

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
40 Gleneida Avenue Room #318
Carmel, NY 10512

Committee Members: Chairman Jonke, Legislators Castellano & Nacerino

Thursday

April 13, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Chairman Jonke who requested Legislator Castellano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Castellano, Nacerino and Chairman Jonke were present.

Item #3 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T088/ New Position Deputy County Attorney - DSS / Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated there are other people who are present to address this matter also. County Attorney Compton Spain and Deputy Commissioner DSS, Mental Health & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio. He stated there is a vacancy in one of the two (2) DSS Attorney positions. He stated there have been discussions regarding the possibility of having the function done by a Deputy County Attorney in the County's Law Department. He stated throughout New York State there are both options that exist. He explained the position, Deputy County Attorney, would be assigned to DSS, but under the auspices of the County Attorney. He stated they are all on board in reverting the DSS Attorney vacant position to a Deputy County Attorney of the County's Law Department. He stated there is currently a DSS Attorney. He stated nothing would change with that position. He stated the one they are recommending be changed is the DSS Attorney vacant position. He stated the vacant position would be an appointment by the County Attorney, while the physical position will be in the DSS Office.

County Attorney Compton Spain stated he believes it is the right thing to do. He stated it is his belief that there should be one (1) County Attorney's Office in the County. He stated there have been problems in the past because of multiple County Attorneys. He stated he believes it is better to have one "Commissioner" type of position that all of the Attorneys would report to. He stated in this instance he will work with Commissioner Piazza and Deputy Commissioner Servadio on the hiring process, to make sure the right person is hired. He stated said Attorney will be from the County Attorney's Office. He stated the current DSS Attorney Faye Thorpe will continue in her present position. He stated he sees doing the same with that position when and if that position becomes vacant. He stated he believes it will allow for a better structure and he supports having Attorneys reporting to Attorneys. He stated referring to what Personnel Director Eldridge reported that both options are in practice throughout New York State. He stated he believes for the most part it exists the way that is being proposed.

Deputy Commissioner Sara Servadio stated they are looking forward to working with County Attorney Spain to find the right candidate for the Attorney position, because the department is short staffed.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is basically a structural change. She stated the employee would be under the Law Department's purview, but it will not change the dynamics of the sensitivity of the work that would be done at DSS.

County Attorney Compton Spain stated he understands the level of sensitivity of the work that is done in DSS and he respects that.

Legislator Gouldman stated that he agrees with the reasoning presented this evening. He stated having one legal department in the County would create efficiency and effectiveness for the County.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Fund Transfer 23T088/ New Position Deputy County Attorney - DSS; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #4 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T089/ Coordinator of Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Chairman Jonke stated Personnel Director Eldridge is present to speak to this agenda item.

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated this proposal is a reclass of the former title Coordinator of the Office for People with Development Disabilities to Coordinator of the Office for Individuals with Disabilities. He stated the essence of the job responsibilities would be the same. He stated Deputy Commissioner Servadio will speak to this item as well.

Deputy Commissioner Sara Servadio stated currently there are two (2) vacant part-time positions. She stated the proposal is to create this one (1) full-time position. She stated they have been researching and using the Dutchess County's model as a guide as they have worked on this proposal. She stated that currently Putnam County does not have a person to speak to the families of someone who has a disability. She stated the same person would speak to the community at different forums. She stated if a family has a child and they are just beginning the process to get their child classified there is no one in their office, other than herself and Commissioner Piazza, that are able to work with the families. She stated this proposed full-time position would handle that. She stated also it would bring Putnam County up to date with surrounding Counties. She stated, many Counties have entire departments devoted to people with disabilities.

Personnel Director Paul Eldridge stated this was presented in the County Executive's State of the County as a focus.

Chairman Jonke stated that he did recall County Executive Byrne speaking to this matter. He stated he is in full support of this.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if this is an appointed or tested position.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated it is a tested position.

