

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

(Chairwoman Scuccimarra, Legislators Addonizio & Gouldman)

Tuesday May 16, 2017
(Immediately following the Protective Services Committee Meeting at 6:30pm)

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 P.M. by Chairwoman Scuccimarra who requested Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Addonizio, Legislator Gouldman, and Chairwoman Scuccimarra were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – March 23, 2017 & April 12, 2017

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/Declining Number of Bees/Back Yard Beekeepers Association

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she requested Ralph Szur, a representative from the Back Yard Beekeepers Association, because there is a lot of concern about the declining number of bees.

Ralph Szur of the Back Yard Beekeepers Association, stated he has been keeping bees for around 18 years. He stated he is a “Back Yard Beekeeper,” which means he only has a few hives. He stated he had seven (7) last Fall and he is now down to two (2). He stated it was a rough Winter and Spring for beekeeping. He stated he would be citing a survey conducted by the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and the Apiary Inspectors of America. He stated about 6,000 beekeepers managing about 400,000 hives were surveyed for the 2016 survey. He stated one (1) out of every three (3) pieces of fruit, seed, and nut is bee pollinated. He stated pollination is an \$80 billion business. He stated honey bees are one (1) pollinator. He stated there are approximately 30,000 native bees in North America. He stated the focus is on honey bees because they are adaptable to agricultural purposes. He stated generally, per year, there is about a 30% colony loss. He stated usually the losses would occur in the Winter but now are also occurring in the Summer. He stated Winter losses are more understandable while they are uncertain why colonies are being lost in the summer. He stated two (2) possible causes are lack of food sources for forage and pesticides. He stated 60% of the entire population goes to California in February to pollinate almonds. He noted that the United States is the largest almond producer in the world.

Legislator Addonizio stated she has read that they also pollinate coffee beans.

Mr. Szur stated that is interesting because he has not heard of that happening. He stated some plants are wind pollinated, like corn and pistachios. He noted the lack of diversity in bees’ diets.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra clarified that the lack of diversity in their diet is contributing to the loss of bees.

Mr. Szur stated the bees are highly stressed. He stated commercial bees are being moved around the country for pollination purposes. He noted the differences between his back yard beekeeping and commercial beekeeping.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if mites were a big cause of his bee colony loss.

Mr. Szur stated there are a lot of stressors for bees and one of the biggest is Varroa Mites. He stated it is similar to a tick the size of a rat on a human. He stated monitoring the mites is the biggest issue of beekeeping. He stated pesticides can be used against the mites.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if the pesticides would kill the bees.

Mr. Szur stated it does not kill the bees, it weakens them to other problems. He stated as far as promoting pollination, planting native perennial wildflowers helps.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra noted that Putnam County Golf Course has a segment that has many native wildflowers.

Legislator Addonizio suggested planting some at Tilly Foster.

Mr. Szur stated things that help bees also help other pollinators. He stated landscaping that promotes pollinator habitat would help, such as not applying pesticides or herbicides because it can poison the nectar that the bees bring back to the hive. He stated he acknowledges that it would be unrealistic to get rid of pesticides and herbicides entirely but he would suggest they not be applied to flowering plants, only apply them at certain times of the day.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if Mr. Szur knew the regulations for beekeeping in Putnam County.

Mr. Szur stated he did not know.

Legislator Addonizio stated Cornell Cooperative Extension would most likely know.

Mr. Szur stated different towns have different ordinances.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if someone wanted to start beekeeping what their first action would be.

Mr. Szur stated he would suggest joining a local organization of beekeepers. He stated there are mentors, courses and events to help people learn what it takes to be a beekeeper. He stated he mentors six (6) or seven (7) people.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, stated when she was on the Agricultural Review Board, they would put together lists of native plants that were preferred to use. She stated something similar could be useful on the County Website.

Mr. Szur stated that is a great idea and noted that lists like that are available on the internet.

Legislator Castellano questioned who to contact to remove bee hives from around a house.

Mr. Szur clarified that a bee hive is a box with bees in it and a bee swarm is what is usually seen around houses. He stated there are lists available for people who take honey bees out of houses or remove swarms. He stated it is illegal to exterminate honey bees. He stated beekeepers are looking for swarms to use and will take them from houses.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if he could leave the information he brought.

