

AUDIT & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Held In Room 318 of the
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512

Members: Chairman Castellano, Legislators Albano & Nacerino

Tuesday **6:30 PM** **July 30, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 P.M. by Chairman Castellano who asked Legislator Nacerino to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Albano, Nacerino, and Chairman Castellano were present.

Item #3) Approval of Minutes - May 23, 2013

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #5f) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (13A044)/Coroner/Increase Coordinator Stipend & Hire Part-Time Help

Director of Personnel Paul Eldridge stated that Dr. Nesheiwat, the current Coordinator of Coroners and a Coroner himself, made a presentation and report to the Protective Services Committee in June regarding the Coroner's Office. He stated that Dr. Nesheiwat told him he works a minimum of 10 hours a week completing just Coordinator duties. He stated that the amendment in front of the Audit Committee tonight increases the Coordinator stipend from approximately \$6,400 per year to approximately \$12,000 per year. He stated the justification for that is that the number of coroners decreased from 4 to 3 at the beginning of 2013 and we have unfortunately seen an increased number of coroners cases. He reported the increased numbers and percentages over the last few years. He stated that besides the hours the following are additional justifications for the stipend increase and temporary help. He listed all of the individuals, organizations, and agencies that the Coordinator must interface with. He mentioned that the Coordinator now has an office in the TOPS building and therefore has a place besides the "box" that the files were in before. He stated that the Coordinator is formulating new policies and procedures and working with the Law Department on that. He stated that the Coordinator carries out duties in addition to the autopsy duties.

County Executive MaryEllen Odell stated that when the new year came around and the old Coordinator of Coroners retired, there was really no one but Dr. Nesheiwat who stepped up to take on the Coordinator roll. She stated that previously the Office of the Coroners was contained in a cardboard box. She stated that there was no office. She stated that the County was able to locate office space for the Coroner's Office and gave them access to interface with the Law Department. She stated that they even tried to give the Coordinator administrative assistance but he refused at the time. She further stated that Dr. Nesheiwat has been running this entire Department on his own while at the same time repurposing and reformatting the Coroner's Office to fit today's needs

and the future's needs. She stated he really is someone who does this job selflessly. She stated that he refused a County fleet car for when he is called out to the Western part of the County late at night and he even pays for his own postage at times to expedite answers to the decedent's family or insurance companies because he understands and it is a priority for him.

Legislator Oliverio stated that Dr. Nesheiwat is an absolute gift to this County. He stated his only concern with this is that it is not being done during the budget process which is where he believes it should be done. He stated that as much as Dr. Nesheiwat is worthy of this, and Legislator Oliverio stated he will vote "yes" for this during the budget process, to give a stipend now creates havoc and discord amongst other employees. He believed it is a can of worms that must not be opened. He has voted no before on similar increases and would like to be consistent. He asked Dr. Nesheiwat to be patient and wait. He further stated that he knows that Dr. Nesheiwat is doing a great deal of work and it is great work but the increase should be done during budget time. He stated that because of that he will be a "no" vote on this right now.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated that Dr. Nesheiwat had a unique case in her district that he could do the best job he could because he lacked clerical help and a sufficient office and it just made this poor family upset which in turn made Dr. Nesheiwat upset because he was doing a wonderful job. She further stated that if this is hindering Dr. Nesheiwat from doing the job that he wants to do then she believes this should be passed.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he is not in favor of the stipend but he is certainly in favor of the clerical help. He stated that is a clear need right now and we should do that. He reiterated that he is in favor of the clerical help for Dr. Nesheiwat but he is not in favor of the stipend right now.

Director Eldridge stated that the Coordinator is not an elected position. He stated that the Coroner's positions are but then the elected Coroners vote on who will be the Coordinator and that Coordinator's stipend is the one under review here.

Legislator LoBue stated that at a previous committee meeting Dr. Nesheiwat gave a comprehensive overview of the Coroner's office. She stated that he deserves this increase in stipend but she believes that it should be done during the budget process and she will be a "no" vote.

