

**AUDIT & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Held via Audio Webinar Pursuant to Temporary Emergency Orders**

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

**Monday**

**6:30pm**

**March 29, 2021**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm by Chairman Castellano who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Albano and Gouldman and Chairman Castellano were present.

**Item #3 – Approval of Minutes – February 22, 2021**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 – Correspondence/County Auditor**

- a. **Sales Tax Report** – Duly Noted
- b. **Board In Revenue Report** – Duly Noted
- c. **Transfer/Revenue Report** – Duly Noted
- d. **2021 Contingency/Sub-Contingency Report** – Duly Noted

**Item #12 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T055/ District Attorney/ Returning Retiree for 8 Weeks to Cover for another Employee**

Chairman Castellano stated he would be addressing item #12 at this time.

District Attorney Robert Tandy thanked Chairman Castellano for addressing this item at the beginning of the meeting. He stated there are a few support staff employees who will be out of work for a period of time. He stated one full-time employee will be on leave for six (6) to eight (8) weeks to care for a family member, a part-time employee will be out of the office for at least 10 days for medical reasons, and a full-time employee has left the office due to contractual matters. He stated he contacted a recent retiree who was the senior support staff member and they have agreed to come back for eight (8) weeks to cover for the employee that will be out for six (6) to eight (8) weeks. He stated the District Attorney's Office has had a vacant part-time position for the last few months, which saved money. He stated the intention is to use those funds to pay the retiree to come back. He stated without doing this, the District Attorney's Office is left with only one (1) full-time support staff employee.

Legislator Sullivan questioned the status of the Courts in terms of COVID.

District Attorney Tandy stated the courts have reopened; he believes by Memorial Day they should be back to a normal schedule. He stated all COVID-19 precautions are being taken.

Legislator Nacerino stated her support for this request. She stated it is a great benefit when a retiree can come back and transition seamlessly to fill a void.

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

**Item #5 – Correspondence/Commissioner of Finance**

**a. Overtime/Temporary Report – Duly Noted**

**b. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A011/ Sheriff’s Dept./ Use T-Commission Funds to Purchase Replacement Weapons (Also reviewed in Protective)**

**1) Memorandum Documenting Requested Information at Protective Services Meeting**

Chairman Castellano stated this Budgetary Amendment is for a substantial amount; \$95,190. He requested Commissioner of Finance William Carlin provide his perspective on this.

Commissioner Carlin stated this uses T-Commission funds, which are funds raised through inmates making phone calls. He stated for years, a reserve was developed and it is used similarly to seized assets, where the Sheriff recommends a Budgetary Amendment and the Legislature then approves or denies it. He stated in most cases, the request has been approved. He stated now that we are dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, they are looking for specific language in the law that provides for keeping a reserve of the T-Commission accounts. He stated if it is not found, they will work with the Sheriff and Legislature to incorporate the use of T-Commission revenues into the operating budget process.

Legislator Gouldman questioned why the weapons were being purchased from a place in Rochester, New York.

Commissioner Carlin stated the Sheriff has done his research and this request has gone through the Purchasing Department. He stated when it comes to the disposition of firearms, the laws are very specific in terms of how they can be sold or disposed of. He stated he is sure those guidelines were met.

Legislator Sullivan affirmed Commissioner Carlin’s comments regarding the use of the T-Commission funds. He stated we are trying to get our accounting practices in coordination with the way that all other monies in other departments within the County that generate revenue are handled. He stated as a Certified Public Accountant, he believes it is a good accounting practice to be consistent throughout the County. He stated he wishes the Legislature would have been made aware of this in the budget process rather than having to transfer funds a few months into the fiscal year. He stated these are not items that wear out quickly, it must have been well known ahead of time

that this large purchase had to be made. He stated nonetheless, if these items are needed, they need to be purchased and the funds are there so he is in support of this.

Legislator Nacerino thanked Lieutenant McManus for the memorandum he sent which detailed the rationale and explanation of the need for this request. She stated using these funds results in no fiscal impact. She stated during the budget process, we can look to tighten up some of the loopholes that might be existing with how we work with these funds. She stated right now, the expenditure of these funds is at the discretion of the Sheriff.

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

- c. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A013/ Sheriff's Dept./ Use T-Commission Funds to Purchase Replacement Computers in Civil Division & Corrections (Also reviewed in Protective)**
  - 2) Memorandum Documenting Requested Information at Protective Services Meeting**

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

- d. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A014/ Sheriff's Dept./ Use T-Commission funds to Purchase Furniture for Forensic Computer Lab (Also reviewed in Protective)**

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

- e. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A015/ Emergency Services/ Receipt of 2018 SICG (Statewide Interoperable Communications Targeted Grant Program) Grant Award (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Chairman Castellano stated this grant will allow the issues of dead spots throughout the County to be alleviated, improving communication among first responders throughout the County.

