

**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 30, 2023

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

Item #3 - Approval/Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes/ December 13, 2021

Chairman Jonke stated the minutes were accepted as submitted.

**Item #4 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T002 County Executive/ Reorganization –
Reclassification/ County Executive Kevin Byrne**

Chairman Jonke made a motion to waive the Rules and Accept the Additional, a memo from Personnel Officer Eldridge; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

County Executive Kevin Byrne stated he has Commissioner of Finance Carlin and Deputy Personnel Officer Iasoni present to speak to this matter along with him.

Chairman Jonke stated he does not believe there is a need to read Personnel Officer Eldridge's memo, it has been emailed to all the Legislators and a paper copy provided as well. He stated Personnel Officer Eldridge is in support of the County Executive's restructuring proposal.

County Executive Kevin Byrne stated he is presenting a plan that he believes in. He stated he has been transparent in what he is aiming to accomplish by centralizing services and professionalizing the County Executive's Office and the County Government, generally speaking. He stated in this proposal there are stipends for County Employees who are doing extra work on a temporary basis until positions are filled. He stated he is also proposing the elimination of two (2) positions and creating two (2) positions. He stated all of this is being proposed at a net savings of \$64,000.

Deputy Personnel Officer Iasoni stated a request was made by then County Executive Elect Byrne to meet with Personnel Officer Eldridge to look at these key positions. She stated Personnel Officer Eldridge is charged with classifying positions. She stated two (2) positions were classified: Director of Compliance and Intergovernmental Relations and Director of Communications. She explained

they are pending jurisdictional classification, they will be submitted to NYS Civil Service, there will be a commission meeting and ultimately the jurisdictional classification will be established. She stated Personnel Officer Eldridge is confident these positions will be non-competitive carrying minimal qualifications, that are high level positions.

Commissioner of Finance Carlin stated he is present to answer questions pertaining to the finances. He stated for the record this is a transition, which in Putnam County we go through infrequently. He stated in the past the Legislature has always been amenable to hearing from the County Executive's Office in terms of putting forward what the Administration proposes to run their office and bring the County into the future. He stated he believes the correspondence from County Executive Byrne is very comprehensive.

Chairman Jonke stated the \$64,000 savings is something he is taking into consideration as he reviews this request. He stated he did contact County Executive Byrne and said that he believes as the new County Executive he should have the right to structure his staff in the way he sees necessary, and he deems fit. He stated he will be supporting this request.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement with the comments made by Chairman Jonke. He stated he has no objections to the proposal at this time.

Chairman Jonke stated he agreed to read a statement from Legislator Nacerino who is a member of the Personnel Committee. He read the statement into the record. A copy of the statement is attached to the minutes. In summary, Legislator Nacerino wrote of her support for what was proposed by County Executive Byrne, with exception to the \$24,000 proposed salary increase for the Deputy County Executive position. In closing she stated she would support a motion to divide the question so that the components of the County Executive's reorganization could be considered separately.

County Executive Byrne responded to some of the statements included in Legislator Nacerino's message. He stated there are many important issues to be addressed in the upcoming year, such as Union negotiations. He stated he does not see how that is tied to what is being considered this evening. He stated as a point of reference his memo and the budget transfer related to this matter were provided to the Legislature on January 12, 2023, and this is the first time he is hearing this letter from Legislator Nacerino. He stated the 3.5% increase for the 2023 salaries across all the County Employees was agreed to by the previous Administration and Legislature. He stated the way it was referenced in said message made it sound like it was only applied to the County Executive's Department. He explained he believed it was important to clarify the 3.5% increase included the entire County workforce, which included Legislators who were not in office at the time, which he believes was appropriate. He stated he believed he clearly outlined his intention to adjust the Deputy County Executive' salary in his memo of January 12, 2023, and in the Budgetary Transfer 23T002. He continued to speak to the savings due to the waiver to take health insurance is real and savings

from a waiver of health insurance plans has been used in the past, this is not an entirely new concept. He stated he works well with Legislator Nacerino and is sorry she was not present. He expressed his appreciation for her support on the other proposals he put forward. He continued to speak specifically to the expertise and institutional knowledge of his Deputy County Executive and how this employee's expertise will result in cost saving for Putnam County. He also spoke to his effort to be transparent with the use of these funds and restated his proposal includes a net savings of over \$64,000.