Legislator Albano stated that the budget is not perfect and things change through the year. He stated that we agree that there is a need for clerical help. He stated if there is an understanding that there is a need for clerical help but the doctor is doing all of this clerical work now he does not understand why we cannot vote for this stipend right now. He stated that he has spoken with the doctor about the doctor's plans and ideas for the future of the Coroner's Office and he is happy to see that office moving in the right direction. He stated he will support this.

Legislator Nacerino stated that while she supports Legislator Oliverio's opinion that we need to honor the process and our budget, in this particular case she believes that

some of the responsibilities that Dr. Nesheiwat has taken on are unprecedented and hard to predict. She stated that Dr. Nesheiwat serves a crucial role in Putnam County Government and that this is a modest increase. She stated that he has earned every penny. She stated she will support this.

Chairman of the Legislature Othmer stated that we need to bring ourselves into the twenty-first century and he will support this.

Legislator Oliverio stated he agrees with the stipend but during budget time. He stated we need to keep in mind that this is an elected position. He stated that you run for the Coroners position and you know what the salary is and what it entails. He stated it would be the same as increasing the Chairman of the Legislature's stipend right now.

Director Eldridge stated that Dr. Nesheiwat did not run for Coordinator he ran for Coroner.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he accepted the appointment of Coordinator. He further stated that to increase this stipend is to fly in the face of the constituency that elected them.

Chairman Castellano stated that there is a definite increase, unfortunately, of mortality rate in this County. He stated he believes this is a reasonable request and that we need to make sure that the people in Putnam County receive the services that they are entitled to.

Legislator Oliverio stated that when he first got here the Book of Proceedings was one volume and much thinner than it is now. He stated that now we have two volumes and they are much thicker, which means we are doing more work. He stated that though we are doing more work than in previous years we have not received a raise in approximately 8 years. He stated we do more with less. He asked how we will explain this to our constituency if this stipend increase passes. He stated he supports this but asks the Committee to wait until the budget.

Legislator LoBue asked how many autopsies have been completed this year to date.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated 39 autopsy cases have been completed right now. He stated that there are many more non-autopsy cases.

Chief Deputy Commissioner of Finance Anita Gilbert explained the reasoning behind the request for funds for additional autopsies.

Legislative Counsel Clement Van Ross stated that because the Coordinator is not an elected position but an appointed position there might not be a need for a local law change. He stated if we do need a local law we need it right away.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated that right now we send our autopsies to Putnam Hospital Center and that in the future we might need to think about changing to doing them in house.

Chairman Othmer asked Dr. Nesheiwat if when he goes out on a call if he uses his own car and if so does he get reimbursed for gas.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated he uses his own car but does not get reimbursed for his gas.

Chairman Othmer asked if Dr. Nesheiwat had to cancel appointments in his own practice if a Coroner call comes in that he must go to.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that is correct.

Chairman Othmer stated that should all be taken into account.

County Executive Odell stated that we will more than likely have a possible retirement of one of our sitting coroners this year. She stated that we will have to hold a special election. She asked the Legislature who in the medical community would be willing to run and serve for Coroner knowing that they cannot count on their Legislature to support them in the event that there should be an increase in the burden or commitment that they choose over and above their desire to serve their community. She stated that she wants the Legislature to understand that moving forward this Coroner's Office will be taking on extensive evolutions keeping in mind what Legislator Scuccimarra spoke about an opportunity establishing our own facility which might be cost efficient and a possible revenue opportunity if we can embrace our surrounding communities and counties as well.

Chairman Castellano reiterated the number of annual autopsies since 2010. He stated that we need to keep in mind these numbers and the fact that we went from 4 coroners to 3 coroners beginning in January of this year.

Legislator LoBue asked Dr. Nesheiwat if in fact a coroner was going to retire this year and if that vacant position would be on the ballot in November.

