

**Protective Services Committee Meeting  
Held in Room #318  
Putnam County Office Building  
Members: Chairman Gross & Legislators LoBue and Oliverio**

**Monday**

**June 10, 2013**

**(Immediately Following the Economic Development & Energy Committee Meeting)**

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m. by Chairman Gross who requested Legislator LoBue lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chairman Gross and Legislators LoBue and Oliverio were present.

**Item # 7 - FYI/Fund Transfer (13T099)/Bureau of Emergency Services/Purchase Uniforms for Deputy Emergency Services Coordinators**

Legislator Oliverio made a motion to approve fund transfer 13T099; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

**Item # 3 - Update/Putnam County Emergency Response Team Performance & Status/Chief Johnson-Carmel Police Department & Chief DiVernieri - Kent Police Department**

Sheriff Donald B. Smith stated that requested time during this meeting to update the County Legislature about the Putnam County Emergency Response Team. He explained that Chief Johnson is unable to make the meeting and Lieutenant Karst has come in his absence. He addressed an issue prior to the budget process. Until 2005, Putnam County lacked a response team and was dependent upon the mobile response team from the New York State Police, which could be coming as far away as Albany, which would force them to wait up to three hours. Sheriff Smith stated that the Westchester Emergency Response team had also been used, which again took a great deal of time. Because of this, the need of an Emergency Response Team in Putnam County was great. This multi-agency team was able to be put together through funding from Law Enforcement Terrorism Protection (LETP) grants. This team proved to be outstanding and has trained with multiple other teams and has traveled in all areas of New York. On December 14, 2012, the day of the tragic Sandy Hook shooting, the Putnam County Emergency Response Team was in training at the Paladin Center. Included in this training was a school scenario. The team reached out to Sandy Hook to offer their help, however the situation happened so quickly, it was over before they could head over. Because of the specialized training the members of the team have gone through, the bar is raised and Putnam County is a safer place.

Lieutenant Brian Karst of the Carmel Police Department, who has been the commander since 2005 stated that the team is a multijurisdictional task force team. The specialized training the members of the ERT go through benefits every municipality. He highlighted the fact that the ERT is training in schools on a regular basis preparing for an active shooter incident since this is occurring all over the country. The ERT is made up of the

Sheriff's Department, the police of both towns of Carmel and Kent, Putnam County Bureau of Emergency Management, tactical operators, snipers, paramedics, FBI trained crisis negotiators, and a canine. Lieutenant Karst stresses that the success of the command of this team is a collaborative effort. This team works and trains with all tactical teams in the region with which they share ideas as well as equipment. The lieutenant stated that the team is called six to nine times a year and when they are called, it is an extreme situation. Right now they are training once a month and with firearms four times a year. The snipers that are on the team have an additional twelve training days per year as their shots must be precise. They would like to do even more training in more innovative situations. He spoke about their funding and the LETP grant that they get. However this grant is restrictive and does not allow purchases of offensive weapons, munitions or ammunitions. An Armored Personnel Carrier (APC) was obtained through the 10-33 program, which is an equipment stream from the Department of Defense. This APC was free of cost. The team was also given a fire truck from the Lake Carmel Fire Department free of cost. The Lieutenant states that the ERT should be present at all large events, as they are terrorist targets. He then asked that the County establish a budget line to fund the costs of the ERT to provide as much public safety as possible. The number he had come up with was \$90,000. A training video was shown to illustrate what the team goes through in a high risk situation.

Legislator Oliverio questioned if the Sheriff was going to put this into their upcoming budget.

Sheriff Smith stated that the training cost is not in danger as the grants cover that. The equipment and munitions are also covered as well through the donations they receive. The Sheriff also stated that if there were an emergency cost to be covered, the team would cover it out of pocket. The \$90,000 of budget that they are asking for are for long-term viability. He brought up the bike event in Phillipstown in which a portion of the team was deployed, although they were not trained to deploy in such a situation. Sheriff Smith calls Putnam County the perfect County for the Madrid Scenario. Being just 50 miles outside New York City and having the two rail lines right into the City make us more of a target. Cold Spring and Phillipstown are also a concern as they are close to West Point. He says that the team not only needs to be trained, but it needs to be able to be deployed.

