

HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
Held In The
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 318

CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512

Members: Chairwoman Scucimarra, Legislators Gross and LoBue

Monday

April 20, 2015

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by Chairwoman Scucimarra who requested Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Gross and Chairwoman Scucimarra were present. Legislator LoBue was absent.

Item #3 – Approval of Minutes – March 19, 2015

Legislator Gross made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted; Seconded by Chairwoman Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Legislator Gross made a motion to waive the rules and accept all of the additional; Seconded by Chairwoman Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Item #4 – Presentation/POW’R Against Tobacco Coalition Coordinator Denise Hogan/Increasing the Age of Purchasing Tobacco Products from 18 to 21 Years of Age

POW’R Against Tobacco Director Maureen Kenney stated New York City and Suffolk County have increased the age of purchasing tobacco products from 18 to 21 years of age. She stated Westchester County and Rockland County are currently considering this legislation. She stated Westchester County Legislator Catherine Borgia is very interested in a regional approach regarding this matter.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she met Westchester Legislator Borgia at a NYSAC Conference and discussed the possibility of raising the age of purchasing tobacco products.

Director Kenney stated the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) and the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids all endorse this proposed legislation. She provided an example of her son’s friends that smoke who are currently around the age of 22 and all began to smoke around the age of 15. She stated when those individuals began smoking around the age of 15; they received most of the cigarettes from older friends. She stated if it is challenging for the youth to get cigarettes it may prolong their decision to smoke cigarettes. She stated as of now, by the time one is 21 years old and wants to quit the nicotine addiction makes it harder for those to quit smoking.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she heard that if someone has not used tobacco by the age of 26 they are unlikely to ever begin smoking.

Director Kenney stated 98% of all adult smokers started to smoke before the age of 26 and 85% began to smoke before the age of 21.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she believes the proposed legislation to increase the age of purchasing tobacco products would have a positive effect on public health.

Commissioner of Health Dr. Allen Beals stated currently there are serious issues with addictive behavior in the County, such as the Heroin Crisis. He stated the nicotine is an addictive substance. He stated it is fact that to quit smoking is very challenging; therefore, the emphasis has to be on prevention. He stated the County has strict enforcement with checking the age before the purchase of a tobacco product. He stated young people's social network includes those who are older in age, which is where the youth are getting their cigarettes. Seldom are cigarettes sold to those under the age of 18. He stated the increase to being 21 years of age of purchasing tobacco will have a dramatic positive effect.

Legislator Gross stated he does not support smoking. He stated at the age of 18 one is seen as an adult in the eyes of the law; such as voting, joining the military, and marrying. He stated people have to take responsibility for their actions. He stated he cannot support the proposal to increase the age of purchasing tobacco products.

Legislator Nacerino stated she respectfully disagrees with Legislator Gross. She stated Legislators have a responsibility to protect the safety and welfare of our youth. She stated nicotine is an addiction that also precludes to diseases. She stated children's brains are not capable of making an important decision that will impact them in the future such as deciding to smoke.

Legislator Addonizio stated she agrees with Legislator Gross. She stated those at the age of 18 are considered adults. She stated at that age they should be able to make the proper choice in regards to smoking. She stated she does not condone smoking and approximately 98% of lung cancer is related to smoking. She stated she opposes the proposed legislation to increase the age because she believes it is "too much government" and overtime young adults have become more immature.

Legislator Gross stated he taught at the Brewster High School for 32 years and the health program in schools have a very strong stance against tobacco use. He stated he believes education is the key to changing the issue.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she understands Legislator Gross's view; however when she sees high school students smoking, it breaks her heart. She stated our County is one of the healthiest counties in New York. She stated approximately 88% of adults in the County do not smoke.

Legislator Castellano questioned if New York City changed the age restriction for purchasing tobacco products.

Director Kenney stated yes, it was effective last year.

Legislator Castellano stated he is surprised that there was not a lot of news coverage for New York City raising the purchasing age for tobacco products to 21. He stated he is more inclined to support the proposed legislation because it puts cigarettes in the same category as alcohol.

Director Kenney stated if this matter is discussed again, the POW'R Against Tobacco Organization would greatly appreciate the opportunity to come back to the Committee meeting with a formal presentation.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she would be happy to invite the POW'R Against Tobacco Organization back to the Committee meeting to discuss this matter further.

