

**RULES, ENACTMENTS & INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**Held In Room 318**  
**PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING**  
**CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

**Members: Chairman Sullivan and Legislators Albano & Castellano**

**Thursday** **6:00pm** **January 23, 2020**

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The meeting was called to order at 6:01p.m. by Chairman Sullivan who requested that Legislator Albano lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Albano, Castellano, & Chairman Sullivan were present.

**Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – December 10, 2019**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 - Approval/ Reappointments/ Plumbing & Mechanical Trades Board/  
Alonge, Mancone, & Capalbo**

Chairman Sullivan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #5 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 20T004/ County Clerk/ Computer Equipment**

County Clerk Michael Bartolotti stated the Putnam County Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) has been very busy. He stated Real ID goes into effect on October 1, 2020 so there is an increase in customers who are upgrading their regular license to a Real ID or enhanced driver's license, which are involved transactions with a great deal of required documentation. He stated there are also an influx of customers coming in under the Green Light Law, which went into effect on December 16, 2019. He stated the DMV is in a unique geographical situation because it is the southernmost County-run DMV in the State. He stated the State-run DMVs have very long lines and people can be left waiting for hours therefore customers will come to Putnam where it moves faster. He stated these factors have resulted in some long lines at the DMV over the past month. He stated in an effort to address this issue, he would like to put one (1) complete additional workstation in so more customers can be accommodated at once. He stated there are two (2) windows at the DMV that do not have all the functionality that they should. He stated unfortunately, despite his attempts to be provided with equipment through the State DMV, their response was that Putnam would have to purchase the equipment if they wanted it. He stated it was decided to purchase the extra equipment to be able to utilize the windows, providing more versatility to make logistical changes to enhance customer flow.

Chairman Sullivan stated it is important to note that the more transactions processed by the Putnam County DMV, the more incoming revenue there is to the County. He stated this will help alleviate the cost of this equipment.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated that is correct; the County keeps 12.7% of the revenue collected. He stated the quicker the transactions can be processed, the more transactions they will be able to process.

Legislator Albano stated he went into the DMV recently and saw how busy it was. He stated the employees there are doing a great job and he would support this request to help the DMV run even more efficiently.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated in those two (2) weeks before the holidays the office was extremely busy with the Green Light Law going into effect, the holidays coming up, and kids being off from school. He stated the staff has been doing a phenomenal job. He stated it is beginning to slow down a little bit and he believes some of the efficiencies that have already been put in place are beginning to have a positive effect.

Chairman Sullivan stated County Clerk Bartolotti had also discussed addressing the customer flow and the possibility of segregating lines based on transactions.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated they are exploring the option to break out driver's license transactions. He stated this will allow those coming to the DMV for simpler transactions such as registering a vehicle, obtaining a title, or paying a fine, to get through the line a bit faster.

Chairman Sullivan stated through the Green Light Law, there are many more people eligible to apply for a driver's license. He stated this will result in long wait times to take a road test because there have not been any additional employees added to give the road tests.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated that is correct and the road test staffing was spread thin to begin with. He stated he is unaware of any additional field instructors being put on. He stated with the influx of individuals applying for a license under the Green Light Law, it will definitely slow the road test process down.

Legislator Castellano questioned how long the current wait time is.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated he is not aware of the current wait time, but it will increase exponentially.

Legislator Castellano questioned what the timeline is from when a driver's license is applied for to when the road test can be taken.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated individuals under 18 years old take their written permit exam and they must wait at least six (6) months and complete the five (5) hour course

before an appointment can be made for a road test. He stated individuals over 18 years old do not have to wait six (6) months; they can take their written permit exam, complete the five (5) hour course and schedule their road test.

Legislator Gouldman stated he would like to commend County Clerk Bartolotti and his staff for the all their hard work. He stated on the western side of the County, it is sometimes more convenient for residents of Putnam Valley and Philipstown to go to the DMV in Peekskill or in Dutchess County. He stated shortly after the Green Light Law went into effect Dutchess County made the decision to only accept customers who were residents of Dutchess County. He stated he also heard that a line was forming at the Peekskill DMV at 11:00 at night. He stated this equipment purchase will help everyone.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated they are trying to do the best they can to maximize the efficiencies for the staff so customers can be taken care of as quickly as possible. He stated the Deputy Clerk at the Putnam County DMV gets to work at about 6:50am and since the Green Light Law went into effect and especially the few weeks following, there has been a line of people waiting outside when she arrives. He stated the office does not open to the public until 8:30am. He stated once the DMV opens, there is a nonstop flow of customers. He stated there are people basically camping out at the State-run offices in Peekskill, White Plains, Yonkers, and Haverstraw.

Legislator Montgomery stated the purchase of computer equipment was discussed recently and she questioned if this purchase request was approved by the IT/GIS Department.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated the IT infrastructure in the DMV is run by the State and therefore the County IT/GIS Department does not have anything to do with it.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if this purchase was declined twice by the Legislature.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated no, it was not.