Legislator Ellner stated he is in full support of this proposal.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 23T089/ Coordinator of Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD); Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T090/ 12 Position Reclassifications - Highways & Facilities Department/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated that he began discussing this matter with Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery in December of 2022. He stated his knowledge and experience from his position in the previous County Executive's Office and his return to the Department he originally worked in full-time, Highways & Facilities Department, was valuable in the review of the structure and in addressing some of the issues the County was working on. He requested Administrative Director Feighery speak to some of the changes he has made that have been very helpful and encouraging to the staff. He introduced from the Personnel Department Senior Personnel Specialist Virginia Redlon who did the Reclassification work.

Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery stated the County has been utilizing the skillset of the employees in the Highways & Facilities department to get work done. He stated a balance for the County is to encourage these employees to get further certifications. He stated Local 60 in Brewster has permits training for the County employees in the Highways & Facilities Department. He stated they have been training them for free on the employee's time, it is an incredible opportunity. He stated three (3) of the County's employees have gotten certified. He stated in 2022 the Department of Transportation (DOT) took away the County's ability to give CDL training to the County employees. He stated an employee of the County, took it upon themselves, and went through the 60-hour DOT Administrator Training. He stated now the County has a continuing education program and he elaborated on that. He stated all of this is an incentive to keep employees, which is very important.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge expanded on the benefits of the employee getting the Administrator Training. He stated employees who get hired into a Laborer position and in six (6) or eight (8) months get their CDL.

Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery stated these employees are in high demand in today's job market. He stated the County wants to create an environment that inspires good employees to stay and continue to provide training opportunities. He stated with that continued training, it provides them the opportunity to advance, whether it be in salary and/or level. He stated it benefits the County, in the fact that they have a skilled workforce. He stated a past practice is to pay employees out of title. He stated it is his opinion, that should only be done as a stop gap. He stated if an employee has the talent to do a job they should be paid at that level, and not only used for a time at a level, and then when the work is completed the employee must go back to their original position. He stated that does not happen in the blue-collar world.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge provided the rules and regulations that must be followed to have an employee work out of title, both in the white-collar and blue-collar positions of the County. He stated Administrative Director Feighery is correct there has been a need to have skilled and qualified

employees work on County projects and be paid out of title. He stated that is why they have brought this forward, to remedy that.

Chairman Jonke stated he agrees with all that has been stated this evening. He stated the County does not want to invest in training employees and then having them leave. He stated after five (5) years of working for Putnam County an employee is vested. He stated if an employee is treated well, there is good reason to stay.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated that since Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery and Acting Deputy Commissioner of Highways & Facilities Joe Bellucci have been in charge the morale of department has gone way up. He stated that he has heard that directly from the employees.

Senior Personnel Specialist Virginia Redlon stated she works on classifications and reclassifications for the County. She stated by the time the request comes to her; the employee is already doing the work. She stated she does not want anyone to view this as a reward, it is paying and compensating employees for the work they have already been doing.

Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery stated the amount of money the County has saved of taxpayer dollars is tremendous and it is thanks to the talented work force in the Highways and Facilities Department.

Legislator Nacerino expressed her agreement with all that was reported and her support for this proposal.

Legislator Castellano stated his support of this request.

Legislator Ellner questioned if there is a system of tracking the shared services in relation to the CDL Drivers with the Towns of Carmel and Kent, is there some sort of paper trail.

Administrative Director of Highways & Facilities Tom Feighery stated there is a paper trail.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve the Fund Transfer 23T090/ 12 Position Reclassifications - Highways & Facilities Department; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T091/ Restructuring Office for Senior Resources/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Director of Office for Senior Resources Mike Cunningham stated there were previous comments stated about morale. He stated his morale has taken a tremendous boost with the appointment of Marlene Barrett as the new Deputy Director for the Office for Senior Resources (OSR). He stated Marlene has been working in the OSR Department for almost 12 years. He stated she has worked in the case management area and has been involved in several key projects. He continued to speak to the great work she has done and the projects she has been a part of.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated that there were 55 applicants and Marlene Barrett rose to the top. He stated they were all very impressed with her, and she is held in very high regard by her co-workers.

