

**AGENDA
PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE
PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE
2015 TENTATIVE BUDGET
AND
REPORT OF THE BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
TO BE HELD IN THE
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Monday October 27, 2014 6:30 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Chairman Albano who requested Legislator Castellano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Scuccimarra, Oliverio, Tartaro, Nacerino, Castellano, LoBue, Wright and Chairman Albano were present. Legislator Gross was absent. Also present was Legislative Counsel Van Ross.

Chairman Albano requested that the Clerk read the Public Notice (attached).

Chairman Albano stated that this Public Hearing gives the Legislature the opportunity to hear from you, the public, about your views of the proposed 2015 Tentative Budget. Your concerns are very important to us and it is our responsibility to approve a fiscally responsible budget that provides for the health, safety and quality of life for our residents, while also not exceeding the tax cap. I would ask that anyone wishing to speak regarding the proposed 2015 Tentative Budget should come up to the microphone, state their name and the town in which they reside. He asked the public to please keep in mind that there is no comment period for the Legislators and therefore no cross discussion. If you do have a question, please leave your name and contact information with the Clerk and we will get back to you promptly. This Public Hearing will assist the Legislature in making informative decisions during our Legislative meeting on Wednesday evening, October 29th when we will Adopt the Budget.

Frank DelCampo, President of the Mahopac Library Board of Trustees, thanked the County Executive for increasing the budget for the libraries and commended the Legislature for their continued support of the libraries. He mentioned the following statistics from the past year at the Mahopac Library: 265,000 patrons were served, nearly 267,000 items were borrowed, 2,400 programs were presented and 57,000 people came in and signed up for use of the computers.

Pat Brophy, Chief Attorney for the Putnam County Legal Aid Society, explained that the Legal Aid Society was created by the Board of Supervisors in 1965. The Legal Aid Society has provided the necessary legal defense for the indigent residents of Putnam County for the last 45 years. He stated that County Law provides that the Counties must provide indigent legal defense. The Law also gives the County a choice; to have a Public Defender or Legal Aid Society. He explained that the Public Defender is a County agency, therefore its employees are provided County benefits and are included in the State Retirement System. He stated that the Legal Aid Society is a separate not-for-profit corporation. He stated that the cost of having a Legal Aid Society is considerably less for the County. He stated that it is estimated that the cost would triple if services were

provided by a Public Defenders Office. He stated that part of the Legal Aid Society's expenses, which they are required to submit to the County, is the payment of rent. He stated that that 40 of the 45 years, Legal Aid was renting from the private sector. He stated that five (5) years ago the County approached the Legal Aid Society and asked if they would be willing to move from their private sector location to their present location at a County owned facility in order to save the County money. He stated that the Legal Aid Society's budgeted County funds has remained the same for the last seven years which has always contained monies for the Legal Aid Society's rent of \$1,900.00 per month. He explained how the Legal Aid Society has outgrown the current 1,400 square foot premises. In expressing the need for a larger facility to the Administration, they were told that there were no other County facilities available. He stated that there is a misconception that we are asking for an increase to our budget. He stated that the Legal Aid Society is just asking that their budget remain the same and for the amount that was taken out of our budget by the Administration be put back in for rent. He stated that they have found another location in the private sector, however, they have not yet signed a lease until they have the fiscal security to know that they have the funds to pay their rent. He stated that their rent will increase, however, they are not asking that the County pay the increased amount. They will cover the increased amount through the New York State Office of Indigent Services. This New York State money that comes to the County is considered grant funding. He stated that the caveat of grant funding is that it cannot supplant the budget. Therefore, if the money is not put back into the budget for rent and the Legal Aid Society now goes back to the NYS Office of Indigent Services for the full amount of the rent instead of the increased portion of the rent, he stated that it would then open the door for review by the New York State Comptroller.

Janet Canaday, Carmel Resident, stated she was concerned that the CSEA positions were being put into subcontingency when all of the other raises have been approved. She stated that these positions were audited and reviewed and the individuals are working under title. She asked the Legislature to reconsider the raises that she believes the members have been working for.

Michael Mahoney, Kent Resident, thanked the Legislature for their continued support of the libraries.

Michael McDermott, Trustee of the Kent Public Library, stated that in the short time he has been involved in the Kent Library, he was quite impressed with the job they do with the funds available to them. He mentioned the significant increase in the number of people who utilize the Library and take part in the many programs offered. He believed the increase in funding would be one of the best investments made.

Carol Donick, Director of the Kent Public Library, thanked the Legislature for their constant support of the libraries over the years.

Regina Morini, Trustee of the Mahopac Public Library and Representative for Putnam County Mid-Hudson Library System Board, stated that the libraries are very important in any town they are in. She stated that the additional funds the Legislature is proposing is greatly appreciated, especially by the smaller libraries.

Alice Walsh, Trustee of the Mahopac Public Library, stated that she was formerly President of the Putnam County Libraries Association. She stated that she saw firsthand

how the libraries worked together. She thanked the Legislature for their continued support for all of the libraries in Putnam County.

Thomas Maxson, Trustee of the Kent Public Library, thanked the Legislature for their past support of the library system and asked for their support of the proposed 5% increase.

Elizabeth Hudak, President of the Putnam County Legal Aid Society, stated that our Chief Attorney gave a wonderful presentation regarding how important the Legal Aid Society is to the residents of Putnam County. She stated that she wanted to emphasize the fact that these individuals are your neighbors, your friends and relatives. The Legal Aid Society does not only service criminal defendants. She stated that they service mothers, fathers involved in custody, access, visitation, orders of protection. They help children and people who have fallen on difficult economic times. She stated that indigent is a word that means more. It means people, our neighbors and a lot of people who need the Putnam County Legal Aid Society. She stated that the Legal Aid Society needs a bigger place to function in. She stated that their caseload is 2,000 cases. In July they took on 160 cases, August 140 cases and typically have a 7% - 10% increase in their caseload each year. She urged the Legislature to continue the positive vote received at the Budget & Finance Committee meeting. She stated that the Legal Aid Society is a very important component of our Putnam County society. It is not just another mandate.

Jen McCreery, Director of the Desmond-Fish Library in Garrison, stated that she is very passionate about the role the libraries play in informing citizens and helping them thrive.

Patti Haar, Director of the Patterson Library, stated that she appreciated the continued support over the years. She stated that for every dollar the libraries receive in funding, they in turn provide \$7.00 dollars in services. Every little bit that libraries receive in funding makes a big difference. She stated that libraries are the only organization County wide that serves every resident.

There were many more individuals who voiced their support for the 5% increase for the libraries.

There being no other member of the public who wished to speak, at 7:00 P.M., Legislator Wright made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Oliverio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.