

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
TO BE HELD IN ROOM 318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairman Jonke, Legislators Castellano & Nacerino

Monday

January 29, 2024

(Audit & Administration Immediately Followed)

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 Legislator Castellano and Chairman Jonke were present. Legislator Nacerino was absent.

Item #3 - Approval/Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes/ December 12, 2023

Chairman Jonke stated the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4 – Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 24A002/ Reallocation of the Adopted 2024 Tourism Department Budget/ Personnel Director (correction: Officer) Paul Eldridge

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated it has been announced, Tracey Walsh who was the Putnam County Tourism Director, retired December 2023. He stated she is back in 2024 and would like to continue working for the County in the Tourism Department on a part-time basis or at least until a full-time Tourism Director is hired. He stated this budgetary request is a reallocation of funds so Tracey Walsh can continue the operations of the Tourism Department as well as facilitate a smooth transition once a new Director is hired.

Chairman Jonke requested clarity as to if this would be a permanent part-time position or is it temporary.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated it is temporary and he thinks it will continue with Tracey Walsh working part-time most of this year. He stated and it would still leave enough money to hire a full-time Director as well.

Chairman Jonke questioned if the new Director of Tourism will receive the same salary that Tracey Walsh was at.

Commissioner of Finance Mike Lewis stated the salary has been reduced by \$5,000.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Budgetary Amendment 24A002/ Reallocation of the Adopted 2024 Tourism Department Budget; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

**Item #5 – Approval/ PuMA – Ratification of Collective Bargaining Agreement Resolution/
First Deputy County Attorney John Cherico**

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated meetings took place in December of 2023 into the beginning of January 2024. He stated an agreement was reached between the Administration and PuMA. He stated the Memorandum of Agreement was passed by the PuMA. He stated tonight the Administration is requesting approval of the ratification and of the necessary funding, which is addressed in Item #6.

Chairman Jonke requested Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge provide an overview of the agreement, that is suitable to be addressed in this open meeting.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated this is a four (4) year agreement, January 1, 2024 – December 31, 2027. He stated negotiations went well in that there were items that the PuMA members requested and items the Administration requested, and an agreement was reached. He stated there is a new provision called a Retention Bonus that is included.

Chairman Jonke questioned if a Retention Bonus is the same as the Longevity payments.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated it is similar, but there are some differences. He stated the Retention Bonus will not be added to the base salary and will not be cumulative. He spoke briefly to other items negotiated: Direct Deposit to receive their W-2 and 1095-c forms electronically, a new section regarding Motor Vehicle summons, and the list of arbitrators has been updated. He stated there were a couple of titles that PuMA requested to be included in their group. He stated six (6) were requested and three (3) were granted. He stated all in all it was a cordial, respectful interaction.

Chairman Jonke stated these are the County's Managers, they are pros.

First Deputy County Attorney John Cherico stated his appreciation to Personnel Officer Eldridge for lending his expert assistance. He stated Personnel Officer Eldridge is of course very knowledgeable about this and about the process of the negotiations, as is Director of Environmental Health and PuMA President Shawn Rogan. He stated he has been in regular communications with the Outside Counsel used for this matter. He stated everything Personnel Officer Eldridge explained is consistent with the County Law Department's understanding.

Chairman Jonke expressed his appreciation to all who were involved in these negotiations. He questioned Director of Environmental Health and PuMA President Shawn Rogan as to the consensus of the PuMA members.

Director of Environmental Health and PuMA President Shawn Rogan stated this agreement was unanimously voted in favor of by the PuMA members.

Legislator Castellano questioned how many members there are.

Director of Environmental Health and PuMA President Shawn Rogan stated there are approximately 25 members. He stated that number varies month to month.

Legislator Ellner questioned what the travel reimbursement for these employees is.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated if they are traveling on County business, they are reimbursed in accordance with the IRS rate.

Legislator Ellner questioned specifically what their meal reimbursement is.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated it is in accordance with the resolution passed by the Legislature.

Legislator Ellner requested confirmation that Personnel Officer Eldridge was referring to the resolution passed in 2012 (R#59/2012).