Director of Office for Senior Resources Mike Cunningham spoke to the positive addition of another employee, Kristen Wunner, Fiscal Manager for OSR. He stated next, he will speak to the restructuring request for the OSR Kitchens. He stated the County has four (4) kitchens, one at each of the Friendship Centers. He stated they are such an important part of the OSR program. He stated there needs to be correction to some of the position titles. He stated since there have been retirements and COVID, the inaccurate titles are a bit of an obstacle with getting good replacements. He offered detail that in each kitchen they would like the following titles to staff it: Cook and Food Service Helper. He stated in the main kitchen, which is at the Koehler Center there is a Cook and two (2) Food Service Helpers. Currently the Cook position is untitled at a level 3. He stated the request is to give it the Title Cook at a grade 5 level. He stated he believes it would help with the recruiting process. He stated another challenge is getting subs. He stated when absences occur as a result of vacation, illness, etc. it is very challenging to get coverage. He stated that is why they are also requesting a floater Cook. He stated they have done that with the Driver positions in OSR and it has been very successful. He stated this year there would be no fiscal impact. He stated moving forward it is not a significant amount. He explained additionally most of the cost will be offset by the reduction of the subs that are budgeted for.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge expressed his support of this request.

Chairman Jonke recalled riding along with OSR to deliver meals a week or so ago. He stated he saw firsthand the value of the work and service that is provided by this department. He expressed his support for this request.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Fund Transfer 23T091/ Restructuring Office Senior Resources; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Confirmation of Appointment of the Commissioner of BES/ and Personnel Updates/ County Executive Kevin Byrne

Chairman Jonke invited Deputy County Executive Jim Burpoe to speak to this item.

Deputy County Executive Jim Burpoe stated on behalf of County Executive Byrne and himself it is a privilege to appoint Robert Lipton to the position of Commissioner of Bureau of Emergency Services. He stated Mr. Lipton has extensive knowledge, expertise, and dedication. He stated he has been serving as Deputy Commissioner of BES for over ten (10) years. He has over 41 years of volunteer services to the Fire Department and the Ambulance Corps. He has been serving as the Acting Commissioner of BES since January 1, 2023, and has done an incredible job. He explained Mr. Lipton's experience and knowledge with the grant process is very valuable to the BES. He concluded by stating with all of the unpredictable weather occurrences and the closing of Indian Point it is critical to have an individual with the knowledge, dedication and resources that Mr. Lipton brings to this position. He stated he hoped the members of the Legislature feel the same way and will confirm this appointment.

Legislator Nacerino stated she was honored to be asked to sit on the selection committee of the Commissioner of BES position. She stated the interview process spanned over two (2) days. She stated after giving serious consideration to each candidate, the selection committee unanimously recommended Robert Lipton to the County Executive. She stated the final decision was that of the County Executive. She stated she is proud to support the County Executive's decision to appointment of Robert Lipton as the Putnam County Commissioner of BES.

Legislator Castellano expressed his congratulations. He stated it has been a pleasure working with Mr. Lipton and his over 41 years of volunteer services says a lot to his commitment to his community. He stated he looks forward to the future with Mr. Lipton serving as the County's Commissioner of BES.

Chairman Jonke stated he has worked with Mr. Lipton for the past six (6) years, and he agrees no one is better for the position of Commissioner of BES than him.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated he has worked with Mr. Lipton for a number of years and has hoped that he would become the Commissioner. He stated he relied greatly on Mr. Lipton, during the years that he was the designee to serve as backup to the County Executive at the Indian Point drills in years past. He stated he is thrilled with County Executive Byrne's appointment of Robert Lipton as Commissioner of BES.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve the Confirmation of Appointment of the Commissioner of BES -Robert Lipton; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Robert Lipton expressed his appreciation for the Legislature's support.

Item #8 - Other Business- None

Item #9 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:08 PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trubusy.