Chairman Castellano stated it would not be on this November.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated he has not received an official resignation from this individual but there has been discussions. He stated he believes their decision would be made in about a month or two.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated that if their formal resignation is received by September 19, 2013 the election could get on the ballot this year. If it were after September 19, 2013 the election could not be on the ballot in November and the position would be appointed until November 2014's election.

Legislator LoBue asked if we should go back to 4 coroners if there will be a continuous uptick in population increase and society.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated if we go back to 4 coroners, every coroner will be on the ballot for the election in November that is the law.

Legislator LoBue stated we need to figure it out.

Transportation Manager Vincent Tamagna stated that two different Charter Review Commissions looked at the Coroner's Office and the discussion over 3 and 4 coroners was that the citizens group was a proponent of going to 3 coroners. He stated that also over 2 Charter Reviews we saw the need for creating uniform reporting, having an office, responding to the public, etc. He stated now we have someone who has stepped up and done this job.

County Executive Odell stated that the Coroner's Office was not running to the best of their ability in years past. She stated that Dr. Nesheiwat has stepped up to fix those inequities. She stated that in the past the load of the Coroners has been grossly disproportionate and Dr. Nesheiwat's idea to incentivize the evening of that load is to change the way the coroners are paid, by having a uniform salary plus a stipend per case attended to. She stated that going back to 4 is not a fix.

Legislator Oliverio stated that if we place the stipend in the budget then it will be public knowledge in October. He stated if this individual were to retire in the next couple of months, that knowledge would be available to whoever chooses to run. He stated although this may be the case he would question any individual who wants to gain political office for the money or the benefits. He stated Dr. Nesheiwat loves this County and loves the people of this County and that is someone who we need in public office. He stated we need to visit all of these ideas during the budget process.

Chairman Castellano stated Dr. Nesheiwat is here looking for help.

Legislator LoBue asked Dr. Nesheiwat how long the Coroner's Office has had space in the TOPS Building.

County Executive Odell stated since approximately February or March.

Legislator LoBue asked if before that move the Coroner's Office was technically in the old Board of Elections building.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated that is correct.

County Executive Odell stated that was not an office it was a storage area.

Legislator LoBue stated when she saw it, it was an office. She asked if space was renovated in the TOPS Building for the Coroner's Office or if they were given space that was pre-existing.

Dr. Nesheiwat stated it was space that was already available because someone had moved out of it.

Chairman Othmer stated that we should move this to the Full Meeting.

Legislator Albano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Chairman Castellano. All in favor.

Item #4) Correspondence/County Auditor

Item #4a) Sales Tax Report was duly noted.

Item #4b) Board In Revenue Report was duly noted.

Item #4c) Transfer/Revenue Report was duly noted.

Item #4d) Contingency/Sub-Contingency Report was duly noted.

Item #4e) OTB Report was duly noted.

Item #5) Correspondence/Commissioner of Finance

Item #5a) Overtime/Temporary Report was duly noted.

Item #5b) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (13A037)/Sheriff/Port Security Grant 2011

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #5c) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (13A039)/Finance/SPO Program – Mahopac Central School District 2013

Chairman Othmer stated that he knows he went about this the wrong way but he is very happy with how the SPO Program turned out.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #5d) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (13A040)/Scenic Hudson/Foundry Grant

Chairman Othmer stated that he has been to the Southern Confederate counter-part to our Foundry. He stated that he hopes we can bring our Foundry up to that level.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #5e) Approval/Budgetary Amendment (13A043)/Sheriff/Cover Reimbursable Outside Expenses

Legislator Albano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #6) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T134)/Emergency Services/Emergency Medical Dispatch Program for 911 consoles

Legislator LoBue asked where these consoles were going.