Legislator Addonizio stated she has had many constituents contacting her regarding this matter. She stated the people are surprised that a salary that was approved and accepted, which included a 3.5% raise is now asking for an additional 19% raise. She continued to speak to this matter and stated this is difficult for her to justify to her constituents. She stated she believes that this could create a ripple effect, in that if employees choose to decline their Health Benefits, they can ask for a raise. She stated she is not talking about qualifications or experience, that has nothing to with this. She provided history of a Deputy County Executive salary, Bruce Walker. She stated in 2011 Mr. Walker made \$114,812 and when he left the position in October 2017, his salary was \$120,645. She stated in six (6) years his salary increased \$5,833. She stated she cannot justify this proposed raise. She stated also it is not an equal comparison for Putnam County to match a salary of an Orange County employee. She stated the budget for Orange County is \$897million and Putnam County's is approximately \$164million.

County Executive Byrne stated he is not comparing Putnam County's Deputy County Executive position salary to Orange County. He stated the salary for the Orange County Deputy County Executive is over \$190,000. He stated this Deputy County Executive is coming to Putnam County with over 14 years of County Government experience. He stated he cannot speak to the decisions of the previous Administration. He stated he did speak to each Legislator prior to bringing this proposal forward. This is the first time it is coming for consideration and approval of the Legislature from the Byrne Administration.

Chairman Jonke stated this individual has a unique and valuable skillset that will serve Putnam County, which is what County Executive Byrne has presented. He questioned hypothetically if this individual were to leave the position 6 (six) months from now, and you hire another individual who does not have the same level of experience and expertise, would the offering salary for the new candidate be adjusted.

County Executive Byrne stated yes and also the fact of whether or not Health Insurance would be taken or not would also be part of the setting of said salary. He stated he would bring that to the Legislature. He stated his current Deputy County Executive has a level of expertise that has brought forward actions that will result in savings in our Purchasing Department. He stated he is aware of the

history of the County where certain employees are paid from different department lines. He stated he does not think that is a good practice, he believes it lacks transparency.

Legislator Sayegh stated she did speak with County Executive Byrne about this. She stated she has the same reservations about this salary as Legislators Addonizio and Nacerino. She stated she does not agree with increasing a salary based on the waiving of health benefits. She stated the candidate can decide at some point they do want to take the County's Health Insurance. She stated at that point she does not see that the County would decrease the salary. She stated she does not see that this is fair to the County Employees. She referenced the County's mileage reimbursement program, if employees use that, it is form of an increase in salary. She stated when the County reorganized the Women's, Infants and Children's (WIC) Program in the County's Health Department, it was not done in order to increase a salary, it was to consolidate and save the taxpayer dollars. She stated her position on this proposal is not about the individual or the job they will be doing. She stated the reference of money saved has been made. She stated she has not seen that, and if that could be shown, she would be happy to take that into consideration for the 2024 budget. She stated it is her position that the 2024 budget would be more reasonable for the Legislature to consider approving a \$24,000 increase. She stated she does not agree that once this salary is set that it would be reduced. She stated she believes this to be a disservice to the taxpayers. She stated she does appreciate County Executive Byrne's innovative approach and believes he has every right to reorganize his department however he sees fit, to benefit the taxpayers of Putnam County. She stated at this time she does not support this proposal and believes it to be wrong to ask that Putnam County make his salary whole, based on the individual's salary when he worked in Orange County.

