliance with the requirements of Medicare rules and regulations he would be happy to negotiate to bring it into compliance. He stated the number that was originally provided was a starting point number that is on all of their agreements and is the reimbursement rate on a blanket rate. He stated they are open to working with the local Ambulance Corps and other organizations to negotiate a reasonable rate, especially since they are entering the middle of some organizations' fiscal years and budgets have already been set. He stated he submitted in writing to the County Executive that Ambulnz would honor what is already in place, provided they are legal to do.

Chairman Castellano questioned if there is enough staff to begin on January 1<sup>st</sup>. He questioned how many employees are required.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated 47 full time employees are needed to cover all shifts. He stated right now, they have 54.

Chairman Castellano questioned if the employees have been trained.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated there are some employees that need to take an exam, which are all scheduled.

Chairman Castellano questioned how many employees will be working on a particular day.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated there are three (3) ALS fly cars and two (2) ALS ambulances out each day so there are five (5) paramedics and two (2) EMTs.

Legislator Gouldman requested clarification on the staffing numbers. He stated he believed the current company had 71 employees and that was not enough.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated it depends if the company is doing three (3) or four (4) shifts. He stated based on their staffing configuration, their requirement is 42 employees for four (4) shifts to be able to fully cover. He stated Ambulnz has some employees taking three (3) shifts and others taking four (4), which is why they have 54 employees to cover.

Legislator Nacerino thanked Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski for clearing up some of the concerns that were raised at and since the Protective Services Committee Meeting. She stated the rates were of great concern to the Ambulance Corps and she was encouraged to hear that their budgets would be honored this year. She stated the other concerns raised were that the employees coming in from other locations were not familiar with the Putnam County area, especially in the winter or in inclement weather.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated all vehicles are equipped with GPS and have navigation systems inside the vehicle. He stated calls come in and are responded to via iPads within the vehicle, which also plots the route. He stated there are at least three (3) navigation tools in each vehicle. He stated part of the orientation is spending a full eight (8) hour day driving around the County to familiarize the employee with the roads and directions. He stated the paramedics that are already familiar with the area will be who drives the fly cars because they will be by themselves in the vehicle. He stated EMTs with more familiarity of the area will be the driver of the ambulances.

Commissioner Clair stated the current company has also pulled employees from Westchester or surrounding areas who may not be familiar with Putnam to fill shifts when necessary.

Legislator Nacerino stated as a side note, she highlighted the importance to make a concerted effort to get people to post their house numbers on their homes. She stated awareness needs to be raised about how significant it is.

Commissioner Clair agreed. He stated this was discussed by the Emergency Services Safety Advisory Board this past summer as well.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski for the information. She stated this fund transfer is in front of the Committee for approval, however the Legislature has not seen the contract. She stated she has requested a copy of the contract from the County Executive and hopes she receives it prior to the Organizational Meeting in January when all Legislators will be voting on this. She agreed that having house numbers displayed prominently was an important endeavor. She thanked all members of the local agencies who came to this evening's meeting.

Legislator Jonke stated he spoke to Director of Purchasing Mazzotta who noted that the contract refers to the RFP, which is available on the website.

Legislator Montgomery stated she too spoke with Director Mazzotta. She stated she does not understand why the Legislature is not provided with the RFP when it is issued. She stated she was unable to find the RFP online and she would still like to see the contract.

Nicholas Falcone, Captain of the Philipstown Volunteer Ambulance Corps stated he would like to voice his concerns with the new vendor, Ambulnz which will begin services in Putnam County on January 1, 2022. He thanked the Legislature for the opportunity to speak on this matter prior to a vote being taken. He stated his three (3) main areas of concern are the financial impact to the patient and the agencies currently providing the service, the quality of the personnel employed by the organization, and the experience and ability of Ambulnz to fulfill the contract throughout the five (5) years. He stated Director Mazzotta reported that the cost of the equivalent service provider was \$1.9 million, while Ambulnz was \$1.45 million. He stated the Commissioner stated that the new provider is responsible for negotiating fees for providing service directly with the current providers. He stated in this case, for ambulance services, they are planning to increase the charge to them for each transport of paramedic level and additionally charge an ALS assessment fee to all patients that they do not transport. He stated this was addressed earlier when Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated there would be no increase this year since the budgets are already set and there would be no ALS assessment fee. He questioned if Ambulnz bills for RMAs (refusal of medical assistance).

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated no, they do not bill for RMAs.

Captian Falcone questioned if that if system-wide or just part of this contract.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated it is system-wide.

Captian Falcone stated although the rates and assessment fees were settled for this year, he questioned what would stop them from increasing in the future.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated everything would be negotiated with each agency; it is not unilateral.



Captian Falcone clarified that there is potential for an ALS assessment fee to be charged next year.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated if the ambulance service or whomever they are working with does not want an assessment fee, they will not include one. He stated the assessment fee does not work to the benefit of Ambulnz as much as it works to the benefit of the Ambulance Corp itself.