Item #5 – Presentation/Public Service Announcement/War on Addiction Initiative/Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Joseph DeMarzo

Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Joseph DeMarzo stated Putnam County's National Counsel for Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependencies ("NCADD") Executive Director Kristen McConnell co-chair for the Communities that Care Coalition ("CTC") with him. He stated there are currently five (5) CTC Coalition groups in the County. He stated CTC began in 2005 with no funding. He stated with the permission from Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza, CTC applied for a grant that assists in supporting the Organization.

CTC Co-Chair McConnell stated in 2008 CTC was awarded the Drug Free Communities Grant; and CTC receives funding annually for ten (10) years. She stated the grant provides funding for a full-time coordinator, compliance checks with police officers, and media coverage. She stated the Public Service Announcement ("PSA") that was recently created was paid for through the grant.

Deputy Commissioner DeMarzo stated originally the PSA was to inform the public on opiates; however the Heroin Crisis is constantly in the news. He stated the War on Addiction includes alcohol and other substances such as marijuana. He stated the Carmel CTC Chapter allowed the usage of their production studio, and children to do the voiceovers for the PSA. He stated CTC is open to everyone. He stated it is a goal of the CTCs to create more PSAs. He then proceeded to play the PSA.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated Deputy Commissioner DeMarzo and Co-Chair McConnell do a wonderful job. She stated they did a great job in the Town of Philipstown by helping to fight back on the War on Addiction. She stated it is important that while the County fights the War on Addiction that the Legislature recognizes tobacco products as addiction.

Deputy Commissioner DeMarzo stated the CTC is more than happy to put the PSA up on any website.

Legislator Nacerino stated she agreed with Chairwoman Scuccimarra in that any addiction is a very serious matter.

Item #6 – Presentation/Common Core State Standards/Cathy Sapeta

- a. Approval/In Support of the Passage of State Assembly Bill A05142 & Any Senate Companion Bill to Discontinue the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards**
- b. FYI/Resolution #268 of 2013/Memorialization/Common Core Learning Standards**

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated in 2013 a Resolution was done to slow down the process of the Common Core Learning Standards (“Common Core”).

Founder of New Yorkers United for Kids Cathy Sapeta stated she calls for the withdrawal of the Common Core. She facilitated discussion in how the exams are way above grade level; such as a reading exam was scored a level five (5) but the exam was for third graders. She is concerned of the effects of the exams will have on children’s self-esteem. She stated Bill Gates is a main funder in the Common Core and one of the founders. She stated Common Core was created as an experiment. She stated a motive for Bill Gates funding the Common Core is because it will require a lot of technology in order for the program to work. She questioned if one (1) set standard can be used on everyone. She then had those in the room participate in a questionnaire experiment to demonstrate the challenges of using one (1) set standard on everyone. She stated approximately 500 early childhood experts had great concerns that the standards would be harmful to young children.

Early Childhood Adjunct Carrie Welch stated she is also requesting for the withdrawal of Common Core. She stated she is a member of the National Association for Education of Young Children (“NAEYC”). She stated NAEYC believe that those from birth to age eight (8) should have equal access to developmentally appropriate high quality learning. She stated she is also a mom to a six (6) year old. She facilitated discussion in how her son has challenges adapting to the Common Core. She stated the Common Core is not developmentally appropriate for children. She stated the Common Core Exams do not measure accurately and have biased questions. She stated particularly young boys do not to properly develop physically, emotionally and socially under the Common Core.

Retired School Psychologist Cathy Substa stated the Common Core looks at what “everyone should be able to do” and “how do we get them there”. She stated currently the goal for educators is to have the children pass the exams. She stated data mining is written into the Common Core. She stated school districts are required to set up a database that includes various demographics and information such as the child’s age, parent’s marital status, religion, and economic status. She stated the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) Law changed in 2012 by executive order. She stated information is now less secure and the information from the database can be given to third parties. She stated she also would like to stress when there is a set standard for everyone it decreases individuality at every level.

Legislator Nacerino referenced an article from the Journal News, “Opt Out” dated Sunday, April 19, 2015. She stated in the article the point of the Exam is to level out the playing field regardless of an economic advantage or academic achievement; however the article contradicts itself. She stated the

expectation is unrealistic because socioeconomic status does have a huge role in school districts, preparation of learning and the learning process.

Legislator Gross stated the Common Core is a detrimental program. He stated opportunities and creativity is stifled among the youth. He stated there is not a safety net for those at the low end of the spectrum. He stated the teachers have to teach to the test which results in eliminating certain topics from class.

Legislator Nacerino stated the Teacher's Associations are actively opposing the Common Core. She stated the Common Core defies the essence of education. She stated it is not fair to evaluate a student in a self-inclusion classroom to a student taking advanced placement classes.