Legislator Montgomery stated in reference to the point made by Legislator Gouldman, the residents of Philipstown are facing a serious issue without being able to go to the DMV in Dutchess County. She stated she wrote to Dutchess County Clerk Bradford Kendall requesting a meeting to try to alleviate this issue. She stated in the meantime, she would like to discuss the possibility of having DMV services in Philipstown as has been brought up in the past. She stated she would like to meet with County Clerk Bartolotti to discuss this possibility. She stated without public transportation available on the western side of the County, residents are at a disadvantage without being able to go into Dutchess County.

County Clerk Bartolotti stated he would be open to that.

Chairman Sullivan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

**Item #6 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 20T009/ Finance/ Pay for NYCOMCO in Veteran's Van**

Chairman Sullivan stated this is an annual charge for the use of equipment that allows the van to communicate with the base.

Chairman Sullivan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

**Item #7 - Approval/ Fund Transfer 20T015/ Board of Elections/ Clear Ballot Audit System**

Commissioner of Board of Elections Catherine Croft stated there are two (2) systems being purchased. She stated one is Clear Count, which is a scanner that tabulates the results of absentee ballots. She stated the other is Clear Audit. She stated the Board of Elections is required to audit 3% of the voting machines, which is two (2) machines, after the election. She stated now with early voting, one (1) of those machines needs to be audited as well. She stated in 2019 there were two (2) audit teams made up of four (4) people each who came into the Board of Elections for four (4) days to perform the audit. She stated Clear Audit will perform the audit and reduce the time it takes down to about two (2) hours without the need to bring in extra people.

Chairman Sullivan questioned if this program would help speed up the certification.

Commissioner Croft stated yes, it would. She stated the State Board of Elections certifies the systems used by local Board of Elections such as the voting machines, the E-Poll books purchased last year, and this system being discussed. She stated Orange and Dutchess Counties used this system in last year's election and spoke of it very highly.

Chairman Sullivan clarified that last year there was a team of eight (8) people performing these audits over several days and the purchase of this system will cut that down to a couple hours.

Deputy Commissioner of Board of Elections Kelly Primavera stated yes, with this system two (2) staff members will be utilized and it will take a couple hours at most, depending on how many ballots there are.

Chairman Sullivan questioned if this system will be more accurate.

Commissioner Croft stated the other system was accurate, but it would take longer as there were sometimes issues with the ballots going through.

Deputy Commissioner Primavera stated the new system is a bigger scanner and will make the process more efficient.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how many voting machines are in Putnam County.

Commissioner Croft stated there are 44 voting machines in Putnam County.

Legislator Gouldman requested clarification on how many machines need to be audited.

Deputy Commissioner Primavera stated two (2) machines must be audited for election day and one (1) machine for early voting.

Legislator Gouldman questioned how the machines are chosen to be audited.

Commissioner Croft stated they use a lottery to choose so it is randomized. She stated this includes the audit for the absentee ballots as well.

Deputy Commissioner Primavera stated they must audit one (1) election district out of the 86.

Chairman Sullivan stated of the \$73,174 that is being requested via this fund transfer, \$57,000 will go toward a five (5) year license. He stated essentially, the County is pre-paying for five (5) years of use of this system.

Deputy Commissioner Primavera stated two (2) onsite trainings are also included, however she does not believe that will be necessary as it is not a difficult system.

Legislator Sayegh clarified that the license will last five (5) years and in the sixth year will need to be renewed. She questioned if new machines would be needed.

Deputy Commissioner Primavera stated it is their hope that the machines will last longer than five (5) years.

Legislator Albano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

### **Item #8 - Approval/ Resolution/Overtime Policy/ County Departments**

Chairman Sullivan read Section 7.01 of the Putnam County Charter entitled Legislative Control into the record: *“Control of the financial affairs of the County government shall reside in the County Legislature, which may at any time cause an examination and audit of the books, records and papers pertaining to the money, funds or other property belonging to the County or over which the County shall have control.”* He stated Article 7 of the Putnam County Charter entitled Financial Control details the different controls, responsibilities, and duties of the Legislature in terms of anything financial related to the County. He stated the resolution on the agenda tonight is to clean up the overtime

policy. He read section 7.08 of the Putnam County Charter entitled Budget Controls; Work Programs; Allotments into the record: *“No County officer, employee, administrative unit or other authorized agency shall, during a fiscal year expend any money or incur any liability in excess of the line item amounts appropriated and available in the operating budget or authorized to be borrowed by the County Legislature. The unexpended balance of each current appropriation, less the encumbrances outstanding at the close of the fiscal year for which it was made, shall lapse at the close of such fiscal year except for appropriations made for the construction of permanent physical improvement or works not to be completed during that fiscal year or for funds established to accomplish some specific purpose until the purpose for which it was made shall have been accomplished or abandoned.”* He stated essentially this is saying any money left in a department’s budget at the end of a year goes back into the general fund. He stated this resolution will put some additional controls and language related to the control of overtime so any department that expects to exceed their budget will be required to come before the Legislature to explain the reason for exceeding the budgeted amount. He stated at that point, the Legislature will review the request and either approve or deny it.