Captian Falcone stated it was stated at the last meeting that a 24 hour unit extra paramedic supervisor cost roughly about \$600,000 for the vehicle, provider, service, etc. He questioned how a company could bid a contract for significantly less money than the amount to cover the unit itself. He questioned why a company would bid less knowing that they would be starting in the negative. He stated the town contracts have not yet been negotiated and the towns are left to fend for themselves. He stated this contract is slated to begin in 10 days on January 1, 2022 and it is concerning that nothing has been agreed upon in the towns. He stated several meetings with towns have been cancelled and now there is a rush to get this work done. He stated the town budgets have been set for the year and the County's response of having nothing to do with this is unacceptable. He stated without these agreements the vendors cannot collect revenue to fulfill the contract, which is based directly on the amount of estimated collection. He stated Ambulnz is an interfacility transport company currently. He questioned if the 54 providers are to cover only Putnam County, or if they will be covering other areas as well.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated the 54 employees will be in Putnam County only. He stated there are 176 providers on the roster to cover the other areas.

Captian Falcone questioned how many providers are currently waiting to take the necessary test to be able to begin working.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated there are three (3) people waiting.

Captian Falcone stated of the five (5) employees that went over to Ambulnz, two (2) have resigned already, prior to the contract beginning.

Chairman Castellano stated he does not believe this is in line with what is being discussed this evening.

Captian Falcone stated his point was that the employees who went over to the new company are already beginning to leave, which is concerning.

Chairman Castellano stated it was stated earlier that Ambulnz is prepared to begin January 1, 2021.

Captian Falcone stated his concern is that the provider and patient care quality is going to decrease significantly. He stated many of the providers who have been working in this area for many years will no longer be working here. He stated he appreciates the clarification that was provided by Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski.

Legislator Gouldman stated he has spoken with the members of the Putnam Valley Volunteer Ambulance Corps, members of other Ambulance Corps throughout the County, and Putnam Valley Town Board members and they have expressed that this new contract is not in the best interest of Putnam Valley. He stated there are many things that are still unclear. He stated he will not be voting in favor of this fund transfer this evening. He stated it is his hope that Ambulnz will speak with the Ambulance Corps throughout the County before this is voted on by the Full Legislature in January.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated he has met with Garrison and Patterson and has meetings set up with Putnam Valley, Philipstown, Kent, and several other localities next week.

Legislator Gouldman stated he will not be voting in favor this evening but looks forward to hearing the outcome of those meetings.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated he would like to ease remaining concerns. He stated FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) was activated by the State of New York to decompress the hospitals in the upstate regions because they were overloaded. He stated Ambulnz was asked to provide 12 ALS units, six (6) of which are CCT (critical care transport) units, in three (3) days to fulfill the requirement of the State. He stated Ambulnz is the largest provider of COVID standby services across the State of New York with seven (7) units that have been deployed since the beginning of the year. He stated at one point there were 27 PODs (point of distribution) that they were providing services to on behalf of the State. He stated Ambulnz is a large organization with the ability to handle this work. He stated the County has asked Ambulnz to handle a community COVID testing site within the County because the current provider was delayed in being able to do that. He stated that will begin Monday, December 27, 2021.

Commissioner Clair stated the testing sites will be run in two (2) locations. He stated one site will be at the old Dress Barn location in Putnam Plaza (this location has since been moved to the Paladin Center in Carmel) and the other site will be at the Philipstown Recreation Center beginning on January 3, 2022. He stated both sites will be run seven (7) days a week.

Chairman Castellano requested clarification on the testing sites.

Commissioner Clair stated the sites will offer rapid testing on a walk-in basis.

Legislator Sullivan stated testing is so important right now. He questioned what the hours of operation each day will be.

Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski stated the sites will be open from 10:00am-6:00pm.

Commissioner Clair stated that is correct. He added that from 6:00am-9:00am the sites will be open for students only.

Legislator Nacerino stated to be clear, what is before the Committee tonight is the fund transfer, not the contract. She stated the contract will be executed by the County Executive.

Chairman Castellano thanked Chief of Emergency Operations Witkowski and Commissioner Clair for being present this evening to answer outstanding questions.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution for the 2022 Organizational Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Albano. By poll vote: Two Ayes. One Nay – Legislator Gouldman. Motion carries.

**Item #13 – FYI/ Discussion/ Fund Transfer 21T358/ Commissioner of Finance Bill Carlin/ Fish & Wildlife/ Pay Estimated Incorporated Filing Fees**

Commissioner Carlin stated this has been a long time coming. He stated Fish & Wildlife is incorporating as a not-for-profit and they will have a board. He stated the budget will be adjusted once everything is complete and the County will provide one amount of money as is done with the other not-for-profit organizations. He stated the County will no longer be involved with specifics related to how much money to spend on certain fish and wildlife. He stated the County has agreed to pay the incorporation filing fee, which is what this fund transfer does.

Chairman Castellano stated this will make it more efficient for the County.

Commissioner Carlin stated it will be more convenient for the Board as well, it will not all be on Ray Merlotto, who currently handles things on behalf of Fish & Wildlife with the County.

Legislator Nacerino stated Ray Merlotto lives in her district and he has done a stupendous job.

**Item #14 – Other Business – None**

**Item #15 – Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 7:36pm Chairman Castellano made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Beth Robinson.