

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

Members: Chairwoman Scuccimarra, Legislators Addonizio and LoBue

Tuesday

May 19, 2016

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 P.M. by Chairwoman Scucimarra who requested Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chairwoman Scuccimarra was present. Legislators LoBue and Addonizio were absent. Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that Legislators Albano and Nacerino have agreed to participate as members of the Committee for tonight's meeting, pursuant to the Legislature Manual.

Item #3 –Approval of Minutes-April 12, 2016

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #7 – Approval/Fund Transfer Request (16T083)/Social Services/Cover Health Insurance *(Also to be reviewed by the Personnel Committee 05.23.16)*

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if this fund transfer is to cover the cost of health insurance for a new position in the Department of Social Services.

Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza stated this is to fund the health insurance for a new employee.

Legislator Albano made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 16T083 to be reviewed at the Personnel Committee meeting; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #8 – Approval/Budgetary Amendment (16A022)/Social Services/Safe Harbor Budget

Commissioner Piazza stated the State contribution increased by \$15,000; therefore this budgetary amendment is to reflect the increase in the Safe Harbor Budget.

Item #4 – Discussion/Home Composting/Cornell Cooperative Extension/Environmental Horticulture Educator Stengle

Cornell Cooperative Extension Environmental Horticulture Educator Jennifer Stengle stated about 250 million tons of waste is produced in the United States. She stated a lot of what is in the garbage can be composted; in fact 60% of waste in the United States is comprised of organic materials that are compostable. She stated when compostable products are in the landfill covered by soil they produce methane gas; which create a potent greenhouse gas. She stated methane gas has a tremendous negative impact on the atmosphere. She stated with current composting efforts, approximately 87 million tons of municipal solid waste were recovered by recycling and composting. She stated people do not compost because they are worried about the inconvenience, smell, and animals. She stated home

composting bins can be expensive. She stated in some counties they give out home composting bins and others subsidize the agency that gives them away. She stated the Putnam County Health Department sells composting bins for about \$55. She stated Cornell Cooperative Extension has trained master gardener volunteers who teach composting at farmers markets and classes. She stated Cornell Cooperative Extension does have a home composting hotline that is open on the weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. She stated the Burma composting demonstration at the 4-H Fair really attracts the children.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra requested Educator Stengle to elaborate on Burma composting.

Educator Stengle stated Burma composting is where red wiggler worms are used to compost, which is beneficial to quicken the process.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the worms stay in the compost container.

Educator Stengle stated the worms stay in the compost; however with living things there is always a possibility that a worm might escape.

Legislator Albano stated paper can be composted; however there are different papers with different substances.

Educator Stengle stated gloss paper or colored paper should not be composted.

Item #5 – Discussion/Invasive Species

Educator Stengle stated individuals think about plants by their beauty and functionality rather than it being potentially invasive to the environment. She stated New York State passed NYS 6NYCRR Part 575, in May 2015 prohibiting and regulating certain invasive species. She stated there are two (2) levels of regulation, one being the prohibition of certain species. She stated there are also some species that are regulated. Those that are regulated allow an individual to own a certain species, but that individual is responsible to ensure it does not escape into a free living state. She provided an example of an individual may not dump a goldfish from a fish tank into a lake or pond.

Legislator Gouldman questioned who the legal authority is to enforce the invasive species legislation.

Educator Stengle stated the New York State Department of Conservation (“DEC”) and the New York State Agriculture & Markets (“NYS Ag. & Markets”).

Chairwoman Scuccimarra believed many do not understand the negative impact invasive species have on our environment.

Educator Stengle stated there is a concern that invasive species will find a niche in the eco system so well that they will out compete the native species, which can affect another species habitat or food source. She stated some invasive species are “bad actors” and are easy to say these are bad for the environment. She provided Giant Hogweed as an example of a “bad actor”, as it impacts human health. She stated there are some species that are invasive that do not seem like a “bad actor.” She stated due to

NYS 6NYCRR Part 575, the NYS Ag. & Markets can inspect any registered growers and dealers of plant material. She stated those that sell plants on the regulated list, have to put a label on the plant stating it is a regulated species. She stated some of the pests that are invasive can easily be transported in firewood, which is why many camp grounds have a sign that states “do not transport firewood.”

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional and other business; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Educator Stengle stated bamboo is considered invasive and can cause a lot of damage to roadways and it becomes a neighbor issue. She stated before the legislation, DEC developed the Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (“PRISM”). She stated there are six (6) PRISMs throughout the State. She stated the lower Hudson Valley PRISM is a collection of many local organizations. She stated this regional approach allows opportunities to eradicate invasive species that are early in their infestation. She continued her presentation by listing all of the education and community awareness efforts to reduce invasive species, such as classes and trainings.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if any current legislation could be drafted to help prevent invasive species in water bodies.

Educator Stengle stated she is not aware of any legislation. She stated certain Towns have put laws into place, but she is unaware if a similar law or legislation has been drafted for water born plants and animals. She stated she is not sure which agency would oversee such legislation for the Hudson River.

Legislator Albano questioned if invasive species thrive because of the notion that the strong survive.

Educator Stengle stated there is a group that is looking at invasive species for the eco system services that they do provide. She stated July 10th to the 16th is Invasive Species Awareness week. She stated there are a lot of animal species, including fish that are considered invasive species.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated there is approximately \$2 million of grant funding from the Environmental Protection Fund is available to help protect New York State waters from the spread of aquatic invasive species. She questioned if this funding would be useful.

