

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

Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Crowley & Nacerino

Tuesday

March 21, 2023

(Immediately Following the Protective Meeting at 6:30PM)

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Crowley, Nacerino and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

Item #3 - Discussion/Update/Mental Health & Stabilization Center/Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza

Commissioner Piazza stated they have been looking at space at Putnam Hospital, but there really has been no movement. He stated they are still looking at all the options, including outside of the hospital grounds.

Legislator Nacerino questioned what we and Putnam Hospital are doing to increase mental health services.

Commissioner Piazza stated the Hospital does not have a child or adolescent mental health unit. He stated they do evaluation for children in the emergency room, but that is not the best place for it. He noted that the Stabilization Center will serve adults and children. He stated DSS is looking at what the community needs.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if the children need to go through the hospital first in order to be placed in mental health program. She stated she has heard that children sit in the emergency room and then just get discharged. She stated they need help.

Commissioner Piazza stated they are concerned about the people who are sent to the Hospital but are discharged and not admitted.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she has asked the Hospital what the follow up care is when someone goes there with a mental health issue. She stated it does not seem like there is one.

Legislator Nacerino stated this is concerning for people who are in distress, and she questioned if there are other alternatives to Putnam Hospital.

Commissioner Piazza stated they do need to be medically cleared but there have been cases where after a child is discharged, the parents take them to Four Winds or Westchester Medical Center.

Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Sara Servadio stated they do not want to put the expectation on our police agencies that they have to take people all the way down to Westchester.

Commissioner Piazza noted the waitlist for services has been unyielding. He stated CoveCare has switched to a new system to decrease the waitlist for first visits.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if there is a funding agreement with Putnam Hospital for the Stabilization Center to be on their grounds.

Commissioner Piazza stated the funding for the Stabilization Center is all on Putnam County.

Legislator Crowley stated her concern is how adolescent care is handled. She stated she knows that for adults they have mobile mental health care via a tablet, but not for children.

Commissioner Piazza stated he will look into why it is not being used for children.

Deputy Commissioner Servadio stated there is a bed shortage for school-age children throughout the State. She stated they are trying to decrease the amount of time kids are in the emergency room.

Legislator Gouldman stated if the Stabilization Center is on the Putnam Hospital grounds, it is not beneficial to his constituents and the western side of the county. He suggested a more centrally located spot for the Stabilization Center. He stated if Putnam Hospital is not functioning the way the County thinks they should, why not partner with other hospitals in the region.

Commissioner Piazza stated Hudson Valley Hospital does not have a psychiatric unit.

Legislator Gouldman stated neither does Putnam Hospital.

Deputy Commissioner Servadio stated Putnam Hospital has an adult psychiatric unit.

Legislator Gouldman stated his constituents, as well as others on the western side of the county, do not go to Putnam Hospital because it is farther than hospitals in Westchester or Dutchess.

Commissioner Piazza noted that law enforcement has to take people to certain designated hospitals for mental health care. He stated being more centrally located in the county is a focus for them. He stated they are also looking to implement more outreach.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes the Stabilization Center should be separate from the Hospital. She questioned what can be invested in right now, considering we are in a mental health crisis right now. She stated there is a lot of money tied up in the idea of a Stabilization Center.

Commissioner Piazza stated that stabilization centers are the way of the future and is what people want. He stated it helps them alleviate their mental illness suffering.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she is very impressed with the Stabilization Center in Dutchess County.

Legislator Addonizio stated it was her understanding that the Stabilization Center would be on the grounds of Putnam Hospital.

Commissioner Piazza stated he has not spoken to President of Putnam Hospital Dr. Mark Hirko about it in a few weeks.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if it is possible to provide transportation to the Stabilization Center in Dutchess County, while Putnam's is being finalized.

Commissioner Piazza stated it can be looked into.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if there are any other updates on mental health.

Deputy Commissioner Servadio stated they have begun training school districts in youth mental health first aid. She stated it is a six (6) hour training and has been completed in Mahopac and Putnam Valley. She stated the State is funding the books for the training. She stated they are averaging approximately 17 attendees per session.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned who can take the training.

Deputy Commissioner Servadio stated any educators.

Legislator Montgomery stated she took the training at the NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) Conference. She stated she is so glad it is being offered in the schools. She stated she believes it should be as common as CPR.

Deputy Commissioner Servadio agreed with Legislator Montgomery. She stated the County is offering crisis intervention training for law enforcement. She stated the goal is to have every officer trained.

Chairwoman Sayegh thanked Commissioner Piazza and Deputy Commissioner Servadio for the update.

