

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

**Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Addonizio & Jonke**

**Thursday July 14, 2022  
(Immediately Following the Rules Committee Meeting Beginning at 6:00PM)**

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Addonizio and Chairwoman Sayegh were present. Legislator Jonke was absent. Legislator Nacerino sat in place of Legislator Jonke.

**Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – June 21, 2022 Meeting**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 22A053/Health Department/Software Change for Processing and Recording Public Health-Based Records**

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to accept the Additional; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor

Supervising Public Health Nurse Kathy Percacciolo stated all the County's public health patient-based programs have been out of compliance since 2017 due to the lack of an electronic medical record system with this capability. She stated the current system is being paid for and not used. She stated the Patagonia Health System is a public health based electronic system. She stated the Health Department is not able to obtain prescriptions for tuberculosis patients because prescriptions are all electronic. She stated the Health Department's Fiscal Manager can use Patagonia to do all reporting for the Health Department as well as complete time and effort reports. She stated there is zero (0) fiscal impact and every year there is a performance improvement incentive generating money that can be used to pay the annual cost of the system. She stated this system is desperately needed for the health and safety of the residents.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned what is currently happening in terms of keeping records.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated an electronic system developed during COVID was used by the entire state. She stated audits will begin taking place and she does not know what will happen.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned how medical records for MCH (Mother and Child Health), immunizations, lead poisoning, rabies, and tuberculosis, etc. are being kept.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated currently all records are on paper. She stated unfortunately people have received double immunizations as a result.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if patients who tested positive for tuberculosis can get a prescription.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated a client diagnosed with active tuberculosis goes to a federally qualified health center for evaluation and the physician prescribes treatment. She stated the Putnam County Health Department is responsible for treating and providing medication, which cannot be done without the prescription.

Legislator Nacerino stated Patagonia is crucial to the health and safety of the people. She stated an electronic record system eliminates human error and collects necessary information.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned how there is follow up if someone is out of office.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated the system that was used during COVID was easy to use due to it being electronic and the whole state documenting in the same system.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if these records would be tracked between Counties.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated the purpose of the electronic record system is for more effective communication between Counties.

Legislator Gouldman questioned why this was not done earlier if the Health Department knew about this for five (5) years.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated the system was requested in 2018 and denied.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how long it would take for a new system to be implemented.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated training is ready to commence and the goal for the start date will be set for October 1, 2022.

Legislator Gouldman stated the Legislature should move forward with this system.

Legislator Montgomery apologized for the denial of the system in 2018. She thanked Supervising Nurse Percacciolo for her efforts.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo clarified that it was not the Legislature who denied it.

Legislator Albano stated it is common sense to support getting this system.

Legislator Castellano questioned what the financial impact will be.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated various grants received during COVID cover the startup cost. She stated a request was put in for 20 people to use Patagonia at the same time as opposed to the 10 allowed to use the current system at the same time.

Legislator Addonizio expressed her support for this crucial system.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if any other Counties in the state are in same situation.

Supervising Nurse Percacciolo stated multiple Counties are looking at Patagonia because it is the first system based in public health.

Seven Hills Lake Resident Maureen Galway-Perotti expressed her astonishment on the work being done with such an antiquated system. She stated she hopes this matter comes to fruition.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Budgetary Amendment 22A053/Health Department/Software Change for Processing and Recording Public Health-Based Records; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

