

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
Held Via Audio Webinar
Pursuant To Temporary Emergency Orders

Members: Chairman Gouldman, Legislators Montgomery & Sayegh

Tuesday

December 8, 2020

(Immediately Following the Protective Meeting at 6PM)

The meeting was called to order at 6:15 P.M. by Chairman Gouldman who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Montgomery, Legislator Sayegh and Chairman Gouldman were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – October 13, 2020 Budget Meeting

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/Re-Appointments/Industrial Development Agency Board/Baranowski, Downey, and Karlsson

Legislator Montgomery thanked the volunteers for their service.

Legislator Albano stated he knows Mr. Baranowski personally and he will be great for the IDA.

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to move Approval/Re-Appointments/Industrial Development Agency Board/Baranowski, Downey, and Karlsson to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/Designation/County of Putnam/Tourist Promotion Agency

Chairman Gouldman stated this is done yearly and allows the Agency to apply for funds.

Legislator Montgomery stated she does not agree with spending these funds during a pandemic. She stated money should be spent on various COVID supplies and public health nurses. She stated her district has more tourism than it can handle. She stated her area does not need anymore marketing, especially when the district is not supported by the County in handling the effects of the tourism. She stated the County Executive informed the Village of Cold Spring will no longer supply a meager \$7,500 for garbage removal. She stated garbage removal is a basic public health concern and the County will no longer assist with that even though the area brings in sales tax from thousands of tourists. She noted that the Cold Spring Chamber of Commerce receives little to no support. She stated the New York Times article that is attached to the agenda (Item #7) makes it clear that tourism is not where the County should be investing. She stated she would be voting against this resolution.

Legislator Sayegh stated the County used to have an outside non-profit handle tourism promotion, but now the County has brought it in house and this resolution is simply appointing

the County as the Tourist Promotion Agency, so we are eligible to receive grant money from the State. She stated the I Love New York funds are to be used for promoting tourism from outside the County. She stated she will be voting in favor of this resolution.

Legislator Jonke stated he echoes what Legislator Sayegh noted. He stated his district could use tourism promotion.

Legislator Albano stated he would also support this resolution. He stated it keeps people visiting our area. He noted that sales tax is a third of the County's budget, so it is very crucial.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would also support this resolution. She noted that there have been some years in the past where the tourism numbers were not where the County hoped they would be. She stated it was decided that the County serving as the tourist promotion agency would be the best most efficient way moving forward.

Legislator Sullivan noted that any money coming from the State is County funds just coming back. He stated it would be beneficial to receive our fair share.

Legislator Montgomery stated when the Tourism Department was created, she believes the County Attorney gave options for how the funding could be received and dispersed if there was no Agency. She noted that it is not safe to have tourism during a pandemic. She stated tourism in Putnam County has taken off. She stated it does not need the support of this agency. She stated the towns need to be supported.

Legislator Nacerino stated Thunder Ridge, in her district, is a large draw. She stated it is probably one of the few safe recreation activities during the pandemic.

Legislator Addonizio stated she supports this resolution. She stated it gives the Legislature the authority to receive grants from the State.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the County needs a promotion agency to promote organizations like Thunder Ridge. She questioned if the agency is necessary, considering how much it costs to run. She stated she would like the County to consider the alternatives.

Legislator Sayegh clarified that I Love New York funding cannot be used inside the County, it would not be eligible to disperse to the towns.

Legislator Albano stated he has seen figures that indicate that every dollar spent on tourism brings in more money to the County.

Legislator Nacerino stated the consensus was to create a Tourism Department and it does not make sense to debate it now.

Chairman Gouldman made a motion to move Approval/Designation/County of Putnam/Tourist Promotion Agency to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. Roll Call

Vote: Legislator Montgomery - No, Legislator Sayegh – Yes, Chairman Gouldman – Yes.
Motion carries.