Legislator Crowley stated the last Deputy County Executive, under the old Administration, was brought in and permitted to stay as a member of the PUMA Union, which the job he originally had was classified in. She stated that employee was brought into a Management position while permitted to keep his membership in the PUMA Union, so the employee was protected if the Deputy County Executive position job did not work out. She stated that is not the case with County Executive Byrne's Deputy County Executive, he has no protection. She stated allowing the past Deputy County Executive to remain a member of the PUMA Union while working in a management position was an added value that this current employee is not getting.

County Executive Byrne stated he would request that the Legislators review the memo from Personnel Officer Eldridge.

Chairman Jonke stated for the record Personnel Officer Eldridge is in full support of County Executive Byrne's proposed reorganization.

County Executive Byrne stated he is not aware if any of the current Legislators have gone through a transition of Administration. He stated if you ask our colleagues, in Orange, Westchester and

Rockland Counties, it is standard to have a new Administration restructure their office. He stated and his restructuring is at a savings. He stated he is a fiscal conservative and when he discusses salaries, growth and operating expenses it is because it increases spending that can be untenable for taxpayers. He stated this, to be very clear, reduces spending. He stated this will be very good for the taxpayers. He stated if you are going to vote for the savings, but not the expenditures that help to realize those savings, that can be dangerous. He stated he respects all of his colleagues here, and recognized there will be times when we will have different opinions. He stated what is in front of the Legislature right now is not something we face often, but it is a good opportunity to centralize services and elevate County Government.

Legislator Castellano confirmed the person in this position has waived the County's Health Insurance.

County Executive Byrne stated that is correct.

Legislator Castellano questioned historically what is done when a County Employee waives Insurance.

Commissioner of Finance Carlin spoke to several scenarios. He stated the primary driver here is this candidate has a unique knowledge and skillset and years of government experience in Purchasing that is generating savings throughout the County and will probably continue to do so as the County evolves.

Legislator Castellano stated he understands that and supports this proposal. He stated he just wants to be clear and consider if there is any way that the County could be negatively impacted financially.

Commissioner of Finance Calin stated the Legislature would have the authority to adjust the salary accordingly.

Chairman Jonke stated he would like to bring the focus back to the memo from Personnel Officer Eldridge, who documented his full support for this proposal.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 23T002 County Executive/ Reorganization – Reclassification; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 22T387/ Highway Department/ Purchase of Salt Stockpile/ Chief Deputy Finance Commissioner Lewis

Commissioner Carlin explained the purchase of Road Salt is one of the only purchases of the County that falls into the category of an "Emergency Purchase", due to the priority and safety involved. He

stated the reason this matter is in Personnel is because the funding is being used from vacant personnel lines.

Legislator Castellano questioned how long Salt can be stored before using it.

Purchasing Director Tully stated there are minimum requirements. He stated the County fills out a survey stating what the projection of Salt usage will be. He stated that is calculated with a weighted average based on the prior years. He stated then the County is required to purchase 75% of that amount at the defined price. He stated if we have a light season we may need to find another location to store the Salt. He stated he submitted this purchase at the end of 2022, prior to him leaving the Highways & Facilities Department to be sure the incoming Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner in the Highways and Facilities Department were in a good position to get through the winter and avoid some of the backlog that can occur during the holiday season.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 22T387/ Highway Department/ Purchase of Salt Stockpile; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 23T011/ DSS/ Rehire Retiree, Sr. Public Health Nurse, Part-time to Handle Home Visits to Those Receiving Personal Care Services Through Medicaid / Commissioner DSS, Mental Health and Youth Bureau Mike Piazza

Commissioner Piazza stated the purpose of the Personal Care Unit is to review the assessments that Manage Care has made related to the people who are on Medicaid who require personal care and the number of hours. He explained in the past there have been changes made in this field. He stated some of the assessments now need to be done by the Manage Care Agency. He explained the County is still required to review them and sign off on them periodically. He stated the day to day demands on the County Department have been reduced. He stated with that changes have been made in that department. He stated the DSS Public Health Nurse has retired. He stated it is difficult to find another nurse under these circumstances. He stated he is proposing that said retiree return to part-time employment, 10 hours a week. He stated that will facilitate the County in meeting the requirements. He stated it will be a savings to the County and will be no cost to the County. He stated this is 100% reimbursable through Medicaid.

