

**RULES, ENACTMENTS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE  
Held In Room 318  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Members: Chairman Othmer, Legislators Albano, & Gross**

**Monday**

**June 11, 2012**

**6:30 P.M.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 P.M. by Chairman Othmer who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Albano, Gross, and Chairman Othmer were present.

**3) Approval of Minutes – May 14, 2012**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**4) Approval/Local Law/Amending Article IV, Section 25-28 of the Putnam County Code Entitled “Membership; Terms”**

Chairman Richard Othmer invited Director of Veterans Affairs Karl Rohde to speak on this subject.

Director Rohde stated that all of the terms of those on the Veterans Park Advisory Committee had expired and at that time they decided to make changes to the Committee in order to make it more responsible to the needs of the County. They wanted to move the membership from seven members to eight members but were advised to move it to nine members. Three members need to be veterans of the Armed Services of the United States of America. Two must be active members of the Putnam County Joint Veterans Council. One member shall be the Putnam County Park Superintendent. And one member must be the Director of Veterans Services in Putnam County. Also, one member need not be a veteran nor have experience or knowledge in the area of parks and open space. These members would be appointed by the County Executive, subject to confirmation by the Legislature. Members shall be appointed to a three year term but any members currently holding office of the effective date will serve until the end of their existing term. The members will serve until their successor is appointed. The Committee has been very active and completed a lot but sometimes with the seven members they did not have a quorum or a good mix of veterans and non-veterans.

Chairman Othmer asked if they had a number of veterans who would like to be on the Committee.

Director Rohde said they have all of the names for everybody.

Chairman Othmer stated that is unlike our other boards that have had difficulty with numbers due to the financial disclosure forms.

Director Rohde stated there was some hesitation regarding the forms but that hesitation has been put aside.

County Executive MaryEllen Odell stated through the Chair to Legislator Gross that she was the liaison for the Veterans when she was a legislator as he is now and she used to attend the meetings for the Advisory Board and tried to be helpful for them with the projects at the time. Although, you do not have a voting voice, it is appreciated by the board to have that liaison presence.

Director Rohde stated that they wanted to see the Director of the Museum to always be on the board but the Law Department advised against it being put in the Local Law. Instead they will do it more as a guideline.

Legislator Roger Gross asked when the meetings took place.

Director Rohde stated they take place at the request of Deputy Commissioner of Parks Chris Ruthven or the Chairman of the Advisory Board. He further stated he will step down as the Chairman. The Committee meets, on average, three to four times a year.

Legislator Gross requested to be on the email list.

Director Rohde agreed.

Chairman Othmer made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

### **5) Renaming of the Putnam County Veterans Residence/Discussion**

Chairman Othmer stated that his personal opinion is that no politician's name should be on any public building. When you are elected to a position you should do it because it is your job and you should represent your constituents but, he stated whatever is recommended will be his vote.

Legislator Carl Albano stated that the reason he requested this be put on the agenda tonight is that individuals from the Town of Carmel Town Board approached him asking what had happened to the previous talks of this subject years ago. He believed it was something they should discuss again because it was dropped last time. He stated he did speak to Director Rohde and greatly respects the veterans' opinions on this subject to keep the name as is. He wanted to discuss the issue so the public would understand why the name remains as it does.

Director Rohde invited the Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs Art Hanley and Joint Veterans Council Chairman Harry Sherblom up to address this item alongside him. He stated that Deputy Director Hanley visited the Veterans' residence earlier today. Director Rohde stated he has worked on the Veterans' residence from the beginning and one afternoon with his predecessor John Scherer, former County Executive Bob

Bondi, and Former State Senator Vincent Leibell, among others pried the door open of the old building to see what was there. He went on to describe the state of the old building and the new building. He stated when it came time to name it he believed it should be named Bondi-Leibell Veterans Residence but, stated they did not want their names on it. Former County Executive Bondi suggested they name it just after State Senator Leibell because without him they never would have had it. Director Rohde stated that State Senator Leibell visited the residence frequently and truly cared about the veterans. Director Rohde went on to tell a story of State Senator Leibell's dedication to and respect of veterans.