Legislator LoBue questioned what the cost was for the bike race.

Sheriff Smith stated that when the team needs to deploy, it costs about \$10,000. However, at the bike race the team did not deploy and he wanted to get specific figures and get back to us. Although he did say that two command posts had deployed because of another major bike event.

Legislator LoBue questioned which towns were not able to participate due to lack of funding.

Sheriff Smith stated that the towns of both Kent and Carmel were not able to participate.

Legislator Nacerino stated her support of this matter as we live in a vulnerable society. She also pointed out how this team speaks to shared services and how they pool their specialties to create a strong, diverse team. She brought up an incident that occurred last year in the Town of Patterson where the ERT was called. A person had gone into the Patterson Town Hall, locked themselves in the bathroom and took down some ceiling tiles and it was unknown if there was a bomb placed.

Sheriff Smith stated that the common denominator of all the Towns; is the County. He says it is a small price to pay to have this team trained and ready to provide safety to the citizens of the County.

Legislator Castellano questioned how the budget of the ERT was handled in the past. He also asked the number of officers from each Town who are on the ERT.

Sheriff Smith stated there are 10 team members from the Sheriff's Department, 9 from the Town of Carmel, and 5 from the Town of Kent. He stated that the cost of the training is coming from the grant money and each department is putting this into their operational budget. He expressed his concern for the increasing number of events and overviewed the need for security.

Captain Velotti stated that events of over 1,000 people in New York State are required to have an emergency plan that is set by Homeland Security.

Sheriff Smith stated that anything can happen anywhere and having the team at various events is a safety precaution, as well as an extra training for the members.

Legislator Othmer stated that he agrees with the Sheriff. He also stated that children from all different areas are going to various schools and this team is really protecting everybody. He then spoke about the events that are held around the County and that when large events take place, the sales tax that is collected is money coming into the County that could potentially go toward the ERT.

Legislator Oliverio stated that this is a County function and that no Town should bear the cost of the team. The responsibility falls on the County. He showed his complete support of this proposal.

Legislator LoBue questioned the costs and the education of the public. She stated that everyone is looking for funding as these are hard economic times. When an event is planned, it seems that security is an afterthought.

Legislator Nacerino stated that as tourism is stepped up, safety should be stepped up as well. This should be a simultaneous act as you cannot have one without the other.

Bernie Cosberg (constituent) questioned if it is possible for an individual department to opt-out of the ERT.

Sheriff Smith stated that some did opt-out of an event because of funding. However, in an emergency, the team would show up and funding would be sorted out at a later time.

Bernie Cosberg (constituent) questioned if there is something in the future that can be scheduled as a training opportunity to ensure that an event like Phillipstown (the bike event) can be better predicted and handled.

Sheriff Smith stated that they specifically went to Albany to speak to the grant people about this and they were told us that if they were to cross this line the grant could be put in jeopardy.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that he appreciated what was mentioned about the police presence providing piece of mind. He told us how he took his family to New York City for a weekend and they stayed by Times Square. He shared a fear he had of being down in the City. When he was in Times Square however, at all times he was about ten feet from a police officer, which put his mind at ease and let him enjoy his trip. He stated how this is a lot of money, but he is predicting that more revenue will come in because of the heightened security.

Sheriff Smith stated immediately after the bombing at the Boston Marathon security was stepped up immediately. He stated that the majority of people appreciated that effort. He stated that each and every day the Sheriff's Departments job is to deal with every threat that is out there and work to keep the citizens of Putnam County safe.

