

**HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM #318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Addonizio & Jonke

Tuesday

November 15, 2022

(Immediately following the Rules Committee Meeting at 6:30PM)

The meeting was called to order at 7:42 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Addonizio, Legislator Jonke and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – August 9 and September 12, 2022, Meetings

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/Fund Transfer 22T315/Health Department/Increases in Preschool and Early Intervention

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 22T315; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 22A078/Health Department/Award from National Association of City and County Health Officials/Investment in Medical Reserve Corps

Shanna Siegel, Supervising Public Health Educator, stated the goal is to have more technical support for the Medical Reserve Corps. (MRC) in the form of equipment such as laptops and training. She stated they are interested in instituting a satellite EOC (Emergency Operations Center).

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is a great use of funding.

Legislator Montgomery noted the importance of having a satellite EOC. She questioned how this would be utilized if areas are cut off from the County Seat.

Ms. Siegel stated they have not finalized where the satellite EOC will be stored.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Budgetary Amendment 22A078; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 22A079/Social Services/State Rental Supplement Program Funding

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Budgetary Amendment 22A079; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

**Item #7 - Discussion/Update/Mental Health Update/Commissioner of Social Services
Michael Piazza**

Commissioner Piazza stated the mental healthcare providers discuss the status of the system of care at multiple meetings. He stated that he and Deputy Commissioner Sara Servadio met with the school districts to receive feedback on what their needs are. He stated there are issues throughout the state, and the issues in Putnam are universal and you will not find a county that is not impacted in a similar way. He stated access to inpatient care is limited. He stated there are waitlists for services for children and adolescents. He added that there has been a significant increase in people seeking help since the pandemic. He noted that a big reason for the lack of capacity is that many clinicians have decided they did not want to work anymore. He stated child psychiatrists have always been hard to find and that is still the case now. He stated the use of telehealth has taken off. He stated there is also a shortage of case managers as many go into private practice. He stated it is not an issue of money, it is about who is willing to work for the available salaries. He stated supported housing providers have not recovered since the pandemic started. He stated there are 58 supported housing beds in the County, but not all are filled due to lack of staffing and/or the seriousness of the symptoms cannot be handled. He stated people come to DSS when they cannot find other help. He stated when telehealth started taking off, the State started providing laptops or tablets to police agencies so that if an officer came upon an emotionally disturbed person, they could have a telehealth visit that could reduce the crisis or guide the officer. He stated the program could not be initiated due to lack of staffing. He stated on the positive side, there is sufficient capacity in substance abuse treatment. He stated there are many initiatives in place for Narcan distribution and education. He stated there are 21 unintended death fatalities this year with 2 months to go. He stated there have been 50 overdose reversals with Narcan. He stated all known strategies to reduce fatalities are being implemented. He spoke about the idea of “sober homes” which are not licensed by the State and not funded by the County. He stated for the past four (4) weeks approximately 30 providers have taken part in a work group to examine the system of care for children. He stated they came up with five (5) action plans. He stated one (1) of them that he is involved with is establishing a work group to work specifically with the schools and have regular meetings so that when a school social worker is having an issue with a student, they do not have to wait until it becomes a crisis for additional assistance. He stated the County will also set up meetings with the school superintendents at least three (3) times a year. He stated it will include the Sheriff’s Department, Probation, and the Health Department. He noted that there will also be a liaison to the schools. He stated the County Executive’s commitment to a Crisis Stabilization Center continues to progress and a site next to Putnam Hospital has been identified as a potential location. He stated developmental disabilities are a point of focus for improving how they are handled. He stated many times there is no safe discharge plan for these patients.

Chairwoman Sayegh noted that she believes the difficulties with handing developmentally disabled patients is universal, as she knows a nurse in another state that deals with similar issues. She questioned if there have been any solutions found for the various issues Commissioner Piazza mentioned.

Commissioner Piazza stated the State recognizes what the needs are and they are caught in similar situations. He stated it is not an answer but there is an acknowledgment of the issues.

Chairwoman Sayegh noted that our school system stresses importance of technology and not human services and interactions.

Legislator Addonizio suggested using funds from the opioid settlement for the Stabilization Center. She questioned if that could be done.

Commissioner Piazza stated it could be used and would be appropriate.