Deputy Director Hanley stated that he has been on the job just about three months and when he took the job he was told the residence is under his oversight. When he arrived there a couple of veterans took him aside and said, don't let them do it, don't let them change the name. Deputy Director Hanley asked them why and they stated that State Senator Leibell visited all the time, they had Thanksgiving dinners, they had barbeques, he would just stop by, etc. They then asked how many other public officials just stop by. Residents were upset by this item being on the agenda, they do not want the name changed. They know State Senator Leibell did wrong but asked that the name of the residence not be changed. Deputy Director Hanley stated for the record that you do not have to be disabled nor retired to live in the residence.

Chairman Othmer referred to the letter in this item backup materials from State Senator Leibell in which the senator asked the name to be changed to Floyd Fisher.

Deputy Director Hanley stated that some of the old residents had reservations about changing the name to Floyd Fisher.

Legislator Gross stated that during his time in the Senate office he handled Veterans Affairs and Homeland Security and Education issues and he has been to the residence several times and what the Director and Deputy Director have stated of the opinions of the residents is completely accurate. The residents have tremendous affection for the former Senator. Putnam County Veterans Residence might be a generic term to satisfy both groups but he respects what has been said and believes it to be very accurate.

The Committee and attendees further discussed the item.

Joint Veterans Council Chairman Harry Sherblom stated he was just elected Chairman and it is an honor to hold that position. At the Joint Veterans Council meeting he got the impression that they would like to have the residence named after a veteran but they are okay with keeping the name the way it is.

Legislator Albano stated it is a crazy situation; good things have happened in the past and unfortunately things have changed. He personally will vote with what the veterans want.

Legislator Dini LoBue stated that she is in agreement, that the name should remain as is.

The Committee and attendees further discussed the item.

Legislator Albano stated to keep the name as is will allow for a remembrance of better times. He stated he wanted to bring it up because people asked him about it and he wanted to be able to have an answer as to why we make the decisions we do. He is glad to hear from the veterans.

Deputy Director Hanley stated that at some point someone did paint over the Senator's name on the sign by the side of the road and the residents attempted to clean it.

Chairman Othmer stated he will vote with the veterans but he feels in his heart that when he votes in the future on things that politician's names should not be on a public building. They were doing their job which is public service. He will vote on the advice of the veterans tonight. Enough is enough now, it is a time for healing in Putnam County. We have to go forward, we have a lot of challenges ahead of us and we have to fix things.

County Executive Odell stated she recalled this vote when she was on the Legislature.

Clerk to the Legislature Diane Schonfeld stated previously no resolution was passed and therefore, the name remained the same. This was just a discussion on the issue brought forward by Legislator Albano.

Chairman Othmer asked the press to reflect this in the nature it was given tonight. That the veterans want to keep it as is and state that it is a time to heal and move forward.

Director Rohde asked for a new sign.

Discussion closed with no action taken, the name of the residence remains as is.

#### **6) Response from Director of Consumer Affairs RE: Anonymous Correspondence Illegal Companies Working in Putnam/FYI**

Chairman Othmer stated that when he receives something that is unsigned or anonymous he throws it in the garbage because he believes it is cowardly to not sign something especially if it is making accusations about others. He stated that someone wrote a letter to the Legislature stating that there were illegal companies working in Putnam but, did not sign their letter, there is no way to track it.

Legislators Gross and Albano agreed to not address the anonymous letter.

#### **7) Other Business**

Legislator LoBue stated that she would like to see the issues that arose from the approved Coroners resolution from the June 2012 Full Legislative Meeting be

addressed now and during budget season to ensure better function, vision, and management of the office itself.

County Executive Odell informed the Committee and attendees that meetings have already taken place and additional meetings are being scheduled with the Coroners to address these issues.

There being no further business, at 7:00 P.M., Legislator Gross made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Krista M. Butler, Administrative Assistant.