

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE MEETING
TO BE HELD IN ROOM 318 OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairwoman Addonizio, Legislators Gouldman & Sullivan

Thursday

September 14, 2017

(Immediately following the Rules Committee Meeting)

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 P.M. by Chairwoman Addonizio who requested that Legislator Gouldman lead the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Gouldman, Legislator Sullivan and Chairwoman Addonizio were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – August 22, 2017

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Quarterly Update/Putnam County Visitors Bureau/Executive Director Bruce Conklin

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

Executive Director Bruce Conklin read the attached quarterly update.

Director Conklin stated from the Visitors Bureau webpage you can jump to different pages. He stated their new commercial is on the website along with links to all of the Visitors Bureau social media.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated she liked the commercial with the glimpses of the County.

Director Conklin stated that commercial is being played in the advertising locations.

Legislator Gouldman questioned when the website goes online.

Director Conklin stated it is online.

Legislator Gouldman questioned when it went online.

Director Conklin stated on September 5, 2017. He stated there was a soft rollout to make sure there were no bugs with the website. He showed the webpage for Magazzino Art. He stated companies can curate their own page.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated Magazzino Art is phenomenal.

Director Conklin stated their page is the basic layout for all pages. He stated they gave him the narrative, the video they wanted posted, and the pictures they wanted shown.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the Visitors Bureau puts together the content for the businesses' separate website.

Director Conklin stated these pages are part of the Visitors Bureau's website. He stated the information on each page comes from the business.

Legislator Gouldman stated this is the business' own page.

Director Conklin stated it is their own page.

Legislator Gouldman questioned who makes the content for the page.

Director Conklin stated currently the content is sent by the business. He stated in the future there will be a form that businesses fill out with the information they want displayed. He stated that form comes to him for approval. He stated the reason for approval is that the Visitors Bureau needs to speak with one voice.

Legislator Gouldman noted that potential content could be controversial so the approval needs to be part of the process.

Director Conklin stated the Visitors Bureau website is very uniform and easy to navigate.

Legislator Sullivan questioned how someone would find out what there is to do in Putnam County.

Director Conklin stated there is a "Things to Do" section on the website. He noted there is an "Arts and Culture" section that is a part of that.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how someone could get their business on the website.

Director Conklin stated to send him an email at visitorsbureau@visitputnam.org and he will list what specifically he needs from each business.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if there is a contact information page on the website.

Director Conklin stated under the "About Putnam" tab on the website there is contact information.

Legislator LoBue questioned who writes the newsletter.

Director Conklin stated he does.

Legislator LoBue questioned which vendor did the website.

Director Conklin stated Sapphire.

Legislator LoBue questioned where they are located.

Director Conklin stated he believes their corporate headquarters are on the west coast.

Legislator Gouldman questioned why they were picked.

Director Conklin stated there was an RFP (Request for Proposal) process. He stated their offer was the best and offered exactly what was needed.

Legislator LoBue stated we have an ongoing agreement with Sapphire.

Director Conklin stated he has an ongoing agreement.

Legislator LoBue stated since the County funds the Visitors Bureau, the County has the agreement.

Director Conklin stated he signed the contract.

Legislator LoBue questioned how long the agreement is for.

Director Conklin stated a year was paid for.

Legislator LoBue questioned how Director Conklin is on budget.

Director Conklin requested clarification of the question.

Legislator LoBue questioned what percentage of the budget has been used.

Director Conklin stated that information was not prepared for the quarterly update; therefore he is unable to speak to it.

Legislator LoBue stated that information can be sent to the Legislature.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated Director Conklin can send it to the Legislature.

Legislator LoBue stated she understands that the Visitors Bureau retained Lusardi Attorneys.

Director Conklin stated yes.

Legislator LoBue requested an explanation.

Director Conklin stated it is an ongoing legal matter. He stated this information is not part of the current update and he could send it to the Legislature if it was requested.

Legislator LoBue questioned who is paying for the law firm.

Director Conklin stated the Visitors Bureau is.

Legislator LoBue stated the Visitors Bureau did not tell the Legislature that they were hiring attorneys.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated it will be looked into. She stated this information along with the budget information previously requested by Legislator LoBue can be sent to the Legislature.

Legislator Sullivan stated Director Conklin can talk to the Visitors Bureau Board before sending the information.

Director Conklin stated he would talk to the Board.

Legislator LoBue stated usually quarterly updates include the financial status.

Legislator Gouldman stated that visitors have spent 6% more this year than last year. He questioned if there is a way to track the number of people coming into the county.

Director Conklin stated there are ways to do that but none of those mechanisms are currently in place.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if that is planned for the future.