Chairman Jonke questioned what the salary will equate to in hours.

Commissioner Piazza stated \$65.00/hour.

Commissioner Carlin stated this is a common practice of the County to hire retirees back because there is ultimately a costs savings. He stated there is not another insurance plan, retirement benefit plan and there are savings throughout.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 23T011/ DSS/ Rehire Retiree, Sr. Public Health Nurse, Part-time to Handle Home Visits to Those Receiving Personal Care Services Through Medicaid; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Appointment/ Interim Commissioner of Bureau of Emergency Services Robert A. Lipton

County Executive Byrne stated he has known Interim Commissioner Lipton for many years and is aware of his work and experience in the Fire Service areas of the County and has served throughout transitions in the past. He stated he is a great asset to the County team.

Chairman Jonke expressed his support for this appointment and also spoke to his recognition of the dedication and professionalism of Robert Lipton as a member the County's Bureau of Emergency Department.

Legislators Castello, Addonizio, Sayegh and Crowley expressed their agreement.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Appointment of Interim Commissioner of Bureau of Emergency Services Robert A. Lipton; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #8 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Appointment/ Interim Commissioner of Health Michael J. Nesheiwat, M.D.

County Executive Byrne stated he is aware that there were concerns raised regarding the New York State Department of Health (DOH) qualification requirements in the past. He stated included in the backup with this appointment there is a memo from Personnel Officer Eldridge speaking to that matter. He explained in summary the DOH has communicated Dr. Nesheiwat is permitted to be approved to serve as the Interim Commissioner of Health for Putnam County. He stated he is very glad that he has agreed to stay on during this transition as the Interim Commissioner of Health.

Chairman Jonke stated his agreement that the County is fortunate to have Dr. Nesheiwat as the Interim Commissioner of Health and to assist during this transition. He stated he has a great deal of respect for him and the work that he and his staff did to get the County through the pandemic.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat serving as the County's Commissioner of Health, was an invaluable help to the County as we navigated through COVID and a difficult few years.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Appointment of Interim Commissioner of Health Michael J. Nesheiwat, M.D.; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #9 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Re-Appointment/ Commissioner of Finance William J. Carlin, Jr.

County Executive Byrne stated Commissioner of Finance Bill Carlin is an institution and we want him to stick around.

Chairman Jonke stated he has known Commissioner Bill Carlin for a very long time, dating back to junior high school. He stated also when he was working as a Town Assessor, he worked with him. He agrees with County Executive Byrne in that he hopes Bill Carlin will stick around.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement Commissioner Bill Carlin is an excellent selection, and he too looks forward to working with him for many years. He expressed his gratitude for all that Commissioner Carlin does for the good of Putnam County.

Legislators Addonizio and Sayegh stated they echoed their colleagues' comments.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Re-Appointment of Commissioner of Finance William J. Carlin, Jr.; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #10 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Appointment/ County Attorney C. Compton Spain, Esq.

County Executive Byrne stated he has known Compton Spain. for many years through his private law practice. He stated Compton Spain held the position of Deputy County Attorney for Putnam County years back. He stated he is an asset to the community and the county.

Chairman Jonke stated he also has known Compton Spain and his family for many years. He is in support of this selection and happy to support the confirmation of this appointment.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement, and referenced Compton Spain's impressive resume that was provided in the backup.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Appointment of County Attorney C. Compton Spain, Esq.; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #11 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Appointment/ Director of Purchasing John G. Tully

County Executive Byrne stated John Tully is another institution. He stated John Tully has held a position in many of the departments of the County. He stated he is honored John Tully has accepted the position of Director of Purchasing.

Chairman Jonke stated the County is lucky to have John Tully on board and he will support this appointment.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement.

