

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

Members: Chairman Jonke, Legislators Castellano & Nacerino

Tuesday

March 12, 2024

(Physical & Special Full Meetings Immediately Followed)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Chairman Jonke who requested Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Nacerino and Chairman Jonke were present. Legislator Castellano arrived at 6:32PM.

Item #3 - Approval/Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes/ February 22, 2024

Chairman Jonke stated the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/ Ratification of PBA Collective Bargaining Agreement/ Personnel Officer Paul Eldridge

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated he is glad to speak to the signed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). He stated he would speak to some of the highlights of the Agreement. He stated it is a five (5) year agreement. He stated it is retroactive to January 1, 2023. He explained in January 2023 all of the other County Units had accepted the roll over to 3.50%. He stated that was rejected at that time by the PBA. He stated that is why it goes back to January 1, 2023, and is good until the end of 2027. He stated the number of Comp Hours were reduced. He stated it was 480 hours, and it was agreed to reduce that to 340 hours. He stated also agreed to was anyone who currently was over the 340 up to 480 would be paid out for those hours. He stated the Holiday Pay was increased. He stated they end up working a lot of the holidays, he stated that amount had not been increased in probably 10 -12 years. He stated it was at \$1,500 and it was agreed to increase it to \$3,500. He stated that is effective January 1, 2024. He stated that is a summary of the highlights of this Agreement.

Chairman Jonke stated his appreciation to those present: Personnel Officer Eldridge, Deputy County Executive Burpoe, Sheriff McConville, and Undersheriff Lindert. He stated he finds this to be a fair Agreement and has heard that the Union Members voted overwhelmingly in support of this Agreement, and that says a lot.

Legislator Nacerino expressed her appreciation to those present, the Administration and all those who were instrumental in bringing this forth. She stated this is fair to the Taxpayers and the Employees. She stated she was happy to support this. She requested that Personnel Officer Eldridge speak to the use of Body Worn Cameras.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated a Body Worn Camera is a piece of equipment. He stated that is supported by PERB (Public Employment Relations Board) and an Employer has the right to require use of equipment. He stated they have been working with the PBA for the past year and a half to two (2) years, on a policy. He stated the policy was implemented in January of 2023. He stated the PBA did file a request with PERB. He stated it was later dismissed.

Legislator Nacerino stated she was happy to hear that. She stated she believes it is crucial to the members of the public and the Officers that the Body Worn Cameras be used.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated his agreement. He stated it has been found that over 90% of cases filed against Officers are exonerated as a result of the use of the Body Worn Cameras.

Legislator Castellano expressed his appreciation and stated he offered his applause for the extraordinary work that was done to accomplish this. He thanked the members of the PBA and thanked them for all of the hard work they do. He stated in today's world it is a tough job, and he expressed his appreciation for all they do. He questioned the Comp Time that will be paid out that falls within the 340 – 480 range, and how it would impact the budget.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated they will have the right to be paid out by the end of 2024 at 2023 rates. He stated there were 18 employees who fall in this category.

Finance Commissioner Michael Lewis stated this was calculated including FICA at approximately \$80,000. He stated his plan is to accrue that back to 2023, and will confirm that with the outside County Auditors, O'Connor Davies Administration, LLC. He stated if it is determined that it is not permissible then the funds will be taken from the Contingency.

Legislator Montgomery reiterated, per earlier discussion regarding the Body Worn Cameras matter, there are still 90 Days to discuss or change it.

Personnel Officer Eldridge confirmed that was correct.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if after the 90 day period will the Body Worn Camera Policy be posted on the County Website. She stated the Police Policy Review document that was submitted to the State from Putnam County included that all the Policies would be posted online. She stated she has been advocating for this.

Sheriff McConville stated he will know in the next 90 days whether any policies will be posted. He stated any posting of policies will be determined strictly by himself, the Undersheriff and the Sheriff's Office Command Staff. He confirmed the policy currently posted on-line is the Use of Force Policy, which is the only one mandated to be posted.

Legislator Addonizio stated her appreciation to all who were involved in negotiating this contract. She stated she believes it is a fair contract to the PBA and to the County. She stated she will be voting in favor of this contract.

Legislator Sayegh stated her appreciation to all who were involved in the negotiations. She stated she appreciates having this open discussion at a public meeting.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve the Ratification of PBA Collective Bargaining Agreement; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/ Budgetary Transfer – 24T046/ Commissioner of Finance/ PBA Contract Settlement/ Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis

Chairman Jonke requested Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis speak to this agenda item.

Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis stated during the 2024 Budget process as part of the contingency, there was money put aside for this particular contract. He stated the budgetary transfer request is to move said funding from the contingency account to the respective budget lines.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Budgetary Transfer – 24T046/ Commissioner of Finance/ PBA Contract Settlement; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval/ Fund Transfer – 24T056/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred During the Month of January 2024 with Six Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office/ Sheriff Kevin McConville

Sheriff Kevin McConville stated this fund transfer request comes as a result of Correction Officer vacancies, FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act), 207C, a suspension, and two (2) Correction Officers on Constant Watch at Putnam Hospital which cost \$75,000. He stated this request has no fiscal impact. He stated the request included using funding from the vacant position and put it in the overtime budget. He stated in the meantime they have been interviewing to fill said vacancies in the Correctional Facility. He stated filling the Correction Officer positions is a challenging, as is the case in surrounding counties as well. He stated they will continue to look and be creative in ways to find candidates.

Chairman Jonke questioned if it is possible to have retired individuals come back on a part time basis.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated that is possible. He stated there are some limitations per section 211 and 212 of the Retirements Social Security Law which has a limit up to \$35,000 that can be earned. He stated they are trying to get that changed to \$50,000. He stated that it is a practice that is being done because it is an advantage to bring an individual in who has the experience and knowledge of the work.

Legislator Castellano stated a test was given recently. He questioned how many people earned being put on the “list”.

Undersheriff Lindert stated he recalled 16.

Personnel Officer Eldridge spoke to the decline in the number of applicants.

Legislator Crowley questioned in reference to possibly attracting Correction Officers from another department to transfer to the Putnam County Correction Facility, is there an issue with the time and the retirement system.

Undersheriff Lindert stated that is not an issue in Corrections.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer – 24T056/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred During the Month of January 2024 with Six Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Fund Transfer – 24T057/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred During the Month of February 2024 with Seven Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office/ Sheriff Kevin McConville

Chairman Jonke requested if this request is directly related to reasons stated for the Overtime during the month of January, in item #6.

Sheriff McConville confirmed that was correct.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 24T057/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred During the Month of February 2024 with Seven Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #8 - Approval/ Fund Transfer – 24T058/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred from March 1, 2024, through March 8, 2024, with Seven Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office/ Sheriff Kevin McConville

Chairman Jonke requested if this request is directly related to reasons stated for the Overtime during the months of January and February per agenda items #6 and #7.

Sheriff McConville confirmed that was correct.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve/ Fund Transfer – 24T058/ Correctional Facility Overtime/ Costs Incurred from March 1, 2024, through March 8, 2024, with Seven Correction Officer Vacancies and two Other Employees Out of the Office; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #9 - Approval/ Budgetary Amendment – 24A024/ Proposed Reclassification of Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Position, A Salary Adjustment for the Director of Mental Health and Child Protective Services Position and Restructuring of Caseworker Positions/ Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated the County has been unable to retain Child Protective Services (CPS) Caseworkers in the past years. She stated recently

they have received an applicant of a very qualified candidate, specialized and certified as an Alcohol and Substance Abuse Counselor. She stated in her meetings with Personnel Officer Eldridge about bringing this candidate in at a different step in the grade she learned that could not be done. She stated in order to do that the three (3) previous hires would need to be bumped up to the same step. She stated that is what she is here to discuss. She stated the starting salary of a CPS Caseworker is \$59,595.00. She stated there is a big jump in salary from step one (1) to step two (2). She stated as many know the work done in CPS is very difficult. She stated the County is very fortunate to have several Caseworkers who have been with the County for twenty plus years. She stated the struggle are these four (4) positions.

Chairman Jonke requested she elaborate on the work that a CPS Caseworker handles. He explained Commissioner Servadio spoke to him relaying some of the duties the Caseworkers were handling.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated they are definitely seeing an increase in the number of CPS calls and also an increase in the severity of them. She stated often they must partner with the local Police Agencies to even go out to the homes. She stated there is an increase in emergency removals. She summarized by stating it is traumatizing for the CPS Workers. She stated she feels very confident that this request to increase the salary is warranted because of what they are going through on a daily basis.

Legislator Nacerino stated she would support this. She stated a starting salary of \$59,595.00 for this type of job is under paid. She stated these employees have educations and see and deal with things that would be horrific to most of us. She stated there is no reason for her not to support this request. She stated the nature of the work needs to be a part of the assessment process in setting a salary.

Chairman Jonke stated speaking for himself, some of us live in a bubble and we do not know what is going on in Putnam County. He stated from Commissioner Servadio and from her predecessor he has learned a lot of what goes on in our County. He stated given the facts of what these employees face in their jobs, he will support this request.

Legislator Castellano requested clarification on what is being requested. He questioned if the request includes a salary increase for four (4) employees.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated yes, the request includes the new hire and the three (3) employees who just began in their positions six (6) months ago.

Legislator Castellano stated the request is to put all four (4) employees at level two (2). He questioned how many steps there are.