Mr. Szur stated he could.

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

Item #5 - Approval/Victim and Witness Assistance Grant Program/Department of Social Services

Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza stated this was originally a three (3) year grant but they have been given an additional two (2) years. He stated all grant applications need Legislative approval and this is technically an application.

Legislator Gouldman questioned what is done with the grant money.

Commissioner Piazza stated for the most part it goes to Victim Assistance Services.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move Approval/Victim and Witness and Assistance Grant Program to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Item #6 - Discussion/Pharmacies Providing Drop-Off Boxes for Unused Medicines/Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the Legislature has to do everything they can to fight the battle against drugs. She stated she asked Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski to speak about his research into this potential law.

Director of Consumer Affairs Michael Budzinski stated Rockland County passed a law regarding pharmacies taking back medications and Westchester has a law proposed. He stated his office has been in contact with Rockland, but their Legislature passed it so quickly that their Law and Consumer Affairs Departments were not able to plan to implement it. He stated Rockland is considering hiring a consultant to help figure out how to implement the law and how much more

staff is necessary. He stated in addition to requiring certain pharmacies to take back medication, the law also involves the department overseeing it and making sure the pharmacies are complying. He stated he has five (5) full time workers and three (3) of them are secretaries. He stated if the law was implemented he would need additional staff in his department.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned how the Westchester law is being implemented and who is overseeing it.

Director Budzinski stated the law is identical to the one in Rockland and it has not been passed yet.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated clarified that who is overseeing the Westchester law is unknown.

Director Budzinski stated yes. He stated he tried to get as much information on the county (Rockland) that passed the law. He stated there are seven (7) medication drop off boxes in the Putnam County. He stated the Sheriff's Department picks up from five (5) of them and local police pick up from the other two (2). He stated he has heard that the Sheriff's Department is getting overwhelmed by the amount of medications they have to pick up.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra noted that representatives from the Sheriff's Department stated have told the committee in the past the same thing.

Director Budzinski stated that the Communities that Care Coalition is trying to get a classification for a designation area, which means the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) will come in and pick up all the medications.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she called some pharmacies in New York and New Jersey and they said they are doing it on their own. She stated they pay for a company to bring a lock box. She stated some pharmacies provide a prepaid envelope to people when they pick up their prescriptions to send back to the company for destruction.

Legislator Nacerino stated she likes the idea of the customer using the prepaid envelope to send the medication back rather than have a lack of oversight at pharmacy take back areas.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated it is at the pharmacies discretion. She noted that some pharmacies feel it is their obligation to help dispose of the unused medicines.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if Chairwoman Scuccimarra has spoken with CVS or Rite Aid.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated she has not spoken with any local pharmacies.

Legislator Nacerino clarified that she was questioning if Chairwoman Scuccimarra spoke with the corporation, not just the store.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated the pharmacies she contacted were small, private ones.

Legislator Nacerino stated maybe the larger chains will take the initiative.

Director Budzinski stated in 2014 the DEA passed a policy that pharmacies could voluntarily take back medications.

Legislator Nacerino noted that the pharmacy would have to take on the cost, which would take the onus off local government.

Director Budzinski stated in both the Rockland law and Westchester proposed law, the pharmacies cannot charge customers for taking back the medication.

Legislator Albano stated it is an added cost but it could be money well spent. He stated perhaps the pharmacies could be asked to take back the medications voluntarily.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza would like to provide any input on the subject.

Commissioner of Social Services Michael Piazza stated he knows Deputy Commissioner of Social Services Joseph DeMarzo has been working with the Sheriff's Department and the Town Police on the amount of medications being dropped off. He noted that CVS stopped selling tobacco because they believed it was in the public interest.

Legislator Albano suggested sending a letter to the pharmacies requesting that they consider taking the medications back voluntarily.

Legislator Nacerino stated she believes it would be premature and suggested waiting to see how Rockland and Westchester implement the law.

Item #7 - FYI/ProAct Report – Duly Noted

Item #8 - Other Business - None

Item #9 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 8:15 P.M. Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.