Director of Purchasing Tully expressed his appreciation for the opportunity and support of the Executive Office. He stated it has been great working with Deputy County Executive Burpoe, who is

a wealth of information, as stated earlier. He stated all of the comments made by County Executive Byrne and Commissioner Carlin in regards to Deputy County Executive Burpoe's leadership and knowledge will generate returns for Putnam County are accurate. He state he is proud to be part of this, and looks forward to being part of the team.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Appointment of Director of Purchasing John G. Tully; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #12 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Re-Appointment/ Director of the Office For Senior Resources Michael J. Cunningham

Chairman Jonke stated he and his colleagues are aware of the great work that Director of the Office For Senior Resources Michael J. Cunningham does for the County and our Seniors. He stated he is happy to support this appointment.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Re-Appointment of Director of the Office For Senior Resources Michael J. Cunningham; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #13 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Re-Appointment/Director of Tourism Tracey L. Walsh

Chairman Jonke expressed his support of this re-appointment of Tracy Walsh to serve as the County's Director of Tourism.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement. He stated under Tracy Walsh's professional approach tourism in Putnam County has come a long way.

Legislator Sayegh stated over the past five (5) years during the reorganization of the Tourism Department Tracy Walsh has done an outstanding job.

Legislators Addonizio and Crowley stated their agreement with what has been said in support of this re-appointment.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive's Re-Appointment /Director of Tourism Tracey L. Walsh; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #14 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne's Re-Appointment/ Putnam County Historian Jennifer Cassidy

Chairman Jonke stated Jennifer Cassidy does a great job as the County's Historian. He stated his appreciation for her expertise in preserving the history of Putnam County.

Legislator Castellano stated his agreement. He spoke to the contribution and valuable work that Jennifer Cassidy did with the Veterans Medal Committee.

Legislator Addonizio stated her appreciation of the fine work that Jennifer Cassidy has done. She spoke to a play “The Letters, Voices From The Great War” that Jennifer Cassidy brought to the Brewster High School. She stated it was so incredible and moving. She stated that she hopes it will be performed again.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive’s Re-Appointment / Putnam County Historian Jennifer Cassidy; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #15 - Approval/ Confirmation- County Executive Byrne’s Re-Appointment/ Director of the County Veterans Agency Karl Rohde

Chairman Jonke stated Karl Rohde has a very valuable job in terms of helping and serving our Veterans. He stated he knows Karl Rohde is well aware of that responsibility and takes it very seriously and does a great job. He stated he is grateful for the work Karl Rohde and his staff do for our Veterans.

Legislator Castellano stated that he agreed. He stated every time he has reached out to Karl Rohde with a matter concerning Veterans, he has always been a tremendous help.

Legislator Addonizio stated her support for this re-appointment and the fine work Karl Rohde and his staff do for the Veterans. She stated on a personal note, Karl Rohde was very helpful to her and her family when it came to her Dad who was a Veteran.

Legislator Crowley expressed her appreciation for Karl Rohde’s service to our Country and for all that he does to serve Putnam County. She stated her appreciation for his assistance with her Father-in-law a Veteran. She is very happy he has agreed to stay in this role.

Legislator Sayegh stated anytime she has reached out to Karl Rohde with a Veteran matter he has been a tremendous help. She recognized him for the work he does for the homeless Veterans and the Veterans Home. She stated Putnam County truly loves and respects our Veterans, and that is supported and demonstrated by Karl Rohde and his staff.

Commissioner of DSS, Mental Health and the Youth Bureau Piazza expressed his appreciation to Karl Rohde for the work he has done to bring mental health services to Veterans. He stated he has assisted the County in expanding the County’s services to address suicide prevention work. He stated it has been proven to be so beneficial not only to the Veteran community, but the entire community.

Chairman Jonke made a motion to approve and confirm the County Executive’s Re-Appointment / Director of the County Veterans Agency Karl Rohde; 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- None

Item #19 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:23 PM Chairman Jonke made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Deputy Clerk Diane Trabulsy.