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated that is correct.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve the PuMA – Ratification of Collective Bargaining Agreement Resolution; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

**Item #6 – Approval Budgetary Transfer 24T011/ PuMA Contract Settlement/
Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis**

Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis stated this budgetary request is the funding related to the ratification of the PuMA Agreement. He stated there were funds earmarked, approximately \$63,050 for the potential increase. He stated the approval of the requested budgetary transfer will permit taking the funding from contingency and allocate the funds to the appropriate budget lines.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Budgetary Transfer 24T011/ PuMA Contract Settlement; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Budgetary Amendment 24A005/ To Reflect the Personnel Expenses Associated with the State Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) Grant/ Sheriff Kevin McConville

Chairman Jonke stated Commissioner of Finance Lewis and Undersheriff Lindert were present to address this agenda item.

Commissioner of Finance Mike Lewis stated the 2024 Budget included a grant funded position in the Sheriff's Department, a Corrections Sergeant. He stated a base salary of \$105,000 was budgeted. He stated at that time they did not include the fringe expenses which total \$56,489. He stated this request is to take the money out of contingency and increase the SCAAP total. He stated the total amount is \$162,348. He stated there is no fiscal impact because the SCAAP Grant is being used to fund this position, the Corrections Sergeant.

Chairman Jonke requested for clarification why this was not done during the Budget process.

Commissioner of Finance Mike Lewis explained during the Budget process Captain Greenough was researching whether the SCAAP Funds could be used to cover the fringe expenses. He stated it was confirmed they could be used, and that is why they are proposing this entry.

Legislator Castellano stated it is great news that the SCAAP Grant will cover the entire cost of the position.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Budgetary Amendment 24A005/ To Reflect the Personnel Expenses Associated with the State Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP) Grant; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #16 - FYI/ Accident Report – Duly Noted

Item #17 - FYI/ Incident Report – Duly Noted

Item #18 - Other Business

- a. Approval/ Confirmation/Appointment/ Interim Commissioner of Health/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge**

Chairman Jonke made a motion to waive the Rules and Accept the Other Business; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Chairman Jonke stated a letter of necessity was submitted by Personnel Officer Eldridge requesting this matter be accepted as other business at this meeting. He stated it is a request to

confirm the appointment of Michael Nesheiwat M.D. as the Putnam County Interim Commissioner of Health.

Personnel Officer Eldridge explained the County advertised last year, 2023, for a candidate to fill the Commissioner of Health position. He stated a candidate was selected. He stated unfortunately the County was notified in December that the candidate for personal reasons, was no longer interested in filling the position. He stated he relayed this situation to the New York State Department of Health. He stated the County has received their approval to permit Dr. Nesheiwat to continue as the Interim Commissioner of Health for Putnam County. He stated the reason he wanted this to be addressed at this meeting is because Resolution #40 of 2023 confirmed Dr. Nesheiwat as the Interim Commissioner through the end of 2023. He stated the County's commitment to the New York State Department of Health is that Putnam County will continue to recruit for a successor. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat has agreed to stay on. He stated the County has also put out for the possibility of a Public Health Director. He stated that he remains optimistic that we will have a qualified candidate to fill the Commissioner of Health position. He stated also, as a point of information, once a candidate is selected by the County the individual must be vetted through the New York State Department of Health, which includes the submission of paperwork and a background review. He stated he was sharing the information, so it is understood that there is a County process and a State process that must be executed in the hiring to this position.

Chairman Jonke stated his only concern was the wording in the proposed resolution where it states in the first Resolve clause: "until such time as a qualified candidate has been found and appointed." He stated he believes that is very open ended. He stated he would like the wording resolution to be amended. He requested that Legislative Counsel Firriolo confirm whether that would be appropriate.

Legislative Counsel Robert Firriolo stated that is appropriate, and he offered an example of the wording to amend the resolution.