Educator Stengle stated yes, it would be helpful for the programs that PRISM has.

Mr. George Baum questioned if a constituent sees an invasive species on municipal property, and Cornell Cooperative is contacted can they eradicate it.

Educator Stengle stated it is very challenging to eradicate a well-developed invasive species. She stated if it is relatively new, PRISM has a team that can get rid of the invasive species before it becomes too hard to get rid of.

Legislator Nacerino recommended if an individual has issues or concerns with invasive species they should write to their Town and ask that the matter be addressed on the town board agenda.

Item #6 – Discussion/Plastic Bag Fee

a. Correspondence/Constituent/Support Plastic Bag Fee

b. The New York City Council/Plastic Bag Bill

c. New York State Assembly Bill #A09904 & New York State Senate Bill #S07336

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this is a continuation of last month's discussion on this matter. She stated recently New York City passed legislation to enact a fee for using a plastic bag. She stated there have been municipalities in the State that also installed fees for using a plastic bag. She stated there have been studies that show attaching a fee for using the bags encourages people to use reusable shopping bags instead of the plastic shopping bags. She believed it is important to raise awareness of the impact plastic bags have on the environment.

Legislator Nacerino stated she understands the environmental concerns; however she feels that raising awareness is the best approach. She stated she does have concerns with placing a tariff or a fee on a plastic bag without a viable alternative in its place. She stated she read an article that affirmed individuals that are more affluent tend not to use the plastic bags and therefore putting a fee on plastic bags will impact the lower class the most.

Legislator Albano stated this issue is not going away and he recommends attaching a return fee to a plastic bag similar to how cans and bottles can be returned for 5 cents each. However, he would like to have the recycling return be 25 cents per bag to motivate people to return them.

Legislator Nacerino stated she has reservations with the 25 cent return fee. She restated she believes raising awareness is the best approach.

Legislator Gouldman concurred with Legislator Nacerino's statements. He stated the County's residents already suffer from high taxes and adding an extra fee would be burdensome. He stated plastic bags are an environmental issue and more has to be done, but adding a fee is not the approach to handle this matter. He questioned who the legal authority would be regarding the plastic bag fee and what entity would receive the money made from the fee.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the money would go back to the store.

Legislator Albano stated he does not support a fee for using a plastic bag. He restated his proposal is having a recycling fee attached to returning plastic bags.

Legislator Gouldman stated the recycling fee is a burden for the businesses.

Mr. Baum stated plastics in general are an environmental burden. He stated the raising awareness approach is not effective. He stated the plastic bags are filled up in the landfill and clogging up the sewer lines and storm drains, which are issues the County pays to fix. Therefore, limiting the amount of plastic bags used will actually save government money. He stated he reuses his plastic bags when he

goes to the grocery store. He stated the nickel return for beverage cans and bottles have been extremely successful and resulted in the reduction of litter on the roadways. He stated other municipalities that have imposed a fee or a regulation on plastic and paper bags; for example New Paltz banned the use of plastic bags.

Legislator Nacerino stated the plastic bags used today are very poorly made, so she does not believe that the plastic bags can be reused after one (1) use. She stated the Legislature needs to be proactive and find an alternative to the plastic bags. She believed that imposing a fee or a tariff is an unfunded mandate and will create hardships for those of in a lower socioeconomic class. She stated in the Town of Patterson a grassroots campaign really pushed the community to recycle.

Mr. Baum stated less than 5% of plastic bags are recycled and that is with all the effort of recycling centers.

Legislator Nacerino stated she is not disputing that fact. She believed it is important to raise awareness and teach children about being more environmentally conscious.

Legislator Gouldman stated Putnam County is the smallest county in New York. He stated many people shop outside the County; therefore imposing such fee or regulation will not create a big impact that is desired.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated when the New York State Returnable Container Act, also known as "Bottle Bill" was enacted it received a lot of backlash when it was first established. She stated now, there is only praise about the legislation.

Carmel-Kent Chamber of Commerce President Bill Nulk believed that plastic bags are viewed as a convenience item that is disposable. He believed the attitude needs to be changed to the plastic bags need to be recycled.

Town of Kent Advisory Committee Chairwoman Beth Herr stated that California is very eco-friendly. She stated there is so much trash in Lake Gleneida, which shows that plastic bags are an issue. She stated she supports a five (5) cent fee on plastic bags.

Item #9 – Update/Legislator Scuccimarra/E-Scrap Containers

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she spoke with the Health Department regarding this matter. She stated the Town of Southeast ("Southeast") is the only municipality that does not have their e-waste monitored; therefore that is part of the issue with the overflowing e-scrap containers. She stated the Health Department spoke to the e-scrap container company about the issue so, they will pick up more regularly.

Legislator Nacerino stated Legislator Castellano informed her that there is an issue with the pick-up of the waste in Southeast. She stated as Chairwoman Scuccimarra pointed out Southeast does not have any oversight with their e-scrap container center, which may be causing the overflow.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she will relay the information she received from the Health Department to Legislator Castellano.

Item #10 – Other Business

- a. Approval/Board of Health Member/Kristen McConnell

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she attended the last Health Board meeting and they decided to appoint Ms. Kristen McConnell to fill the vacant position.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to approve Kristen McConnell to the Board of Health;
Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

Item #11 – Adjournment

**There being no further business, at 7:44 p.m. Legislator Nacerino made a motion to adjourn;
Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.**

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Lisa Sommers.