Item #4 - Approval/Budgetary Amendment 23A009/Social Services/Request to Utilize Opioid Settlement Trust Monies

Commissioner Piazza stated the Opioid Settlement Workgroup met five (5) times and came to consensus on seven (7) areas of concern are:

1. Support for Agencies that provide Counseling Services, Outreach, and Care Management for People with Substance Use Disorders
2. Support the Infrastructure of The Prevention Council of Putnam County
3. Coordinate a Fully Formed and Inclusive Co-Occurring System of Care
4. Provide Additional Support to Physicians and Expecting Mothers to Reduce the Incidence of Neo-Natal Addiction
5. Support Organizations Providing Education and Assistance to Families Struggling with a Family Member or Friend Struggling with a Substance Use Disorder
6. Examine Ways Transportation can be Enhanced to Help Attend Activities that Support Recovery
7. Establish a Memorial to the People who have Lost their Lives to Opioid Overdose

Commissioner Piazza stated there were 30-35 people who attended the workgroup meetings. He stated providing funding to The Prevention Council was important to them because they knew the agency was facing a financial pressure point. He spoke to the work that The Prevention Council does. He stated this request is for \$85,000 which will provide funding for The Prevention Council to continue to provide their services. He noted that these services fall under the criteria that the Opioid Settlement Funds can be used for. He stated the remainder of the Settlement Funds will go out to RFP (Request for Proposals). He stated the County has over \$1.1 million from the Opioid Settlement, with more expected over the next 16 years. He stated there were more opioid fatalities in 2022 than ever before.

Kristin McConnell, Executive Director of The Prevention Council, gave an overview of how the services fit the approved uses of the funding. She stated they are constantly seeking outside funding.

Commissioner Piazza stated this funding will ensure the staff will be trained to administer Narcan.

Chairwoman Sayegh state The Prevention Council does amazing work. She questioned what the timeline for the RFP is.

Commissioner Piazza stated they will be working with the County Executive on that.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Budgetary Amendment 23A009; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

Item #5 - Approval/Request that Putnam's Congressional Delegation Act to Ensure the Safe Handling of Wastewater from Indian Point Energy Center

Legislator Nacerino made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Chairwoman Sayegh. All in favor.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the additional is a letter from Assemblywoman Dana Levenberg and read it into the record. She stated in 2017 then-Governor Cuomo announced the shutdown of Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant and in May 2021, the ownership of the plant was transferred

from Entergy to Holtec to carry out the decommissioning process. She spoke to the fact that the decommissioning falls under the purview of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), not New York State. She stated the Resolution before the Committee tonight, calls on Putnam County's delegation in the United States Congress to obtain assurances from the relevant Federal regulatory agencies that they will not permit any discharge of water from Indian Point that will cause environmental harm and that poses a threat to the health and safety to our residents. She stated the Hudson River is a precious resource.

Legislator Nacerino stated she supports this resolution, and this is a profound issue that is threatening the health and safety of our community.

Legislator Gouldman thanked the Committee for bringing this very important issue forward. He stated the resolution does not go far enough. He stated we have heard assurances from the Federal Government many times that turn out to be not true. He stated the Federal Government should review every alternative option to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the residents of Putnam County and our neighbors. He noted that there are municipalities that would take the water for a fee. He stated the experts do not agree on how to proceed. He suggested leaving the water where it is until a safe alternative can be agreed upon.

Legislator Montgomery stated this resolution does nothing to prevent the discharge of radioactive water into the Hudson River. She stated her opinion that it is misguided to put faith in Federal regulatory agencies. She stated she is sure Putnam County does not want to lose the sales tax revenue from the recreational activities on the Hudson River. She stated many constituents have written to the Legislature regarding this matter. She asked that the Committee make a motion to accept a resolution, which supports Senator Harckham and Assemblywoman Levenberg's Bills, as additional. She read the resolution into the record. She noted Westchester County passed a similar resolution.

No motion was made.

Chairwoman Sayegh the State legislation Legislator Montgomery is referring to does not reflect the current contract with Holtec, thus would not protect the Hudson River at this time. She stated to Legislator Gouldman's point, many alternatives have been discussed, and this resolution urges these alternatives to be seriously considered. She gave a summary of how some alternatives have the potential to be more harmful than the water discharge. She stated we are simply asking the Federal Government to find the best alternative. She stated the City of Poughkeepsie processes 11 million gallons of water from the Hudson River per day. She stated for comparison, Holtec is planning to release 100 million gallons of water over the next 12 years. She stated the Holtec contract allows for 3 millisieverts of radiation to be released per year, and Holtec plans to release 1% of that number each year. She stated this equals 0.03 millisieverts per year. She stated mammograms emit more radiation than that. She stated she does not believe this is the equivalent of poisoning the population, but would like to find the best practices for this situation. She recognized Putnam Valley Resident Judy Allen for bringing this issue to the Legislature's attention.

Ms. Allen thanked the Legislature for considering this matter. She stated Chairwoman Sayegh is correct that the NRC and EPA are the only ones in control of this situation. She thanked Legislator Gouldman and Legislator Montgomery for their support. She stated she believes eventually they will realize tritium should not be released into the water, just like when they realized the dangers of asbestos, mercury, and lead. She stated she believes the best alternative is to leave the water on site.

Legislator Ellner stated he does not want this water discharged. He stated with an unmanned plant, you cannot guarantee that the storage would not leak. He stated he opposes the other resolutions because you cannot filter tritium. He added New York State has no purview over this decision. He implored people to write to their Federal Representatives.

Legislator Nacerino stated her support of the resolution on the agenda tonight.

Legislator Crowley stated Holtec needs to be held accountable.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve the Resolution to Request that Putnam's Congressional Delegation Act to Ensure the Safe Handling of Wastewater from Indian Point Energy Center; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #6 - FYI/Fund Transfer 23T058/Health Department/McGuinness Billing Software

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is just to correct the budget lines.

Item #7 - Other Business - None

Item #8 - Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:41 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.