Founder of New Yorkers United for Kids Sapeta stated school superintendents are more concerned with money than the welfare of children. She stated the pressure should be put on New York State and not children's parents.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she would like Legislative Counsel Van Ross to look at the draft resolution and then bring this matter back to Committee.

Putnam County Golf Course General Manager Mike McCall stated he was a former school board president and has some knowledge in this matter. He stated he agrees with points that were stated. However, he believes there are some good and bad elements to the Common Core. He stated there were issues with the previous New York State Exams prior to the Common Core. He stated he has a daughter that was in the Common Core Program so he understands the concerns that may arise. He stated New York State has one of the best social studies curriculums in the United States. He stated the curriculum is still controlled locally.

Legislator Gross stated there is local control on the school curriculum however, a teacher will be evaluated by the exams given and therefore the teacher will teach to the test.

General Manager McCall stated teachers having to teach to the test and being evaluated by the exams were issues before the implementation of the Common Core. He stated he believes there needs to be a strong administrator to evaluate the teachers.

Item #7 – Discussion/The Great Healthy Yard Project/Use of Chemicals in Our Yards

General Manager McCall stated he works with Westchester County's Pest Management Committee and Nephrologist Dr. Diane Lewis recently became part of that committee. He stated Dr. Lewis is a big advocate against using pesticides. He stated Dr. Lewis started a grassroots movement called the Great Healthy Yard Project and even has a book on this matter. He stated homeowners use approximately 10 times more pesticides per acre than those who work in the agriculture field. He stated having worked at a golf course he uses pesticides however; those using the pesticides are trained. He stated the homeowners are not trained to use pesticides. He stated he is aware that Westchester County is

proposing to approve a resolution to support the Great Healthy Yard Project. He stated there are new studies that show evidence that pesticides have carcinogens.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated homeowners need to be aware that anything put on their yard will end up in their drinking water. She stated that is why the Legislature is so adamant about the Medication Take Back Day. She stated our County has watershed property and our County is near the Hudson River. She stated it is important to take care of our water. She then played the video clip created by the Great Healthy Yard Project Founder Dr. Diane Lewis.

Legislator Nacerino stated she likes the idea of bringing awareness by education because many individuals are unaware of the negative impacts of using pesticides.

Legislator Gross questioned what the alternatives are for getting rid of weeds.

General Manager McCall stated the goal is to have healthy turf to prevent weeds; however to do so it requires a lot of over seeding, aerification, pulling out the weeds and mowing the lawn higher. He stated the best time to tackle an issue with weeds is during the fall season. He stated the mentality of a perfect lawn needs to change. He stated the golf industry has developed the mentality that “brown is ok”. He stated the golf industry is leading the way in water usage and water conservation.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she would like Legislative Counsel Van Ross to look at this resolution in supporting the Great Healthy Yard Project.

Item #8 – Approval/Local Law Amending Chapter 203 of the Putnam County Code/Revising the Definition of “Smoking” to Include the Use of Electronic Cigarettes

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this matter has been discussed at previous Committee meetings. She stated electronic cigarettes are unregulated.

Commissioner Beals stated electronic cigarettes have been a gateway for youth to use tobacco products. He stated there is also an uncertainty of what is in the vapor of the electronic cigarettes. He stated it may be carcinogenic. He stated he is in support of the proposed local law with electronic cigarettes having the same regulations as cigarettes.

Legislator Gross stated he supports the proposed local law. He stated he has visited the vapor stores in the South and individuals use the electronic cigarettes as an alternative to cigarettes. He stated the idea of electronic cigarettes being harmful is becoming known and the FDA is investigating the electronic cigarettes.

Legislator Nacerino stated she supports this local law as well. She stated the local law is in concert with other smoking laws.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to approve the Amendment of Local Law Chapter 203 of the Putnam County Code/Revising the Definition of “Smoking” to include the Use of Electronic Cigarettes; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Item #9 – FYI/2015 County Health Rankings

Commissioner Beals stated the 2015 County Health Rankings Annual Report concluded our County is the second healthiest county in the State. He facilitated the discussion is listing the categories that rank the counties’ health. He stated binge drinking is one (1) of the categories that negatively affect the County’s health ranking.

Item #10 – FYI/ProAct Discount Card- Duly Noted

Item #11 – Other Business- None

Item #12 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:48 p.m. Legislator Gross made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Chairwoman Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Lisa Sommers.