Legislator Gouldman stated this is a wonderful improvement for first responders and Putnam County as a whole. He stated the amount of \$6 million was not expected, but because of the hard work being done by the Bureau of Emergency Services, they were able to be awarded this amount. He stated it will certainly go a long way to improve communications and emergency response throughout the County.

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

**f. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 20A016/ Soil & Water/ Fund Mini Grant Program for Municipal Conservation Projects (Also reviewed in Physical)**

Legislator Gouldman stated this is a great program for the residents of Putnam County and he looks forward to seeing how the grant funds will be distributed.

Legislator Montgomery stated she is excited that this program is being offered. She stated the deadline of the grant applications has passed and the awardees will be notified next week. She stated in the future, she would like the Legislature to be notified of programs such as this so the Legislators can distribute the information to the residents in their district. She suggested including such a provision in the Legislative Manual. She stated this would keep the Legislators aware of what the County Departments are doing for each district.

Legislator Albano stated these grant funds are being used for water quality projects and is a great thing for Putnam County.

Legislator Sayegh stated this is the first time the Soil & Water Conservation District Board (the Board) has ever done anything like this. She stated each year they receive funding from the State of New York that are to be used on specific projects. She stated this year, the Board decided to spread the funding out to the Towns and Villages. She is excited to see the projects that will be done with this funding.

Chairman Castellano thanked the Board for this program. He stated this is a great thing for the taxpayers of Putnam County.

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

**g. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A019/ Sheriff's Dept./ Use Inmate Commissary Funds to Purchase Four (4) Treadmills for Inmate Use (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Legislator Sullivan questioned if the treadmills being purchased would be replacing existing machines or if they are new.

Sheriff Robert Langley stated they are purchasing four (4) new treadmills; not replacements. He stated the Inmate Commissary funds must be used in specific ways.

Legislator Sayegh requested clarification on the difference between Inmate Commissary Funds and T-Commission Funds.

Commissioner Carlin stated the use of the Inmate Commissary Funds are quoted in law and have a specific statute. He stated Sheriff Langley is correct, it can only be used for the recreational enhancements for the inmates. He stated the Commissary is also a

different source of funds, it is collected through the purchase of items such as toiletries, etc. by the inmates.

Legislator Sullivan questioned if the employees are also able to use the treadmills.

Sheriff Langley stated the treadmills will be in the housing unit with the inmates for inmate use.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Budgetary Amendment 20A019; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

#### **h. Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 21A022/ Health Dept./ Overtime & Temporary for COVID-19 Vaccination PODs**

Commissioner Carlin stated this is the planning budgetary amendment, which will set up the cost that will be associated with the PODs (Point of Distribution). He stated the final cost will be determined by how many PODs are held. He stated Federal reimbursement will be received for these PODs. He stated the PODs are being held very efficiently.

Chairman Castellano stated he has heard positive feedback about the County-run PODs and the Health Department is doing a great job. He stated he saw that 25% of all Putnam residents have received their first shot.

Legislator Montgomery questioned where the temporary employees are being hired from; if they are from within the Health Department or if they are additional staff.

Commissioner Carlin stated that information would have to come from the Health Department.

Chairman Castellano stated Health Department Fiscal Manager Bill Orr is on the line but is having trouble unmuting.

Legislator Montgomery stated her appreciation for the PODs being held and she has heard the same feedback about how smoothly they are running. She stated she believes last week's POD at the Philipstown Recreation Center administered 1,400 vaccinations in one day.

Chairman Castellano stated in the next two (2) weeks the eligibility for vaccination will expand to those over the age of 30 and then over the age of 16.

Commissioner Carlin stated there are temporary employees on staff that have been utilized during this process, but more detailed information can be provided.

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

**Item #6 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T034/ Sheriff’s Dept./ Overtime for January 2021 due to Six (6) Vacancies and an Officer on 207C (Also reviewed in Personnel & Protective)**

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

**Item #7 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T036/ Sheriff’s Dept./ Reclass Funds for Training of Personnel (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Chairman Castellano stated the funding for this came from a donation and was not utilized last year in 2020 due to issues with COVID. He stated it is now being added to the education and training line for members of the Sheriff’s Department.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is a housekeeping measure to put the funds in the proper line. She stated she is thankful for this donation.

