

**PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
PUBLIC HEARING  
ON THE  
2018 TENTATIVE BUDGET  
AND  
REPORT OF THE BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE  
TO BE HELD IN THE  
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Wednesday                      October 25, 2017                      7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 6:58 P.M. by Chairwoman Nacerino who requested Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Scuccimarra, Gouldman, Addonizio, Albano, Jonke, Castellano, LoBue, Sullivan and Chairwoman Nacerino were present. Also present was Legislative Counsel Firriolo.

Chairwoman Nacerino requested that the Clerk read the Public Notice (attached).

Chairwoman Nacerino stated that this Public Hearing gives the Legislature the opportunity to hear from you, the public, about your views of the proposed 2018 Tentative Budget. Your concerns are very important to us and it is our responsibility to approve a fiscally responsible budget that provides for the health, safety and quality of life for our residents, while also not exceeding the tax cap. I would ask that anyone wishing to speak regarding the proposed 2018 Tentative Budget should come up to the microphone, state their name and the town in which they reside. There is also a sign in sheet that we ask you sign as well. Please keep in mind that there is no comment period for the Legislators and therefore no cross discussion. If you do have a question, please leave your name and contact information with the Clerk and we will get back to you promptly. This Public Hearing will assist the Legislature in making informative decisions during our Legislative meeting on Thursday evening, October 26, 2017 when we will Adopt the Budget.

Phyllis Hoenig, Mahopac Resident stated that she attended the October 19, 2017 Budget & Finance mtg. She stated that she would again protest the Legislator's large salary increase. She explained that although Chairwoman Nacerino has referred to the salary increase as an adjustment for the last 10 years that the Legislature has not received an increase, the public sees this as very large salary increase of 13.9%. She stated that the Legislature received a COLA increase last year of \$703.00. She stated that her astonishment for the salaries for this part time position happened when her daughter who was running for the Dutchess County Legislature mentioned their salaries of \$15,450. She stated that the Dutchess County Executive salary is \$132,960. She stated that the raise for the Putnam County Legislature will bring the salary to \$40,839. The County Executive's salary will be \$155,209. She stated that she did not understand how the salaries could be substantiated given that Putnam County's population is under 90,000 while Dutchess County's is 260,000. She stated that she read an article in the Examiner that Putnam County has the second highest salary pay scale compared to the 10 surrounding counties. She stated that when the time comes where the Legislature's salaries fall behind in comparison to neighboring counties, she stated that she would be willing to raise the salaries, however, that time was not now.

**Challen Armstrong, Southeast Resident explained that she lives on social security and a small fixed pension. She stated that she hasn't been given a social security Cost of Living raise for three (3) or four (4) years, even though everything else has gone up. She stated that she was shocked with the \$7,000 increase for Board of Election Commissioners and \$5,000 increase for the Deputy Commissioner of Highways & Facilities. She was also shocked at the 13% increase for the Legislators and 17% for a Confidential Secretary. She stated that she worked 30 years in a corporate position and her husband worked over 40 years in civil service. She stated that in each case the business and union employers created standardized job descriptions against which salary ranges were attached. It created parity and responsibilities and the measurement standards among people who were doing the same job. The information was published and accessible to employees. She explained that her daughter works for Aetna for nearly 20 years. She has received consistent performance ratings of "exceeds expectations", yet she has never received an increase greater than 6%.**

**Vijay Saraswat, Mahopac Resident questioned what was going on with 10 years having no increase and one (1) year having a 13% increase. He believed this was odd and he wanted to better understand the process by which the County Legislators figure out how these raises should or should not happen. He questioned why there was a 13% this year and not 0% like last year.**