Legislator Crowley stated this search has been going on for quite a while. She questioned if there is any type of incentive that could be used to attract qualified candidates. She questioned also if this will increase the County's Liability Insurance or any other coverage as a result of having a person in the position who does not have all of the required qualifications.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated no, an Interim Commissioner is allowed. He stated that Dr. Nesheiwat is qualified other than the fact he has not yet completed his Masters of Public Health (MPH), which he has stated he believes he will complete in May of 2024.

Legislator Castellano questioned what the major stumbling blocks are, and is the requirement to be a Putnam County resident one of the obstacles.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated the main stumbling block is the requirement of the MPH degree, and yes because it is a Public Officer position, the individual must live in the County and the salary for a doctor is not that high.

Legislator Montgomery questioned what it would take to change the position from Commissioner to Director, which she understands does not have the MD (Medical Doctor) requirement. She stated that way we would have an individual who specializes in Public Health, Epidemiology, and Pandemics and all those issues. She stated everyone knows her issues with this position and the individual in it, which she expressed from the beginning, because he holds several positions and the issue with the degree. She stated she has engaged in many discussions about this with other Counties and when she has been at the NYSAC meeting. She questioned again what it would take to change the position and has the Administration given this consideration and what is their position.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated the requirement in New York State if you are a County of a population of 250,000 or less you have the option of having either a Public Health Director or a Commissioner of Health. He stated Putnam County had a Public Health Director for many years. He stated with a Public Health Director, the County is still required to have a medical person available as an employee or consultant to the department. He stated there is not much involved in changing the position from a Commissioner to a Public Health Director. He stated he believes Putnam switched to having a Commissioner of Health in 2005. He stated the New York State Department of Health would like Putnam County to stay with a Commissioner of Health.

Chairman Jonke stated New York State Department of Health has given Putnam County a great deal of flexibility over the past few years related to Dr. Nesheiwat working to get his MPH.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated they have, and they understand our situation. He stated the approval of salary increase approved during the 2024 budget process, was a positive. He stated since the search began again, there have been some people applying. He stated he has not yet begun to review them.

Legislator Addonizio questioned how long the vetting process takes.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated once the County selects our qualified candidate, it will take approximately 30 – 60 days.

Legislator Montgomery stated for the record she hopes when and if we find someone and they are hired that the County will encourage Dr. Nesheiwat to stay on for the transition. She stated tonight there were funds allocated to cover the transition period in the Tourism Department.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated they are considering that.

Chairman Jonke stated he spoke with Dr. Nesheiwat. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat told him he is willing to do whatever is needed to help Putnam County.

Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge stated Dr. Nesheiwat has been wonderful and he is fully on board with this.

Director of Environmental Health Shawn Rogan stated he has worked for at least three (3) or four (4) Public Health Directors and three (3) Commissioners of Health. He stated when you have a Commissioner of Health advocating for a County, there is an undeniable difference. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat is an absolute gentleman who brings knowledge and skills to the table. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat supports the staff and expects them to do their job the right way. He stated he does not create unnecessary frivolous initiatives, just to put his name on them. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat asks, "what do you need to do your job?". He stated it is his opinion that you could not ask for a better boss than that. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat has told him the same thing mentioned by Chairman Jonke, that he is here for the good of Putnam County and he will never leave the County in a lurch. He stated his hope is that a qualified individual is hired, and he supports keeping the position a Commissioner of Health. He echoed that there will be no cost savings if the County were to convert back to a Public Health Director.

Chairman Jonke expressed his appreciation to Director Rogan for offering his input. He stated it is valuable to hear the perspective of an employee from the inside, thank you.

Legislator Ellner stated the amount of increase that was made to the Commissioner salary, he did not believe was enough, versus what it costs for health care. He stated he still believes it is not enough.

Chairman Jonke stated he would like to make an amendment to the resolution. He allowed Legislative Counsel to offer the proper verbiage to reflect this confirmation will be approved for a year or until a qualified candidate is hired.

Legislative Counsel stated his recommended verbiage: effective through December 31, 2024.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve as stated, the Amended Resolution Confirming the Appointment/ Interim Commissioner of Health; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #19 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 6:58PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.