**Item #6 - Discussion/Economic Climate and 2021 Outlook/Economic Development
Corporation President Kathleen Abels**

EDC President Abels stated COVID cases are soaring and another lockdown is not improbable, as has happened in Europe. She stated we need to hope for the best and prepare for the worst. She noted some businesses, such as grocery stores, liquor stores, and home improvement have boomed during the pandemic. She stated in Putnam County, residential real estate is exploding, and people are leaving more densely populated places. She stated hopefully this will bring more students to the County as the birthrate was down 23% prior to the pandemic and the State and Federal aid the County receives is on a per-person basis. She stated at the beginning of the pandemic, many local businesses reinvented themselves with delivery and curbside pickup. She stated the County has lost some small businesses and they will be missed. She stated this is the time to support the businesses you love. She stated the outlook for 2021 is extremely uncertain. She noted that the stock market is volatile, and Congress seems to be in gridlock. She noted the pandemic could give way to a period of rapid productivity growth. She stated the economy will be revived with a substantial and robust economic relief package from the Federal Government. She noted that State and local governments must have balanced budgets, the Federal Government can have a deficit in order to deal with emergencies. She stated last spring the EDC pivoted from trying to attract new business, to supporting the existing businesses in the County. She stated the EDC also formed a Small Business Advisory Committee with representatives from different business sectors throughout the County. She stated this Committee became a great forum to share information about the changing restrictions and guidelines. She stated she is currently working with a PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) manufacturer who is looking to relocate from Brooklyn to Putnam County, as well as a cosmetic manufacturing company that wants to move to the County. She stated the initial investment of the cosmetic company would be approximately \$1.5million and 25-30 jobs. She stated the EDC has joined the Hudson Valley Film Commission for 2021 and hopes that the Tourism Department will be able to do the same. She stated the hope is to funnel film making to Putnam County and to track their spending. She stated this would be great for local business such as catering, lodging, electricians, and hardware stores. She stated recently she and Tourism Director Tracey Walsh began working with a producer of a weekly children's show who is hoping to stop leasing space in Brooklyn and buy a building in Putnam County to repurpose into a soundstage which would be a New York State Qualified Production Facility and would provide significant tax breaks. She stated this is a very lucrative business. She stated she continues to work with the Tourism Department to ensure that their goals are aligned. She stated she is optimistic about the future because she knows the people of Putnam County are resilient.

Chairman Gouldman stated it is good to see that the downturn in New York City is a good thing for Putnam County.

Legislator Sayegh thanked EDC President Abels for all the work she has done throughout the pandemic. She stated the information she distributes has been very helpful. She stated she is glad to see that productions are looking to move into Putnam County.

EDC President Abels stated the filmmaking industry has incredibly stringent COVID guidelines. She noted that a GAP commercial recently filmed in Garrison which had on-site rapid result COVID testing of every person, every day. She stated she feels very confident that it would not increase the spread of COVID-19.

Chairman Gouldman stated that is great news.

Legislator Nacerino thanked EDC President Abels for her report and noted that it is very eye opening. She stated she appreciates EDC President Abels' optimism and hard work.

Chairman Gouldman thanked EDC President Abels for her hard work.

Item #7 - Discussion/Putnam County Tourism Update/Tourism Director Tracey Walsh

Tourism Director Walsh thanked the Committee for moving forward with Agenda Item #5. She noted it is an annual measure that is required by New York State and without the designation, the matching funds are not available. She stated the latest report from Tourism Economics shows that we have more work to do, but that tourism in Putnam County is not an expense, but an economic driver. She stated according to the 2019 statistics, tourism in the County saved each household \$239 on their tax bill. She stated it is projected that tourism will begin to rebound in summer 2021. She stated New York City tourism drives the engine for the economy and the grants that the County receives. She stated local tourism will drive the recovery until people begin travelling regularly again. She stated many people are not ready to stay in hotels and travel on airplanes. She stated she has been networking and enhancing relationships in the meantime. She stated the hope is to monetize the visitors. She stated in response to Legislator Montgomery's concerns regarding tourism in her district, there are many businesses in that area that are looking for promotion. She gave an overview of some of the published promotions. She stated they are focused on promoting all of Putnam County. She listed some magazines that Putnam County will have promotion in. She noted that the film industry has become very busy, and this will be a joint effort with the EDC and IDA (Industrial Development Agency). She stated the show that EDC President Abels mentioned earlier is considering doing filming at Tilly Foster Farm as they see it as a great location. She stated Tourism is trying to support local business and bring awareness and promotion to our beautiful Putnam County.

Chairman Gouldman thanked Tourism Director Walsh for this information. He stated the future looks bright for Putnam County.

Legislator Sayegh also thanked Tourism Director Walsh for her report. She stated it does seem like local tourism is the way to go right now. She questioned if there were any COVID related regulations pertaining to the funding that Tourism received from the State.

Tourism Director Walsh stated there is not.

Item #8 - FYI/Unemployment Report – Duly Noted

Item #9 - Other Business - None

Item #10 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 6:57 P.M., Chairman Gouldman made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Sayegh. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.