**Lynne Eckardt, speaking as a resident in the Town of Southeast and not as an elected official stated that she was concerned about the Legislators salary increase. She shared the following: Dutchess County - approximate population 295,000 – Legislators salary \$14,450; Greene County – approximate population 47,000 – Legislators salary \$15,000; Columbia County – approximate population 61,500 – Legislators salary \$14,000; Ulster County – approximate population 180,000 – Legislators salary \$14,000; Washington County – approximate population 62,000 – Legislators salary \$17,700; Rensselaer County – Legislator salary \$20,000. She stated that Orange County was the only county she could find which was higher, except for Westchester County. She stated that Orange County's population was 377,000 with a Legislators salary of \$49,000. She believed that the Legislative board has not been responsive to the public and wished that there could be cross talk allowed. She believed it was ill advised for the Legislators to take a raise this large and believed it was disingenuous for the Legislators to say how hard they work and that they deserve it.**

**Natasha DiDonato, Carmel Resident stated that she was appalled to read in the newspaper about the Legislator's salary increase. She stated that she too would like a part time job that paid \$40,000. She explained that there were many families who could not even afford to pay their taxes. She stated that she pays over \$13,000 in taxes for a small converted bungalow.**

**Jerry Ravnitzky, Mahopac Resident stated that he was startled about what he has read in the newspapers. He stated that supposedly the Legislator position is listed as part time. However, some Legislators are stating they expend a lot more hours. He stated that if they are spending full time hours on this job, he believed they could find work in other areas, given their talents that would bring them a lot more money if they worked in the private sector. However, working as a representative of the people is not the kind of work people ordinarily do to earn a lot of money; it is a service to the community. He stated that if the Legislators wanted to earn more money, as proposed with the salary increase, perhaps they are in the wrong job and should be in the private sector. He**

stated that there are many people in the community who struggle to pay their taxes or have moved out of the community because they couldn't continue to pay their taxes. He believed that if you asked the people in the community if they would approve of an increase that would be over \$10,000 from one (1) year to the next, he believed you would find there would be a large number of people who would vote no. He stated that if the Legislators do get a salary increase, he believed it should be reasonable. He stated that individuals in the private sector usually only get between 2% - 4% of a salary increase. He hoped that the Legislature would reconsider.

Judith Ravnitzky, Mahopac Resident stated that all the members of the Legislature are Republicans and have no other voice to listen too or have any reason to make a compromise and therefore you can vote to give yourselves a nice improvement on your salaries. However, the residents don't have that option and therefore will get an increase in taxes.

John Morar, Mahopac Resident stated that he came to the previous meeting and was also concerned about the process. He stated that it didn't seem like it was a Legislature who was trying to find out what people thought. He believed it was an organization that was trying to defend itself. He believed what was necessary to consider was what salary is needed to attract the quality of people we want to run for these offices. He questioned how it was determined that a salary increase was necessary to get the caliber of people that are needed for public support for running our organization, as well as the demographics of comparing other organizations. He questioned if any of the Legislators would not run for office if the salary was not increased.

Anthony Williams, Putnam Valley Resident who is running for office as County Legislator, stated that he has been listening to everyone's comments tonight, reading the newspapers and listening to the discussions that took place last week pertaining to the salary increases for the Legislators. He stated that one point that he hasn't heard yet, and in his past experience in corporate America and in the private sector was that salaries are often determined by the value that you bring into a company or organization. He stated that usually the metric is about 10 times, for example if you are making \$40,000 per year you should be bringing in somewhere around \$400,000 of value to your position to substantiate or reflect this salary. He questioned if the Legislature was bringing in that type of money in grants, resources or opportunities for our County to justify that type of salary. He stated that if this was happening in the Legislature he believed people would not be complaining as much. However, he stated that if they are not seeing that reflected in the value they are getting in their community, then obviously they have the right to be upset. He stated that technically it is a part time position but honestly, as servants of the people of this County, we should be treating it as a full time position all of the time and not some of the time. He stated that if this salary increase passes, the Legislature needs to find a way to honestly justify that salary to the people so they don't have a reason to question whether or not you are earning that salary.

There being no further comments; at 7:27 P.M., Chairwoman Nacerino made a motion to close the Public Hearing and adjourn the meeting; seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.