#### **Item #5 - Discussion/Update/Harmful Algal Blooms in Putnam County Bodies of Water/Health Department**

Director of Environmental Health Shawn Rogan stated algal blooms are greatly impacting Putnam County. He stated there is a drought currently, which is leading to many problems. He stated that historical data tracked by the DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) and the Department of Health show that numbers of algal blooms fluctuate depending on multiple factors. He stated that 2018 was the worst year for harmful algal blooms (HABs), with over 500 lost days of recreation in Putnam County and 55 detections of blue-green algae. He stated that the Health Department regulates thirty-two (32) beaches in Putnam County, which is the source of the data. He stated that private beaches under the jurisdiction of Homeowner's Associations are not included in this data. He stated that Putnam County trends typically follow New York State trends. He stated that numbers were down in 2019 and 2020. He stated this could potentially be related to the pandemic and decreased observation by the public. He stated that numbers in Putnam County are higher because there is greater collaboration by residents to inform the Department of Health of the blooms. He stated it is difficult to predict the numbers for the remainder of this year considering that weather has been fluctuating. He stated that on the Putnam County Health Department website, beach closures due to HABs and bacteria are reported. He stated that closures mainly revolve around four (4) lakes: Lake Carmel, Putnam Lake, Lake Peekskill, and Lake Casse. He stated the primary focus of the Health Department is to protect public health. He stated the public is frustrated because the Health Department is not sampling to close the beaches, they test to clear the beach to reopen. He stated that visual algae is enough to close. He stated that testing is done to clear a beach for reopening. He stated the Health Department does not have the role of providing a plan to address HABs but to assist in a plan. He stated that the Health Department is also working to identify failing septic systems. He stated that the Department is also doing work with stormwater regulations. He stated that the DEC recently mandated MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems) regulations. He stated

that the mandate is unfunded and will cost Putnam a significant amount of money to meet the regulations. He stated that work targeting HABs is a multifaceted approach.

Legislator Nacerino stated that harmful algae is a very complex issue. She stated it is very disappointing for residents when the beaches are closed. She stated that it is not just Putnam County that is having issues. She questioned whether blooms are more prevalent in August.

Director Rogan answered summer tends to be the worst for blooms. He stated that blooms are reported all throughout the year. He stated that there is still a lot not known about HABs. He stated that the issues in Putnam County can in part be attributed to the density in housing. He stated that pushing leaders to lobby for more funding would be beneficial to addressing issues that contribute to HABs.

Legislator Nacerino questioned whether science has found what makes algae multiply.

Director Rogan stated that the answer is outside his expertise. He stated that based on what he does know, phosphorus build up is a main factor. He stated that dredging can restore the water's health. He stated that under Former Governor Andrew Cuomo, \$65 million was set aside for HABs. He stated that, as a result of this, studies were conducted on three (3) lakes in Putnam County that led to specific recommendations.

Legislator Addonizio stated that considering the concern regarding HABs, more funding from NYS should be allocated to address these issues.

Director Rogan stated that HABs also affect drinking water.

Legislator Nacerino stated that this is a very serious issue. She stated that solutions are fiscally difficult to obtain for residents.

Legislator Addonizio asked about aeration.

Director Rogan stated that Lake Peekskill has used a microbial treatment.

Legislator Montgomery questioned whether money for the septic repair program came from the State. She questioned whether there are regulations for receiving funding and if the regulations can be changed.

Director Rogan stated that the funding did come from the State's Environmental Facilities Corporation. He stated that when the Department of Health requested more funding, the response was that the money previously given had not yet been spent. He stated the little bit of money left has already been spoken for.

Legislator Montgomery questioned whether ARPA funding would be going towards the communities affected by the lakes.

Director Rogan stated that ARPA funding was for infrastructure-based projects whereas this project is more individual based.

Legislator Gouldman questioned what would happen if a homeowner is unable to fix the problem caused by their home.

Director Rogan stated that there have been a few examples where the County has paid for the repair and then put a lien on the house. He stated that a low or no interest loan program would be beneficial.

Legislator Montgomery stated that the Let's Talk Lakes program information is available for those who would like to access it.

Legislator Nacerino questioned what problems the wells and septic systems being in close proximity would pose to small lake communities.

Director Rogan stated septic systems almost never meet today's standards. He stated there are many alternative systems that can be used. He stated conservation of water is important as excess water, such as leaking toilets, can ruin septic systems.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if running water in the winter to keep pipes from freezing is the same situation.

Director Rogan stated it is a calculated risk as running the water could still ruin the septic system.

Seven Hills Lake Resident Maureen Galway-Perotti stated Seven Hills Lake has been experiencing a lake wide toxic algae bloom since July 9, 2022. She stated it is complicated to work with homeowners and association members to educate about the seriousness of this issue. She stated septic systems are expensive, and the average life of a septic system is 40 years if maintained well. She stated most homeowners are not in compliance with repairing their septic system every four (4) years. She stated septic rehabilitation should be a priority because it will decrease the amount of nutrient-loading in the lakes.