Director Conklin stated yes, down the road. He stated a Visitor Profile Study would most likely be done.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how it is tracked.

Director Conklin stated the stats from Metro North stops would be used but there are so many ways to get into the County, so that requires a more in depth study.

Legislator Gouldman stated he took a train from Peekskill to NYC and the train was packed with people coming from Breakneck Ridge; however that does not mean they came to the County and spent money.

Director Conklin stated there are different levels of people who spend money in the County. He stated Putnam County broke the \$60 million mark on traveler spending.

Legislator Gouldman questioned where the tourism employment statistics in the attached PowerPoint were from.

Director Conklin stated it is taken out of the Tourism Economics Report, which comes from New York State's Economics Department.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the statistics are for the State or regional.

Director Conklin stated it is broken down between State and regional.

Legislator Gouldman stated Director Conklin noted a lack of owned photography in his quarterly update. He questioned if stock photos could be used.

Director Conklin stated he is apprehensive towards using stock photos because they lose the authenticity of what is being photographed. He stated that does not mean stock photos cannot be used, he would just prefer not to.

Legislator Nacerino stated the Legislature is proud of the job Director Conklin has done. She stated the objective tonight was to give an update, because for so long this was lacking. She stated the website that people can explore is a terrific resource. She stated not every expenditure the Visitors Bureau makes has to come to the Legislature. She stated the Legislature does not have to micromanage the expertise and trust that they have in the department heads and agencies that the County funds.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated the Visitors Bureau has a great board where each member brings something to the table. She stated she is sure Director Conklin feels the same, because the board supports him.

Director Conklin stated he is happy that he works with a professional board that offers him so many resources.

Legislator Nacerino stated Director Conklin is a great leader and the Visitors Bureau is reaching goals that they have not in the past.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated she is very excited about the website.

Legislator Sullivan questioned what kind of marketing is done in New York City.

Director Conklin stated there is print advertising that reaches NYC, the commercial is being run in Brooklyn and Queens, digital advertising, and Hudson Valley Magazine.

Legislator Gouldman questioned why Brooklyn and Queens were picked to run the commercial.

Director Conklin stated when he started, there was no advertising plan moving forward. He stated he would have liked to have included more of NYC, but considering the cost

of the new website and travel guide, he had to pick and choose where he would market. He stated from what he has heard, the people who are coming up are from the younger generations that live mostly in Brooklyn and Queens. He stated this is just for this year, until the marketing numbers come back and he can see what worked and what did not.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated one of her constituents contacted her about a lack of pamphlets for Putnam in rest stops off of highways. She stated she thinks it would be great to add pamphlets.

Director Conklin stated he is currently working on a travel guide. He stated a travel guide has not been issued by Putnam County for many years.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned the process for getting the pamphlets into the rest areas.

Director Conklin stated it depends on where the area is located. He stated they are most likely owned by some branch of the State.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned if Director Conklin is looking into the process.

Director Conklin stated once the visitors guide is set, he will look into where it can be sent. He stated there are budgetary and time concerns. He stated there will be a campaign to try to entice people to ask for a visitors guide. He questioned how far north Chairwoman Addonizio was thinking as far as where the pamphlets would be.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated the Albany area.

Director Conklin stated Albany has already reached out looking for a visitors guide.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated tourism is an economic driver and Putnam County offers numerous places for tourists to come and enjoy. She stated Director Conklin is operating on a very small budget compared to other counties who she believes do not offer as much to tourists. She stated increasing the budget should be considered.

Item #5 - FYI/Unemployment Report – Duly Noted

Item #6 - FYI/Foreclosure Report – Duly Noted

Item #7 - Other Business

- a. **FYI/Compliance Update/Putnam County Industrial Agency/IDA Board Chairman Bill Nulk**

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

Bill Nulk, Chairman of the Putnam County IDA, stated the IDA is now officially open for business. He stated the IDA was able to go get into compliance in time to assist Ace Endico, who asked for some benefits to help with expansion. He stated the IDA is able to give them sales tax advantages, mortgage tax abatements, and also a PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes). He stated other IDAs in the State impose PILOTS on municipalities, but the Putnam County IDA Board has decided to only move forward with a PILOT if the local municipality has approved it. He thanked the Legislature for their support. He stated the IDA's intention is to ask for funds as needed, as they have done the past two (2) years. He stated if things work right and there are more projects, the IDA is looking to become self-sustaining.

Legislator Sullivan congratulated to Chairman Nulk on getting the IDA back up and running. He stated he is glad to hear that a deal is already done.

Item #8 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 7:06 P.M. Chairwoman Addonizio made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Sullivan. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.