

**PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE
PUBLIC HEARING
ON THE
2017 TENTATIVE BUDGET
AND
REPORT OF THE BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
TO BE HELD IN THE
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Wednesday October 26, 2016 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 P.M. by Chairwoman Nacerino who requested Legislator Gross lead in the Pledge of Allegiance and Legislator Wright lead in the Legislative Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Scuccimarra, Gouldman, Addonizio, Albano, Gross, Castellano, LoBue, Wright and Chairwoman Nacerino were present. Also present was Legislative Counsel Van Ross.

Chairwoman Nacerino requested that the Clerk read the Public Notice (attached).

Chairwoman Nacerino stated that this Public Hearing gives the Legislature the opportunity to hear from you, the public, about your views of the proposed 2017 Tentative Budget. Your concerns are very important to us and it is our responsibility to approve a fiscally responsible budget that provides for the health, safety and quality of life for our residents, while also not exceeding the tax cap. I would ask that anyone wishing to speak regarding the proposed 2017 Tentative Budget should come up to the microphone, state their name and the town in which they reside. Please keep in mind that there is no comment period for the Legislators and therefore no cross discussion. If you do have a question, please leave your name and contact information with the Clerk and we will get back to you promptly. This Public Hearing will assist the Legislature in making informative decisions during our Legislative meeting on Thursday evening, October 27, 2016 when we will Adopt the Budget.

Chairwoman Nacerino deferred to Legislative Counsel Van Ross to embellish on procedure.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated that this is a public hearing required by the County Charter 7.04. It is a hearing when the Legislators hear the concerns of the public regarding the proposed tentative budget as amended by the changes made by the Budget & Finance Committee. It is not a hearing for the public to find out what is in the budget; that Public Hearing was held on October 6, 2016 pursuant to Section 7.04, subsection 3 of the Charter. At that time the County Executive and the Commissioner of Finance were present and required to answer questions of the public about what was included in the Budget. The Budget & Finance Committee met on October 20th to review and make recommended changes. He stated that the hearing tonight is for the Legislators to hear the public's comment on the Budget as proposed and of any proposed changes or revisions made by the Budget & Finance Committee.

David Squirell, Esq., Chief Attorney of Putnam County Legal Aid Society explained that he has appeared before various Committees within the last 10 days. He stated that, for a variety of reasons, they are reducing their request to \$100,000 for subcontingency. He

provided some background of himself in the Carmel area. He then explained that he has had the opportunity to represent individuals in the Treatment Court Program, Family Court, each of the local Justice Courts and in County Court for individuals who find themselves charged with felonies. He stated he has seen many familiar names during the course of his representation of the public. He stated the people who the Legal Aid Society represents are part of the fabric of Putnam County. He stated many people find themselves in court due to events out of their control. He stated, in Family Court, the Legal Aid Society represents people who are victims of abuse, people who are trying to hold on to their children. He stated, in Criminal Court, the vast majority of who the Legal Aid Society represents are victims of the Heroin epidemic and are acting on addiction. He stated he and his staff spend a lot of time making agreements for people to get treatment instead of incarceration. He stated many veterans are represented. He stated there was a time where a specialty court just for veterans was considered. He stated if that was to happen, the Legal Aid Society would be the ones representing those individuals. He explained that Legal Aid was asking for the extra money to be put in subcontingency due to forces outside of their clients' control and Legal Aid's control.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, questioned if there was a Public Hearing on October 6, 2016.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated yes there was.

Ms. Eckardt stated that the October 6th Public Hearing started before it was supposed to. She believed that the budget was not available online. She stated the budget presentation was subjective, which made it difficult to make substantive questions. She stated tonight was only for comment which adds to the difficulty of questioning the budget. She stated she has since found the budget online, but added that she believed it was put up much later than October 6th. She stated the presentation was easy to find, but the budget was not. She believed there should be more transparency with this Legislature. She noted that hearing public comment the night before voting does not leave much time for discussing the public concerns. She questioned if this budget was already a done deal. She stated there are many residents unhappy with the budget. She acknowledged that it is hard to stay within the tax cap. She stated the Legislature needs to look into its issues with transparency and listening to the public. She stated she went to a Committee meeting but found that it was not conducive to public comment. She believed that the process is not as open as it should be.

Kathleen Foley, Town of Philipstown resident, stated she agreed with everything Ms. Eckardt stated. She stated she would like to make her own comments and read comments from Phillipstown residents who were not able to attend.

Chairwoman Nacerino requested Legislative Counsel Van Ross' opinion on if the reading of the comments should be allowed.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated it is up to Chairwoman Nacerino if she wants to allow it.

Chairwoman Nacerino stated she would allow the comments to be read but only if they pertain to items on the budget.

Ms. Foley stated they do pertain to the budget items, the Butterfield Project in particular. She read comments from David Limburg, of Nelsonville, Johnny Hop, a construction professional who has worked in Putnam County. These comments detailed their concerns over the budgeting of the Butterfield Senior Center. It was also believed that the information available to the public was inconsistent and confusing. Ms. Foley stated that she would provide their contact information for the Legislature to answer any questions prior to voting on the Budget.

Ms. Foley then made her own comments in regards to the senior center. She explained that it has been insisted that the project was rescoped, but she has not found evidence of that in the documents she received via her Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests. She cited a September 1st, 2016 memorandum from Deputy County Executive Bruce Walker stating that the most recent estimate from Todd Zwigard Architects (TZA) which adjusted the cost of \$1.5 million to \$1.3 million and she spoke about which documents were provided as backup information at the September 6, 2016 Full Legislative meeting. She continued and commented some of the items listed on the documentation she received through her FOIL request. She stated there were budget lines that did not match the Capital Expense Summary. She questioned if the document she received represented the rescoping of the project. She stated that it appeared to be a construction budget and questioned how it compares to the budget being reviewed by the Legislature. She could not locate Butterfield information in the budget. She questioned how taxpayer monies were being used and if the seniors were receiving what they have been promised. She assumed the Legislature would get back to her on her questions.

Mary Williams of Cold Spring stated she would talk about what seniors want and need at the senior facility. She stated seniors need simpler things than what is being talked about for the Butterfield Senior Center. She stated seniors want exercise and computer training programs. She stated seniors feel threatened by the technology available today. She stated seniors need companionship and someone to listen to them. She stated seniors do not need a lot, especially expensive things.

Lithgow Osborne of Garrison stated he is concerned over the lack of transparency on the part of the Legislature in regards to the budget. He stated he looked through the budget and found only references to rent and staffing of the Butterfield Project. He stated there is no breakdown showing what all the money is being spent on. He stated nothing of significance was discussed at the Physical Services Budget Meeting on October 14.

Alexandra Ballantine of Brewster requested the 2017 funding for the Putnam County Visitors Bureau be put into subcontignecy until the new board can put together a better plan of action with regards to their goals and budget accountability. She believed the past financial discrepancies should be resolved before moving forward.

There being no further comments, at 7:55 P.M., Chairwoman Nacerino made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Edward Gordon, Administrative Assistant.