#### **Item # 4 - Update/Putnam County Coroners' Office/Dr. Nesheiwat**

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that the Putnam County Coroner's office consists of three Coroners. They are Dr. Chakravorty, Dr. Nesheiwat, and Dr. Stephens. There are also two forensic pathologists who are responsible for conducting autopsies. The reports of the autopsies go to the Coroners. These reports can take anywhere from one to three months. When a coroner is needed at a scene, the police will make the call from a random list. Who actually responds is dependent on their availability, the time of day, where they are in the County, and the day of the week. The most accessible coroner will go to the scene, and this system has been working okay. Prior to 2013 each coroner kept their own records, and there was no consolidation of information. They have tried to consolidate as this will enhance their ability to track vital statistics. He stated that he is working on a website for the Coroners' Office. The site will have downloadable forms which will make it easier for the families to get the paperwork that they need. Also the plan is to provide personal healing information for the difficult time that follows the passing of a loved one. The two leading causes of death in Putnam County are coronary events and suicide. This information can be used in partner with the health department to make a healthier Putnam County. He stated that his long-term vision is to have a County owned morgue with a County employed pathologists.

Legislator Gross questioned if the morgue is currently in Putnam Hospital.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that yes, the morgue is in the hospital, but it is mostly used by the coroner's office, not the hospital. The reason the hospital would conduct an autopsy is if it was requested by the family. As of now, Putnam County is paying Putnam Hospital to use their morgue. He stated that this will be more costly than the system that is in place now. He compares this to a salt water fish tank, saying it is costly to set up, but once it is set up it is almost maintenance free.

Legislator Gross questioned what a proper amount of refrigerators would be.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that right now, there are four however he would like to have a minimum of six, preferably more (12).

Legislator Oliverio questioned if Dr. Nesheiwat could come around budget time with an estimate of cost.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that he has begun figuring this out and is trying to put it together.

Legislator LoBue questioned how the switch from four to three Coroners is working.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that he would have preferred four. As Putnam County is growing and the economy is not at its best, he is finding himself working extra hours to get paperwork done for the reports.

Legislator LoBue questioned if Dr. Nesheiwat felt that the priority would be to have a fourth coroner and then work on his long-term vision of the County owned morgue.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that he would like to have a fourth coroner for the other side of the County to ease the workload and time constraints.

Legislator LoBue questioned Dr. Nesheiwat's interest in having an administration in the office, someone who would take care of the recording, etc.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that Carol from the Emergency Services Bureau is doing a lot of that work and that he would like to have someone like that in the office, working solely for the Coroners.

Legislator Nacerino stated that the devil is in the details as far as the fiscal pieces of this idea. She applauded Dr. Nesheiwat's vision and his being proactive and his idea to further help the families of the deceased.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that he gives credit to the agencies that he is utilizing.

James Mills(constituent), questioned the number of deaths caused by overdose.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that there were four young men who all overdosed on heroine.

Legislator LoBue questioned why the Coroners would be called out for a case that was not for an autopsy.

Dr. Nesheiwat gave an example of a 92 year old man who was found by his grandson unconscious in bed and although it was an unattended death, he ruled that an autopsy was not needed. He had the opportunity to speak to the person's Physician at the scene and obtain his fully history. He explained that is an example of being called out to a case which did not end up on the recorded list of Autopsy, however there was a Coroner called to the scene.

**Item # 5 - Approval/Re-appointment to the Traffic Safety Board/J. Van Tassel**

Legislator LoBue made a motion to approve the re-appointment to the Traffic Safety Board; Seconded by Legislator Oliverio. All in favor.

**Item # 6 - FYI/Budgetary Amendment (13A024)/Sheriff's Department/Purchase equipment for Corrections & Road Patrol Personnel – Duly Noted**

**Item # 8 - Other Business**

**8a. FYI/Sheriff's Department/B. A. 13A026/Correctional Kitchen Appliance – Duly Noted**

**8b. FYI/Sheriff's Department/B.A. 13A205/Correctional Kitchen Appliance – Duly Noted**

**Item # 9 – Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 9:05P.M., Legislator Oliverio made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by, Administrative Assistant of the Legislature- Beth Green