DSS Fiscal Manager Kristin Wunner stated that is correct and the cut off to get them into step two (2) is July 1st , 2024. She stated there are four (4) steps.

Legislator Castellano requested an explanation regarding an item on the backup. He stated there is a budget line with a salary of \$80,294.00.

DSS Fiscal Manager Kristin Wunner stated that was a salary of an incumbent who retired after the 2024 budget process.

Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis stated that is a vacant position, and the money from that position is being reallocated to the four (4) positions being discussed.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio clarified the employee who was in the position, who is a 20 plus year employee, did not retire. She stated due to the nature of the work in the CPS Department the individual requested to be transferred.

Legislator Crowley stated she believes this request is beyond fair. She stated she looks at the cost of living, the responsibilities of this work, and also if the employee takes the health insurance it does not leave much money left. She stated looking at the facts of what these employees see in their jobs, they are bringing that home with them. She stated it is her opinion that this request is more than justifiable and will support this request. She thanked Commissioner Servadio for all she does and for bringing this request forward.

Legislator Sayegh stated she is in favor of this request. She recognized Commissioner Servadio for her creativity, vision and for bringing new employees with needed skills into the CPS Department. She questioned if the proposed increased salary of \$66,598.00 will become the base salary for the positions.

DSS Fiscal Manager Kristin Wunner stated no it will return to the CPS Caseworker Step one (1) salary amount.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated the Contract the County has with the CSEA states if an employee is hired in at a salary rate more than the other employees already employed, they too must be brought up to the higher salary.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated she would very much like to discuss at some point an increase to the starting salary.

Legislator Crowley questioned where Putnam County falls in terms of salary amounts and steps in CPS compared to Dutchess, Orange, and Westchester Counties.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated Putnam County's salaries fall lower. She stated it is interesting that Putnam County been able to retain the original class of CPS workers. She stated the three (3) employees who have been in the positions less than six (6) months are replacing three (3) employees who came and left within a year.

Legislator Montgomery recognized that it says a lot about Commissioner Servadio and her predecessor. She recognized that the majority of people in the CPS positions are women, and she recognized the salary was not a living wage. She continued to speak to her opinion on the matter of the salaries offered for the workers in the Social Services positions. She stated she is happy to support this request.

Legislator Ellner stated he applauds Commissioner Servadio's financial creativity. He stated that he believes she has touched upon something. He stated that throughout the County there are employees who have reached their 30 years of service and could retire. He stated if the County could encourage them to retire, then when new employees were brought in the County would realize a savings. He stated he is in favor of this request.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if the reason the previous three (3) employees stayed less than a year (1) was as a result of the increase in the number of CPS cases and emergencies.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated she believes that is probably a contributing factor. She stated also, it takes a very specific person to thrive in this department. She stated she is confident with the current employees and proposed new hire. She stated that will bring them to a full staff and they are also incorporating more social and emotional wellness specifically for that department.

Legislator Addonizio stated she is in full support of this request.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated also in working with Commissioner of Finance Lewis and Personnel Officer Eldridge she has discussed restructuring the department. She has proposed making the vacant Deputy Commissioner DSS, Mental Health and Youth Bureau position a Deputy Commissioner of DSS and Youth Bureau. She stated that would result in a decrease of that salary and add the difference to the Director of Mental Health position. She stated increasing that salary would help in attracting the appropriate person for that position, with the goal of eventually having the Director of Mental Health becoming a Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health. She stated not only in Child Protective Services, but across the board in Social Services there is an increase. She stated they are not able to keep up with the eligibility alone with the Medicaid, the HEAP (Home Energy Assistance Program) applications that are coming into the department. She stated it is her opinion that this warrants a Deputy Commissioner specifically for the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Youth Bureau and then the Mental Health side of this included several projects the Legislature is aware of: the distribution of the Opioid Settlement, the Mobile Crisis Team, the Co-Responder Team and the Stabilization Center. She stated creating the position of Director of Mental Health would allow that individual to focus on all the projects. She stated DSS Fiscal Manager Wunner worked with Finance Commissioner Lewis and they came up with a very creative way to present this proposal.

DSS Fiscal Manager Kristin Wunner stated in this proposal to restructure the Deputy Commissioner position, will result in a decrease of that salary. She continued to speak to the financials to the proposal.

Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Sara Servadio stated this would also allow for internal staff promotion. She stated allowing opportunities for employees who have worked in some cases 25 plus years in the Department. She stated there is a vacant Director position, that will permit for six (6) promotions. She stated the Director of Mental Health position was approved in the 2024 budget at a salary of \$90,000. She stated that they were able to secure grant funding which would bring the salary up to \$110,000, which would make it more competitive to surrounding Counties. She stated

they have State Mobile Crisis Grant funds that would be used. She stated after two (2) years the Opioid Abatement Funds will be available for 15 years.

