

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

**Members: Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Addonizio & Montgomery**

**Tuesday**

**5:30pm**

**August 13, 2019**

---

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested that Legislator Castellano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Montgomery and Chairwoman Sayegh were present. Chairwoman Sayegh stated Legislator Castellano would sit on the Committee in Legislator Addonizio's absence.

**Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – July 23, 2019**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 - Discussion/Putnam County Economic Development Corporation/President Kathleen Abels**

Putnam County Economic Development Corporation (PCEDC) President Abels thanked the Committee for the invitation to speak tonight. She stated she has been a Putnam County resident since she was 11 and a Town of Southeast resident for the past 40 years. She stated she retired in June 2018 from New York State Electric & Gas (NYSEG), where she held many jobs over the years. She stated she eventually became the manager of community outreach and development, which included economic development. She stated this allowed her to sit on the PCEDC Board of Directors. She stated she started as the PCEDC President on July 1, 2019. She stated her mission statement is:

“To drive the economic vitality of Putnam County by working to attract appropriate new businesses, broaden the County's tax base, retain and grow employment opportunities within the county, and aid in the enhancement of the quality of life for residents. The PCEDC acts as a facilitator in bringing together businesses, government agencies, and other stakeholders.”

She stated her vision is to repurpose existing buildings with a focus on historic preservation, find a way to reoccupy existing vacant buildings, and attract desirable new buildings within certain sectors such as life sciences, information technology, film, and television. She stated her action plan is to align the goals of all the stakeholders. She stated she hopes to work closely with the County, the Legislature, the Tourism Department, the Putnam County IDA (Industrial Development Agency). She stated she has noticed that if a municipality is not aligned with the goals of the Empire State Development, they will not receive CFA (Consolidated Funding Application) funding. She stated County needs to leverage its existing assets. She stated the County has great quality of life, healthcare, and a highly-educated workforce. She stated Putnam is a great location that has a close proximity to New York City and various transportation opportunities such as five (5) airports, the train system, and major roadways. She stated the PCEDC needs to support infrastructure projects as they are extremely important, to attract

businesses. She stated in addition to infrastructure, an emphasis will be placed on encouraging innovation and pushing the initiative. She stated the PCEDC is currently working on a new website, with 12 main landing pages and will be very organized. She stated they will be utilizing social media to maintain photographs and links to Putnam County businesses on the website. She stated there will also be links to various resources for businesses. She stated she hopes to launch the website on or before September 1, 2019. She stated there will also be success stories of Putnam County businesses featured on the website.

Legislator Nacerino stated PCEDC President Abels gave a great overview and she is happy to have her on board. She stated working towards a common goal is appreciated and she is excited to have things move forward in a positive direction.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, questioned if the PCEDC meetings are open to the public. She stated she would like for the PCEDC to have a stronger relationship with the towns and villages.

PCEDC President Abels stated in her previous job, she did a lot of work with elected officials. She stated one of the first things she did as PCEDC President was to reinforce those relationships. She stated she has meetings scheduled with several Town Supervisors. She stated she understands that some of the main priorities of the County are two (2) sewer projects and the distillery project in Carmel. She stated the PCEDC website will have their reports, policies, and meeting minutes available to view.

Resident Ann Fanizzi stated the IDA posts their meetings in the newspapers so the public is aware. She questioned if the PCEDC meetings are open to the public.

PCEDC President Abels stated she will bring those topics to the Board for consideration. She stated presently the PCEDC Board meets every other month, on the second Tuesday of the month. She stated the meetings have not been open to the public but the minutes are posted online.

Ms. Fanizzi suggested that the PCEDC meetings be open to the public, similar to the IDA. She stated it would be good for the public to be aware of what the PCEDC does.

PCEDC President Abels stated she agrees that the PCEDC needs to raise awareness about itself, and she will see that that happens. She stated she will bring the idea of an open meeting to the Board.

Ms. Fanizzi she stated she would like more communication between the County and the public.

Legislator Castellano congratulated PCEDC President Abels on her new position. He stated the previous PCEDC President would have networking events with local businesses present. He stated he would like for these events to continue.

PCEDC President Abels stated she met with Chairwoman Sayegh, Tourism, the IDA, and Jennifer Maher, who Chairs the Putnam Business Council, to work on scheduling events together.

Legislator Castellano stated that is great and asked to be kept apprised of the events.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the collaboration shows a great future for Putnam County. She thanked PCEDC President Abels for her efforts.

PCEDC President Abels stated when everyone is on the same page is creates more efficiency.

Legislator Montgomery thanked PCEDC President Abels for all this information. She stated it is an exciting time, as there is also a new Director of Tourism for the County. She stressed the importance of open communication between all parties. She stated that will help inform the public. She questioned how the PCEDC will attract businesses from outside of Putnam County.

PCEDC President Abels stated the website will be the main marketing arm of the PCEDC. She stated she will make sure the website is informative from an outsider's perspective. She stated there are many opportunities for foreign companies to invest in Putnam County.

Legislator Montgomery stated having useful information on the website to entice outside businesses would be great. She noted Cold Spring is the only river town without a hotel.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated sharing of information between agencies is very important.

PCEDC President Abels stated they are a facilitator to direct people to certified experts. She stated the information on the website needs to be kept up to date. She stated the website will allow businesses to research as easily as possible.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated tracking the number of people coming into Putnam on the trains is important.

PCEDC President Abels stated they will schedule bi-weekly conference calls to keep all stakeholders up to date. She stated she spoke with new Tourism Director Tracey Walsh about the new Empire State Trail from New York City to Buffalo.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if there are any current statistics of people who come in to Putnam County.

PCEDC President Abels stated compiling that information is what is currently being discussed. She stated they are focused on having that information readily available.

Ms. Fanizzi stated she hopes that the County agencies have a unified vision for the future.

PCEDC President Abels stated that is the first step, to align their goals.

Councilwoman Eckardt suggested updating the Town Boards on projects in their respective towns. She urged the best communication possible.

PCEDC President Abels stated everyone should be informed.

Legislator Montgomery suggested if there have been inadequate responses from parties in certain districts, to reach out to that district's Legislator for assistance.

PCEDC President Abels stated she will definitely be reaching out to Legislator Montgomery for communication with Central Hudson.

#### **Item #5 - FYI/Unemployment Report**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is a glowing unemployment report for Putnam County. She stated there are 51,300 in the labor force

Ms. Fanizzi questioned, of the labor force, how many are working within Putnam County.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated that information is not provided.

Ms. Fanizzi stated she believes 70% of people in Putnam County work elsewhere. She questioned what the unemployment rate is.

Legislator Castellano stated it is 3.2%.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned what that rate entails.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated it is the percentage of people unemployed in Putnam County.

Legislator Nacerino agreed that most people within the County work outside of the County. She stated the County is striving to bring more jobs into the County.

Ms. Fanizzi stated the proposed logistics center in the Town of Southeast will only bring in low-skill level jobs. She questioned if that is the kind of job we want to attract to Putnam County.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there needs to be a balance. She stated larger employers such as Putnam Hospital, the distillery project, and the logistics center attract people to jobs from outside the county.

#### **Item #6 - Other Business – None**

#### **Item #7 – Adjournment**

There being no further business, at 6:12 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.