Legislator Montgomery stated she wished that County Executive Odell had given the Legislature an opportunity to be part of the decision making process with the Stabilization Center. She stated it will not help her constituents as it is the same distance to the Poughkeepsie Stabilization Center. She stated she would have rather funded existing programs, for example The Prevention Council, Mental Health Association, and CoveCare. She stated these providers have not had their funding increased in years. She stated she knows that these agencies appreciate the consistent support but it is up to the County to realize that their costs have increased. She played a voicemail message from a constituent who could not make it and had issues with getting mental health services and was told that CoveCare was not taking new patients due to lack of staffing. She stated there is no transportation for people to get to healthcare if they are not on Medicaid. She stated Westchester and Dutchess Counties have decreased taxes while still investing in mental health resources.

Chairwoman Sayegh noted some aspects that Legislator Montgomery mentioned have to do with State funding, which the County is reliant on.

Legislator Nacerino thanked Commissioner Piazza for his thorough update. She stated it was important to make it known that the struggles that Putnam County faces are not unique to the County but are universal and felt all over. She thanked all the mental health professionals in our community. She stated these are unprecedented times.

Legislator Addonizio thanked Commissioner Piazza for providing the facts. She stated it is not any different from any other county. She stated it comes down to a lack of workers.

Commissioner Piazza noted that vacancies in staffing create wait lists.

Chairwoman Sayegh noted she received a similar message to the one that Legislator Montgomery played. She stated she is happy to see that mental health professionals are becoming more involved in the schools. She stated the school psychologists have been very helpful.

Legislator Montgomery stated her frustration with the lack of funding from the County for the Philipstown Behavioral Health Hub (Hub).

Larry Burke, Commanding Officer of the Village of Cold Spring Police, stated the overdose figures are inaccurate because they do not account for the ones who do not call 911 and use an at home Narcan kit. He stated Commissioner Piazza does a great job.

Rebecca Pearsall, Philipstown Hub Board Member, stated she is excited to be here. She stated these are unprecedented times. She stated she is looking forward to working together.

Legislator Addonizio stated the Opioid Settlement money could be used to help fund the Philipstown Hub.

Commissioner Piazza stated the County has received approximately \$613,000 from the opioid settlement as of now and will continue to receive more. He stated they will do a needs assessment in the County.

Legislator Nacerino noted that she supports creating a Stabilization Center in the County. She noted, as far as the Philipstown Hub, there is a process and criteria of eligibility for outside agencies to receive taxpayer funding.

Chairwoman Sayegh requested Commissioner Piazza provide clarification on what exactly a Stabilization Center is and the benefits.

Commissioner Piazza stated it is a voluntary diversion from the emergency room. He stated if people are in crisis they can go to an emergency room. He stated Putnam County does not have a mobile crisis team. He stated the consumers have asked for a Stabilization Center in the County, they do not want to have to go to Poughkeepsie. He stated for approximately the past ten years of our local government plan a Stabilization Center and a Mobile Crisis Team have been the number one (1) request on the Needs Assessment. He stated an Officer can encourage a person to go the Stabilization Center, but they cannot force a person to go. He stated the Stabilization Center has a Clinical Staff, Social Workers and Nurses. He stated there is not a psychiatrist and they will not do a detox there, but can help the individuals to go to a place that does do that, as an example Arms Acres. He stated it is a 23-hour safe space for someone in crisis. He stated additionally there would be showering facility and food available.

Legislator Montgomery stated her concern is what happens after the 23 hours in the Stabilization Center. She stated she requested funding for the Hub. She stated unfortunately no funding was provided.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if children and adults are separated and why is there a 23 hour limit.

Commissioner Piazza stated when it was originally formulated there was no State funding available. He explained in order to receive Medicaid funding, which is the major funding source, regulations had to be set. He stated the billing is done on a 23.5 hour basis.

Ms. Pearsall stated she is a Director of Clinical Services in a residence home in Garrison. She stated that she found with the kids that a Stabilization Center would be wonderful as a first stop.

She stated she agrees with Legislator Montgomery in that there needs to be more. She spoke to an innovative idea that she has heard and believes would be effective. She stated it is a psycho education of the community. She stated helping the community to understand this while creating a foundation of a vocabulary for help could be really beneficial as well.

Commissioner Piazza stated there would be a role to be played by the other community agencies. He stated there needs to be a unified involvement for the benefit of the client.

Liza Szpylka from CoveCare Center stated her agreement with the value of a collaboration and coordination between all of the agencies to serve the client.

Jean Kelly member of the Putnam Valley Democratic Committee questioned if there is any health care incentive for nurses and doctors who have walked away from their professions as a result of what they went through during COVID-19.

Commissioner Piazza stated there is no special program that he is aware of at the present time. He stated it is a good recommendation.

Chairwoman Sayegh expressed her appreciation to Commissioner Piazza and to everyone who participated in the discussion.

Item #8 - Other Business- None

Item #9 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:00 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.