Chief Deputy Commissioner of Finance Gilbert stated that they will be replacing the existing consoles with new ones.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #7) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T138)/Health/Fund Part-Time Epidemiologist (also reviewed by Health Committee)

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #8) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T146)/Finance/PARC Preschool Program 2013

Legislator LoBue stated she was informed that the Governor restored the funding but she is not sure the timing of the release of funds from the State. She stated that we may be cutting a check and being reimbursed quickly by PARC.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #9) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T147)/Board of Elections/Purchase Van (also reviewed by Rules Committee)

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #10) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T150)/Sheriff/Reclass to Correct Line – Equipment

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #11) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T157)/Health/Fund Photo Ionization Detector

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #12) Approval/Fund Transfer (13T158)/Probation/Cover Part-Time Temp & Training to Cover Maternity Leave – ATI Program

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #13) Approval/Apply for Grant/Sheriff's Department/2013 Explosive Detection Canine Team

Sergeant Meyer of the Putnam County Sheriff's Department stated that this grant, if received, would cover the cost of the dog, training, and vehicle up to \$60,000 with no County matching funds. He stated they will not be hiring additional personnel. He stated that the Department will assign the dog to an existing Deputy. He stated that this dog will be utilized for explosive detection, tracking, and patrols.

Legislator Nacerino asked if the grant was the startup costs only. She further asked what additional costs the County would incur for this program down the road after the startup costs.

Sergeant Meyer stated that the only additional money would be veterinarian care and dog food and we already have a canine budget line because we already have a drug sniffing dog.

Director of Consumer Affairs Jean Marie Noel asked where the dog was housed and if the Deputy handling this new dog would be housing the dog personally and would the Deputy be receiving additional benefits or incurring overtime for housing this new dog.

Sergeant Meyer stated that the new dog would be going home with its Deputy handler every night. He stated that he believes there is some sort of compensation to the Deputy handler whether it be a stipend or what have you but he is not sure what that would be at this time.

Legislator Oliverio stated that in speaking with the drug dog handler Deputy that brought the dog to Putnam Valley High School this year is that in keeping the dog at their home they receive a modest stipend for the food and things of that sort.

Chairman Castellano stated he believes they receive overtime only if they are called out during off-duty hours.

Director Noel stated that years ago in the Town of Kent they grappled with this issue and she just wanted to bring it to light in the discussions of this grant application.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution, seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #14) FYI/Memorandum from Highways & Facilities Commissioner Pena - Overtime Budget was duly noted.

Item #15) Discussion/County Procurement Policies & Procedures

Chairman Castellano stated that unfortunately Director of Purchasing Alex Mazzotta could not attend tonight's meeting.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she has spoken with Director Mazzotta regarding an idea that she had. She stated that her idea is to have an additional form for Department Heads to justify their discretion and rationale for when they choose a vendor that is an apples to apples comparison. She stated that then that form would be filed with Director Mazzotta. She stated this is merely a housekeeping detail that may alleviate any misconceptions of favoritism. She stated that she will work on this form with Director Mazzotta and bring this back to the Committee when it is ready.

Legislator LoBue asked if this is something the school districts do.

Legislator Nacerino stated that in personnel selections it is similar.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated she believes this new form is a great idea.

President of the Putnam County Chambers of Commerce, Bill Nulk, stated that on October 24, 2013 there will be a workshop using an outline that the Hudson Valley Municipal Purchasing Group uses to help understand how to properly go about getting involved in County purchasing. He stated it is to stimulate business participation in County purchasing in Putnam County.

Legislator LoBue asked if this form is an action that the Legislature can implement.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated that it is if we input it into the Purchasing Procedure.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he thinks it is a good idea but he believes because the onus will be on the Department Heads that we should get input from all of the Department Heads on this item. He stated it could become quite onerous for them.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she agrees to include the Department Heads in the discussions.

Legislator Albano stated he believes this is a great idea.

Item #16) Schedule of Revenues/Fines Levied by Boards/FYI was duly noted.

Item #17) Other Business: NONE

There being no further business, at 7:50 P.M., Chairman Castellano made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Krista M. Butler, Administrative Assistant.