

**HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE  
MEETING  
HELD VIA AUDIO WEBINAR  
PURSUANT TO TEMPORARY EMERGENCY ORDERS**

**Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Addonizio & Nacerino**

**Wednesday**

**June 23, 2021**

The meeting was called to order via audio webinar at 5:37 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Committee Legislators Nacerino, Addonizio and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

**Item #3 - Discussion/Emergency Rental Assistance Program/Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the Emergency Rental Assistance Program began June 1, 2021, to help people who have been unable to pay their rent due to loss of income as a result of COVID - 19. She stated this program is available to Putnam County residents. She stated she requested that Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza be present to speak to this and to help spread awareness.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to waive the Rules and Accept the Additional; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the additional accepted is a list of the number of applicants, by zip code.

Commissioner Piazza stated this program is funded by Federal Emergency Dollars due to the pandemic. He explained the program is in place to help those who have not been able to pay their rent because of loss of income during the pandemic funded program. He explained the Emergency Rental Assistance Program is being administered by the New York State Office of Disability and Temporary Assistance. He stated there is a portal for people to apply through and the applicants need to meet certain criteria and provide certain documentation. He stated the landlords must agree and also sign on to the request. He stated an individual can be approved to receive 12 months of rent and receive three (3) months of prospective rent. He stated his office receives daily updates as to how many people are enter the portal from Putnam County. He continued to speak to this matter. He explained the Magistrates have been notified, as they are aware of evictions. He stated to receive the money, a landlord must agree not to evict the tenant for a period of a year. He continued to speak to the program. He stated United Way is assisting people with the application process. He stated they can be contacted through calling 211. He stated at this time things are being processed for people more efficiently and timely than in past years. He spoke to assisting people in finding housing through the collaboration of different efforts of the agencies in Putnam County. He stated positive things happen when people have safe housing. He stated Search for Change, Inc. has been receiving Federal and State funds. He stated there will be a 72-unit housing project called Fairhaven located at Baldwin Place. He

stated out of the 72 units, 36 will be for low income, subsidized units. He stated the remaining 36 units will be split up as follows: 9 units for Veterans, 9 units for victims of domestic violence, 9 units for people in recovery from mental illness, and 9 units for people who are in recovery for substance abuse.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned how long the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP) will be available.

Commissioner Piazza explained according to State, it will remain available as long as they have money.

Legislator Addonizio stated she is glad that the ERAP is in place. She questioned if the payments will go directly to the Landlord.

Commissioner Piazza confirmed yes, the payments go directly to the Landlord.

Legislator Nacerino echoed the sentiments of her colleagues. She stated this has been a really hard year and people have been under dire stress. She stated to have some financial relief to allow them to stay in their homes and provide the money to the Landlords, it is a win-win.

Legislator Gouldman stated his agreement and support for the ERAP.

Legislator Jonke questioned when the money is expected to be distributed to the Landlords.

Commissioner Piazza stated a specific date was not available the last time he checked, which was about a week ago. He stated he will look into it again.

Legislator Albano agreed with Commissioner Piazza that affordable housing in Putnam County is an issue. He stated the Fairhaven project in Baldwin Place sounds very positive.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if constituents could go to the County's Social Services Office to get help with applying for the ERAP.

Commissioner Piazza stated constituents should call the County's Social Services Office so they can set up an appointment, and then the coordination of having a representative from "211" will meet the constituent in the Social Services office and help them work through it. He stated another option is for the constituents to call 211 directly. He stated the staff at 211 is getting outreach from the State through the grant. He continued to speak to the parameters and process of the ERAP.

Legislator Montgomery stated in summary she is hearing that people should get their applications submitted, regardless of whether they meet the 30-day criteria.

Commissioner Piazza stated that is correct. He shared the total of applicants, etc. to date. He stated they are working to get the word out there.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes, not all landlords know that they can apply. She stated there are webinars that walk people through the process. She stated if anyone is interested, please let her know and she would share them, if anyone wants to send them to your constituents.

Chairwoman Sayegh requested confirmation that the Fairhaven rentals will be for Putnam County residents.

Commissioner Piazza stated that is correct, there is a need in our County. He clarified the Fairhaven project is not a homeless shelter, it is housing being built. It will be subsidized housing for people with low income.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned what facilities are currently being used.

Commissioner Piazza stated there are motel rooms used, the shelter, people living with friends and people are leaving the County because they cannot afford to live here.

Chairwoman Sayegh expressed her appreciation for the fine work done by Commissioner Piazza and his staff.

**Item #4 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 21A051/Office of Senior Resources/Donation/Purchase of Outdoor Benches at Putnam Valley Senior Center**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the Friends of Senior Citizens of Putnam County Inc. have donated \$793.90 for the purchase of benches at the Putnam Valley Friendship Center.