Chairman Castellano thanked the Friends of Senior Citizens of Putnam County for their donation of \$10,000.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T036; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**Item #8 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T046/ Highway/ Putnam County Golf Course/ Purchase Furniture Intended to be Purchased in 2020 (Also reviewed in Physical)**

Legislator Albano stated we are fortunate to have the Putnam County Golf Course, which has remained steady throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated when you consider the money that is made from the Golf Course, it makes sense to spend money to maintain it.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification of where these funds were budgeted in 2020. She stated the fund transfer shows the money being moved from a consulting line to the furniture line.

Commissioner Carlin stated the funding was in a furniture line last year. He stated the budget line the funds are coming from are Golf Course contracts, which covers all the costs of operating the Golf Course. He stated in 2020 it was in a separate furniture and fixtures line. He stated when the budget was being prepared for 2021, it was unclear if the funding would be spent in the remainder of 2020. He stated that appropriation went unspent last year and it now being moved into the proper line.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if furniture is being replaced with this funding.

Commissioner Carlin stated yes, there is worn furniture that is being replaced and updated. He stated the enhancement of the Golf Course brings the facility to the next level. He stated one of the positive aspects to the COVID-19 pandemic is that it brought more people out to play golf and has created a resurgence in the golf community. He stated the opening day of the Golf Course was last week and there were about 179 rounds. He stated in an effort to keep the golfers there, they are trying to improve the experience in the food and beverage area, which brings more revenue into the County, and thus saves taxpayer dollars.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes spending \$20,000 on furniture is inappropriate. She stated the priorities are off here, government services should be brought to the next level rather than the Golf Course, especially during this period of economic crisis. She stated it would be wonderful if this funding could be moved for emergency uses, such as a mobile testing sites. She stated it would also be great to see mobile vaccine units, which this could cover. She stated she will not be voting in favor of this at the Full Legislative Meeting.

Legislator Sayegh stated all surrounding counties have recreational areas or facilities such as parks, farms, amusement parks, golf courses, and stadiums. She stated investments are made into recreation, for example Dutchess County recently approved a bond for \$1.4 million to invest in Dutchess Stadium. She stated these recreational facilities operate in conjunction with the required functions of County government. She stated \$20,000 that was already budgeted is a small price to pay for the additional tourism that will be brought into Putnam County, especially during COVID as the Golf Course is one of the few recreational places that can be enjoyed safely. She stated last year the Golf Course had a great year and garnered some really great reviews from golf professionals. She stated this is a small price to pay to keep up the reputation of the Golf Course.

Legislator Sullivan stated the Golf Course is a money-making venture for Putnam County and provides recreation for residents. He stated he finds it ironic that it was mentioned that the priorities are off, while earlier expenditures were approved in items #5b and #5g for treadmills and weapons to replace those not yet past their useful life as requested by the Sheriff. He stated when it comes to the Golf Course, it is a money-making facility that directly benefits the residents of Putnam County.

Legislator Nacerino stated it is important to remain cognizant that the same rationale cannot be applied across the board and various considerations should not be comingled. She stated as Legislator Sullivan mentioned there were expenditures that went through seamlessly. She stated when considering an item such as this fund transfer it is important to remember that the Golf Course generates revenue and improvements to the facility add to the quality of life in Putnam County, especially under the COVID restrictions. She stated a blind eye should not be turned to quality of life issues.

Chairman Castellano stated last year \$20,000 was budgeted for this purpose and not spent due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He stated as a result of the pandemic, residents spent more recreational time locally rather than going away on vacation, which resulted in an unexpected surge at the Golf Course. He stated it is a benefit to have the Golf Course in the best shape possible as it brings people into the County who are possibly also stopping at local restaurants or filling their cars with gas while they are here. He stated this money was planned to be spent last year and he is glad it is able to be spent this year.

Legislator Montgomery stated things have changed drastically in the past year. She stated she disagrees that spending this money now just because it was budgeted last year is the right thing to do, especially with the defunding of the marine patrol and refuse removal for the Town of Philipstown. She stated this is especially a concern because over the past year tourism in our area has drastically increased. She stated the justification for this expenditure does not make sense in her opinion.

Legislator Albano stated this funding was included in the budget for furnishing last year, which means this year those replacements are needed even more. He believes this is an appropriate expenditure.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 21T046; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

**Item #9 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T047/ County Executive/ Increase Contract for East Branch Consulting due to COVID-19 Pandemic (Also reviewed in Rules)**

Commissioner Carlin stated the increased need for communications during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to this request. He stated there is no communications staff in Putnam County and this individual has greatly assisted the County in getting out COVID-related information.

