

**Economic Development Committee Meeting
Held In Room #318
Putnam County Office Building
Members: Chairman Birmingham & Legislators DiCarlo & Tamagna**

Thursday

January 26, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 6:30p.m. by Chairman Birmingham. He requested that Legislator DiCarlo lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chairman Birmingham and Legislator DiCarlo, were present. Legislator Tamagna was absent.

Chair Birmingham made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator DiCarlo. All in favor.

Item #8) Other Business

8a. Approval/Memorialization/Continue Tourism Funding/Valerie Hickman

Chair Birmingham invited the Director of Putnam County Tourism Valerie Hickman to provide an update on the status of funding for Tourism in New York State.

Director Hickman stated that the year of 2011 was a very successful year in terms of the Tourism Events in Putnam County. She stated that they have redesigned their marketing approach, they have a new mailing list and the web traffic has increased to 15,000 hits per month during the winter months and 25,000 during the summer/fall months. She stated that there are some restrictions from New York State that prevents them from using the New York State funding for advertisement within in Putnam County. The theory is that they want to advertise outside of Putnam County to bring visitors to the area. She stated that each of their advertisements must first be approved by Albany.

There are strict guidelines enforced by the I Love New York program in terms of the uses of their funding. She stated that many of the Tourism Events of 2011 will be repeated in 2012. She went over the list. She stated that Putnam County is a location for sporting events. Every sporting event that she has ever brought into the County has done very well. She stated that she will continue with the partnerships with Metro North Railroad. There was further discussion on the Calendar of events for 2012. She stated that in order for Putnam County to become a destination tourist location, there needs to be places for them to stay. Providing a location for people to stay will bring dollars into the County. She stated that the funding has been disappointing. She stated that she does need the \$53,000 check to cover some expenses. Once that check is received the Tourism Office will send a copy to Albany and they will send their matching amount. She stated that there has been discussion of New York State going to a Regional Funding Policy for several years. There is a great deal of opposition to this pending proposal. There is a Tourism Conference in March of 2012. The recommendation has been for those attending the conference arrive the night before and communicate their concerns with this proposal to the Senators who

will be in attendance. She encouraged the Committee to approve a Resolution opposing the Regional Funding policy.

Chair Birmingham stated that he agrees with Director Hickman that the regionalization of the funding for Tourism would have a negative impact on the revenue that is generated through tourism in Putnam County. He stated that Director Hickman and the agency got Putnam County involved with the I Love New York matching funds program approximately 15 years ago. That is when the Half Marathon, Tour de Putnam and Metro North Partnership all came to be and actually put Putnam County on the map for Tourism. He stated that today there is a great deal of discussion about consolidation and regionalization. In many areas he is in favor of that. However he does not agree that Regionalization of Funding is the way to go in this instance. He stated that he would like to see the Putnam County Legislature pass a resolution supporting a memorialization to protect the I Love New York Program.

Director Hickman stated that Putnam County would lose out in the distribution of funds with the Regional program primarily because of that fact that Putnam County has no hotels, conference centers, or wineries.

County Executive Odell stated that she and Deputy County Executive Walker met with the New York State Director of Tourism and listened to Governor Cuomo at his "State of the State" presentation. She stated that the message was that a lot of the Tourism Funding is spent in the Western Side of New York State, by the Niagara Falls area. She stated that their hope is that the New York side of Niagara Falls will be as successful as the Canadian side. She stated that funding will be very competitive. Business as we knew it for Tourism for Putnam County is over. The business model that Putnam County has been following for the past 15 years is no longer going to work. She stated that she believes that Putnam County needs to reinvent itself in terms of Tourism. The Advertising approach needs to change. Printing is very expensive. Today more tickets and reservations for events are all being done on-line. This is just one area that needs to be revamped. It will save money and get more with the times.

Chair Birmingham questioned if County Executive Odell believed it is worth the effort to fight for the funding.

County Executive Odell stated that she does not believe it is worth working on. She stated that she believes it would be a waste of time. She stated that it is apparent that Governor Cuomo has decided in which direction he is going to fund tourism in New York State. She stated that she would like to see intra-County Tourism explored in Putnam County. Such as promoting the activities that our residents can do right here with their families, such as use of the bike path, go boating and hiking. There are numerous potential activities that the residents should be directed to. She believes that this is an area that has not been explored as a result of all of the restrictions attached to the "I Love New York" Funding.

Chair Birmingham stated that he would like to go ahead with the memorialization as a symbol of our support to continue to receive funding from Albany for our Putnam County Tourism.

Deputy County Executive Walker stated that he would recommend that if the decision is to move forward with the Memorialization, that the wording emphasize the “destination tourism” that Governor Cuomo clearly has his focus on. He stated that the Governor reported the plan is to put a billion dollars into the Buffalo/Niagara Falls areas infrastructure, tourism and EDC type funds. That is 1 billion dollars of the 25 billion dollars that were identified for the State of New York.

Legislator DiCarlo made a motion to approve the Memorialization/Continue Tourism Funding; Seconded by Chair Birmingham. All in favor.

Item #3) Approval/Eco Dev Mtg. minutes November 17, 2011
Chair Birmingham stated that the minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4) Approval/Appointment IDA/Neal L. Sullivan
Chair Birmingham approved the Appointment of Neal L. Sullivan to the IDA Board; Seconded by Legislator DiCarlo. All in favor.

Item #5) Update/EDC & IDA Projects/K. Bailey
Chair Birmingham stated that this agenda item will be tabled because a conflict came up in the EDC President Kevin Bailey's calendar.

Legislator LoBue stated that she has learned that the IDA (Industrial Development Agency) holds their Public Hearings at 12:30p.m. She stated she does not believe that is an accommodating time for a meeting that the Public/Residents may want to attend.

Chair Birmingham stated that he recalls a discussion about changing the that time slot. He stated that he will follow up on that.

Item #6) Foreclosure Report/FYI – Duly Noted
Legislator DiCarlo stated that he would like people who have remained current on their mortgages and bills to all reach out to our Federal Elected Officials. They should request that they take action and be the voice of the homeowners who have stayed current on their mortgage to be able to take advantage of the historic low mortgage loans.

Item #7) Unemployment Report/FYI- Duly Noted

Item #9) Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:18p.m. Chair Birmingham made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator DiCarlo. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Trabulsky
Administrative Assistant