Commissioner of Finance William Carlin explained from time to time the Office of Senior Resources get donations. He stated when this occurs the County processes a Budgetary Amendment and accepts the donation for the purpose the donation is intended for. He stated of course the County and the Office of Senior Resources are very grateful to the people and/or organizations that make these donations.

Legislator Nacerino expressed her appreciation as well to this very generous donation. She stated the outdoor benches will be a wonderful addition to the Putnam Valley Friendship Center.

Legislator Gouldman expressed his appreciation and recognized this very kind and generous donation. He stated the benches are going to be a perfect addition to the outdoor area at the Putnam Valley Friendship Center.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to Approve Budgetary Amendment 21A051/Office of Senior Resources/Donation/Purchase of Outdoor Benches at Putnam Valley Senior Center; Seconded by Legislators Addonizio and Nacerino. All in favor.

**Item #5 - Approval/Letter from Health Committee to all Towns and Villages regarding NY State Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she brought this forward. She explained as a result of the recent passing of the NY State Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act, Towns and Villages will be making the decisions as to whether they will permit recreational marijuana dispensaries and lounges in their borders. She stated the request of a Town or Village to opt out, must be done by December 31, 2021. She explained the Legislation passed by the State does not permit the Counties to decide on this, it is strictly up to the Towns & Villages. She stated this topic has been discussed several times in the past in this Committee. She stated ultimately this is up to the municipalities. She stated she wanted to reach out to each municipality in Putnam County with a letter from the Health Committee to provide some information that may add to their discussion as they decide if they will allow the sale of recreational marijuana through the dispensaries and will allow these lounges for marijuana consumption. She recognized Kristin McConnell from The Prevention Council of Putnam for providing the information and to offer the information to the local municipalities. She continued to speak to her hope that the local municipalities choose to opt-out, by December 31, 2021. She explained if they do not opt-out before December 31, 2021, they will automatically be opted- in. She stated once a municipality is opted-in they will never be permitted to opt-out again. She explained her opinion, as Chair of Health, is for the municipalities to opt-out do more research and then if they decide they want to opt in, that can be done. She stated we continue to receive more data on the impacts the legalization of marijuana is having on communities. She believes the information and data should be closely reviewed and evaluated before a decision to opt-in is made. She continued to speak to the points in the proposed letter.

Legislator Nacerino stated she is in support of sending the letter. She stated during the previous discussions in this committee some of the perils have been discussed regarding having dispensaries in our Towns. She believes this letter reinforces some very important points for the municipalities to give consideration to.

Legislator Addonizio stated she is also supports sending the letter.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated that 50 – 80% of the communities do opt out. She stated she does not see any big rush for any municipality to opt -in.

Legislator Montgomery recommended that a statement from the local Chambers of Commerce and or agree to send this letter to them. She explained she sees this more as a business, economic issue as well. She stated that is the reason behind the State's action. She stated it will not affect the private use of marijuana or the growing of cannabis. She stated this is about opening businesses.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and has been for many years. She stated she believes it to be the prerogative of the local Chamber of Commerce to also write to their Town Boards and Village Boards to notify them of their perspective. She stated this letter is on behalf of the Health Committee as it speaks to the health of the community as opposed to addressing the economic side of this.

Legislator Nacerino expressed her agreement with Chairwoman Sayegh. She stated this is a separate consideration from the economic prospects or detriments. She stated the letter is

representing from the Health Committee level to reiterate some of the parameters and request that they give their decision careful consideration. She stated the concerns of the Health Committee are more about the social issue rather than the economic issue. START

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to Approve Letter from Health Committee to all Towns and Villages regarding NY State Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

#### **Item #6 - FYI/Grant Application/Youth Bureau/September 11<sup>th</sup> Day of Service Grant**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated Executive Director of Youth Bureau Janeen Cunningham will be speaking to this item.

Executive Director of Youth Bureau Janeen Cunningham stated she also had with her Youth Services Specialist/ Runaway and Homeless Youth Coordinator Pamela Phillips-Zeller. She stated this is a \$2,000 grant. She stated it would be utilized by the Youth Court and it is for the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. She stated if the grant is awarded, there would be a ceremony where 50 names of victims would be read, along with a short biography. She noted that this ceremony would require no funds from the Youth Bureau.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is a wonderful endeavor.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated questioned how the Youth Bureau finds grants like this.

Executive Director Cunningham stated through the Global Youth Justice organization. She stated Coordinator Philips-Zeller found this specific grant.

Specialist Philips-Zeller stated AmeriCorps is doing a huge twentieth anniversary day of service. She stated this is a wonderful opportunity to educate the kids who were not born when 9/11 happened and can honor the day.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated that is fantastic.

#### **Item #7 - Other Business - None**

#### **Item #8 - Adjournment**

There being no further business at 6:34 P.M. Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.