Lake Peekskill Resident Lisa Diaz stated the aeration system works well, but several problems arose from bioaugmentation and system repairs. She stated the permit to restart the aeration system is being held up. She stated the excess use of water during COVID has detrimentally impacted the lake. She stated new residents from urban areas demand chemical applications in order to achieve clear lakes.

Director Rogan stated the number of septic system failures doubled during COVID and have sustained through 2022. He stated copper sulfate is a short-term solution to lake problems.

EverBlue Lakes Employee Rudy Scott stated Putnam County is currently the worst area in the country in terms of toxic algal blooms. He stated Counties and regions have to come together to fix this problem. He stated health issues arise from harmful algal blooms. He stated chemical use, such as weed killers and algicides, exasperates the problem the following year. He stated

money can be allocated from the State Budget for this issue. He stated this problem needs to be solved as quickly as possible.

Tonetta Lake Resident Matt Frohman stated the south end of Tonetta Lake is dying due to muck. He stated he worked with Town of Southeast Supervisor Tony Hay who gave him ten (10) years of data on the lake problems, but nothing was done by the company who compiled the data. He stated the community does not know the correlation between nutrient pollution and failed septic systems. He stated community education is of utmost importance.

Director Rogan stated Tonetta Lake Residents may not be informed because there is deep water, a swim area, and no beach shutdowns. He stated targeted education is necessary to solve this problem.

Seven Hills Lake Resident Eddi Zamft stated it is important for schools to teach children about protecting the lakes.

Ms. Diaz stated Lake Peekskill was in disaster in 2015, which motivated the community to become educated on how to take care of the lake. She stated a septic pump outlaw was passed, systems were upgraded, a medication take-back was set up, and an aeration system was installed. She stated the muck is mostly gone due to these actions.

Director Rogan stated Putnam Valley was one of the first towns to start enforcing the DEC rule that septic tanks be pumped out every five (5) years. He stated the towns and the Health Department keep a database of who has had their septic tanks pumped.

Mr. Frohman questioned whether someone is obligated to report an issue with a septic tank.

Director Rogan answered yes. He stated that homeowners have about a month to fix the issue before a regulatory agency comes in.

Kirk Lake Resident Eileen questioned what area of the Town government is responsible for auditing the septic pump outs.

Director Rogan stated it is through the office of Town of Carmel Director of Codes Enforcement & Building Inspector Mike Carnazza.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there have been good ideas presented. She stated that the Hazardous Waste Program ongoing in Putnam County is a great program. She stated that it is free for Putnam County residents and happens twice a year at Fahnestock State Park. She stated that the Medicine Take Back Program is also beneficial. She stated that medicine should not be flushed in an effort to maintain the water health. She encouraged residents to check their septic systems and fix their plumbing leaks. She stated that the Health Department is also very helpful in maintaining public health.

Director Rogan stated that it is a difficult position because no one enjoys closing the beaches. He stated that his colleagues in the Health Department are all passionate about public health and will answer any questions.

Resident Diaz questioned what can be done about the turnaround period after a report of a bloom is made. She stated that by the time the State is addressing one bloom, another could have appeared.

Director Rogan stated that there is a 24-hour period before samples can be collected. He stated that notification begins immediately. He stated that any wait time is due to the fact that the body of water is not cleared to reopen.

Legislator Gouldman questioned when the next Hazardous Waste Program Day is.

Director Rogan answered that it is October 1<sup>st</sup>.

Legislator Castellano questioned whether the Hazardous Waste Program Day can be held in another location.

Director Rogan stated that the DEC has to approve the location. He stated that there can be major issues with the waste brought that would affect the area. He stated that Fahnestock is the central point of the County. He stated that he would be open to looking at other areas.

**Item #6 - Other Business – None**

**Item #7 – Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 7:43 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Legislative Interns Eden Barone and Tanya Ramirez.