Legislator Montgomery stated her comments and requests are in no way personal to East Branch Consulting, LLC. She stated in April 2020 when COVID was at its height, East Branch Consulting, LLC was billing for about 20 hours per month. She questioned why this funding is needed now, when things related to COVID are beginning to improve.

Chairman Castellano stated although things are improving there is still a long road ahead before we get back to “normal”. He stated this will be a more cost-efficient way to get information pertaining to COVID-19, especially vaccinations, out to the residents.

Legislator Montgomery stated information is certainly critical; there is a Public Information Officer in the Health Department who is qualified to report on health issues. She stated she would like to make it clear that the County is paying \$125 an hour for this consultant to do things such as watch webinars of Governor Cuomo and update



social media, which has not been updated since January. She stated it is her understanding this individual is writing press releases and memorandums for the County Executive. She provided an example of one from January 19, 2021 which she believes was political in nature as it showed certain political candidates at a vaccination POD that was not being run by the County. She stated this is not a good use of funds; this is \$20,000 that could be used for Health Department staff or a mobile vaccine unit. She stated the County Executive's Office has four (4) full time employees therefore she does not understand why memorandums and press releases cannot be produced out of the County Executive's Office. She stated two (2) employees have also been added to the County Executive' Office; a part-time Deputy County Executive and a Director of Constituent Services. She stated this does not seem like a good use of funds.

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

**Item #10 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T053/ Board of Elections/ Purchase 35 Voting Privacy Booths (Also reviewed in Rules)**

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

**Item #11 – Approval/ Fund Transfer 21T054/ Health Dept./ Overtime due to COVID-19 Pandemic**

Legislator Montgomery questioned if this funding can also be used for hiring temporary staff.

Commissioner Carlin stated yes, there is funding for temporary staff. He stated a lot of this overtime has already been incurred in nursing. He stated overtime is used because there is no time to train new temporary employees.

Legislator Montgomery stated taking into consideration the health and well being of the staff in the Health Department, she is concerned that they are taking on this extra work. She stated she would like to see more temporary staff being hired and utilized to avoid burn-outs among the permanent staff. She stated the Health Department should be supported in any way possible, which is not always making efficiency the priority.

Commissioner Carlin agreed and stated that is why both temporary and overtime sources of funding has always been provided; from a financial standpoint the Health Department can reach their optimal mix.

Legislator Sayegh stated the Health Department has the prerogative to use their current staff or hire temporary employees, and in this case they chose to utilize their current staff to stay on the ground running and not have to train new people at this time. She stated this decision is no different than those made by other Department Heads.

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

**Item #13 – Approval/ Refunding Bond/ Refunding Amount not to Exceed \$2,700,000**

Commissioner Carlin stated thanks to the financial efforts of the Putnam County departments and mainly the County Executive and Legislature, the County has achieved a Aa1 bond rating by Moody's, which is the strongest a County of our size can achieve. He stated due to having such a good rating, people are apt to invest in our bonds, creating a competitive market, and will hopefully save the County money through refunding. He stated we will not know until the fall, but the Legislature's approval is being sought to issue \$2,700,000 in refunding bonds that should save taxpayers about \$65,000-\$75,000.

Chairman Castellano stated this is a great opportunity to save some taxpayer dollars.

Legislator Montgomery questioned which bonds are being refunded.

Commissioner Carlin stated the bonds were issued over 10 years ago. He stated the refunding bond takes the outstanding payments and refunds them at a lower interest rate. He stated some of the bonds were for projects such as the Emergency Operations Center, the roof replacement at the Donald B. Smith building, highway reconstruction and equipment, Gold Course renovations, and sidewalk replacements. He stated all of the outstanding bonds are listed in Exhibit B.

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

**Item #14 – FYI/ Unaudited Annual Update for the Fiscal Year Ended 12/31/2020**

Commissioner Carlin stated he sent a request to the Charter Review Commission to repeal this report. He stated this requirement was in the original Charter from 1979 and is now outdated. He stated it is more important for the Legislature to receive the financial information provided in the County Executive's State of the County report. He stated the State Comptroller has also acknowledged that this report is an incomplete, unaudited report that does not provide a full picture to the Legislature or public.

**Item #15 – Other Business – None**

**Item #16 – Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 7:45p.m. Chairman Castellano made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Beth Robinson.