Legislator Montgomery expressed her appreciation to Commissioner Servadio and all who assisted her in the preparation of these proposals. She stated the need in the field of mental health is something we hear about every day. She stated the County needs to supply the services and support their staff. She stated she will vote in support of this request.

Legislator Sayegh stated her support for this proposal to split off the mental health portion. She stated it will allow people to focus on their specialties and support the department. She stated she is in support of this proposal.

Legislator Nacerino stated her support of everything that has been said and also fully supports separating the mental health portion from the DSS & Youth Bureau departments. She stated she believes it will prove to be in the best interest of the people who are served.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to Approve Approval/ Budgetary Amendment – 24A024/ Proposed Reclassification of Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health, Social Services & Youth Bureau Position, A Salary Adjustment for the Director of Mental Health and Child Protective Services Position and Restructuring of Caseworker Positions; Seconded by Legislators Castellano and Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #10 - Discussion/ Amend Resolution #59 of 2012/ Reimbursement – Employee Expenses/ Meals/ Legislator Greg Ellner

Legislator Ellner stated he has spoken to a number of employees who have said at the current rate of reimbursement for meals when they are traveling for business: breakfast \$8.00, lunch \$10.00 and dinner \$20.00 it is resulting in them not even submitting for reimbursement, because of the low amount. He stated that he looked at the higher end of the Federal General Services Administration (GSA) schedule. He stated that equates to the following reimbursements, with receipts: breakfast \$18.00, lunch \$25.00 and dinner \$36.00.

Chairman Jonke stated the draft resolution that Legislator Ellner submitted for this discussion was based on the Federal guidelines.

Legislator Ellner stated he based it on the higher end of the GSA contract. He stated the GSA rates can become complicated because they are based on zip codes. He stated he believed that would result in too much work for the accounting employees.

Legislator Nacerino stated she is in support of this. She does not believe any employee should have out of pocket expenses to eat while on company business. She stated ironically, she just recently saw a story on the news which reported a receipt at a popular fast-food chain totaled \$24.00 for a cheeseburger, soda, and small fries. She stated it speaks to what Legislator Ellner has brought forward this evening. She agrees the current rates of meal reimbursement are inadequate. She stated she is not sure what the amended amounts should be, but agrees they need to be amended.

Chairman Jonke questioned are these proposed rates connected with the Putnam County zip codes.

Legislator Ellner stated no, they are higher than the Putnam County rate.

Chairman Jonke stated he would prefer rates that are in line with the Putnam County zip codes. He stated then in the future allow the Finance Department to be able to increase them, if the GSA rate for Putnam County rates increase. He stated it would be handled the same way that the gasoline reimbursement works.

Legislator Addonizio stated she would be in support of amending the reimbursement. She stated she would like to see the reimbursement rates from the surrounding Counties.

Legislator Ellner stated the highest reimbursement rate is the Bronx County at a total of \$79.00 and Albany is \$69.00.

Legislator Sayegh referenced the original resolution from 1996 it had two value categories: with a receipt and without a receipt. She questioned if that is still in effect.

Legislative Counsel Robert Firriolo stated no. He stated in 2012 the amendment made was to move to what the IRS calls an "Accountable Plan" an employee is required to account for the amount that they spent. He stated the current reimbursement amounts are maximum amounts, so if the receipt is less than the maximum amount, they are reimbursed the lesser amount.

Legislator Montgomery stated she is in support of this and recommended that this be passed and not wait.

Chairman Jonke stated this in on for discussion with a draft version of a resolution.

Legislator Castellano stated he would like to know the amounts paid out for the past couple of years for meal reimbursement.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification that this does not apply to everyday, this is for employees when they are out of town.

Legislator Castellano questioned if an employee who works overtime on a Saturday, would that qualify for this meal reimbursement.

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated it is for overnight travel only.

Personnel Officer Eldridge stated that the employees in the highway department if they work plowing a certain number of hours on the weekend they are given a meal allowance.

Legislative Crowley stated this is just a draft, so what would prohibit removing the overnight stay requirement. She stated for an example that members from the Sheriff's Department went to Albany for the day. She stated she is not sure if they were treated to lunch or if they paid for their own. She stated she believes they deserve meal reimbursement.

Chairman Jonke stated as a reference when he worked for the Town of Carmel it was presumed you were responsible for your own lunch. He stated on an overnight stay you would be reimbursed for breakfast and dinner, but not lunch.

Legislator Crowley stated in her position, through the Federal Government she gets reimbursed for all three (3) meals.

Item #11 - FYI/ Accident Report – Duly Noted

Item #12 – FYI/ Incident Report– Duly Noted

Item #13 - Other Business - None

Item #14 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:21PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.