Legislator Montgomery recommended that this item be tabled until input from the Department Heads is received. She stated she has spoken to some Department Heads who were not aware of this.

Chairman Sullivan stated this resolution was worked on by Commissioner of Finance William Carlin and he would assume Commissioner Carlin ran it by the people who report to him. He stated based on Commissioner Carlin’s recommendation he is comfortable that the policy is going to be okayed by the departments that will be affected by it.

Legislator Montgomery stated she would appreciate the input from Department Heads and suggested inviting them to attend a Committee Meeting where a discussion can be had in public. She stated she is concerned about the unintended consequences that may come along with this change. She questioned which departments had an issue with exceeding their overtime budget last year.

Chairman Sullivan stated the Sheriff’s Department exceeded their overtime budget without first coming to the Legislature with a request. He stated this may not affect many other departments.

Legislator Montgomery questioned how to require the Sheriff’s Department to anticipate the need for excess overtime.

Legislator Albano stated this should be addressed in the budget process. He stated if extenuating circumstances arise, the department should come to the Legislature ahead of time to have a discussion. He stated it would be irresponsible to allow the money to be spent with notification to the Legislature afterwards.

Legislator Montgomery stated the need for overtime was anticipated by the Sheriff's Department in the 2019 budget process, but the budget line item was decreased.

Legislator Albano stated it is important to budget correctly to be able to deal with special circumstances that happen during the year. He stated the budget process is the best time to address any issues; it is not good business to make changes during the year without first obtaining approval.

Chairman Sullivan stated the Charter states that the budget lines should not be exceeded. He stated in the 2020 budget there was over \$500,000 allocated for overtime in the Sheriff's Department. He stated this is more than was budgeted for 2019.

Legislator Montgomery stated she believes the overtime budget was decreased in 2019, which is why it was an issue.

Chairman Sullivan stated compared to the 2019 budget, the overtime was increased for 2020.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification on the meaning of "non-mandated budgeted overtime." She questioned how this differs from other types of overtime.

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated an example of mandated overtime would be if there were a constant watch in the jail; the County would have no discretion in incurring that overtime.

Legislator Montgomery stated in the resolution, the second Resolved clause uses the word "timely." She stated this could be left up for interpretation and she requested an explanation of how to understand or interpret it.

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated the resolution was drafted by Commissioner Carlin. He stated in his review of it he inserted the words "in advance" in that section specifically to correlate to "timely." He stated he believes this clarifies it; "timely" is "in advance" of authorizing or expending overtime funds.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Legislative Counsel Firriolo for the clarification. She stated she believes it still leaves a lot to be interpreted. She questioned why the change was made in the third Resolved clause from "will" to "shall."

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated he made that change; it means the same thing but "shall" is a preferred term to "will" when expressing a mandate. He stated both mean that it is a requirement and not an option. He stated the Putnam County Charter also utilizes the word "shall" therefore this will keep it consistent.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Legislative Counsel Firriolo. She restated her interest in hearing input from Department Heads because it will affect each department and requested that this item be tabled until that input has been received.

Sheriff Robert Langley stated in accordance with the resolution, as Legislator Albano pointed out, departments need to budget responsibly. He stated the Sheriff's Department did budget responsibly and realistically, but the budget line was cut from just over \$700,000 to \$640,000. He stated a motion was then made to cut the line further to where it is now, just over \$500,000. He stated that is not a realistic budget. He stated the Legislature has a responsibility to the taxpayers and part of that responsibility is to budget realistically. He stated unforeseen incidents happen; the Sheriff's Department is currently down six (6) officers and provided the following examples: two (2) officers retired, three (3) officers are out on job-related injuries: one (1) was almost killed this week in the line of duty, one (1) was hit by a motor vehicle and could be out for a year, and one (1) suffered a traumatic back injury that will require surgery while wrestling with an emotionally disturbed person while on duty. He stated these officers being out affect the Sheriff's Department ability to patrol and it must be covered with overtime. He stated they have no control over the uncontrollable situations that take place out in the streets of Putnam County. He stated public safety is a responsibility of everyone, including this Legislative body. He stated realistic funds need to be provided to cover those expenses. He stated the Highway Department requested a budget transfer at the end of last year because they exceeded their overtime line and the Legislature approved that transfer.

Chairman Sullivan stated the purpose of this resolution is to have departments come to the Legislature when they get to a point where they do not believe they have enough funding in their overtime line, before it is exceeded. He stated this will allow departments to explain why more funds will be needed to cover the overtime and a discussion about finding a solution can be had. He stated if the Committee and Legislature agree that the request is warranted then initiating a transfer of funds from the fund balance into the overtime line would be approved. He stated through this resolution, the Legislature is asking for a discussion to be had before the budget is exceeded, rather than after the fact.

Sheriff Langley stated he is asking the Legislators to be realistic. He stated the Sheriff's Department has \$1 million worth of comp time that has been built up by the deputies. He stated if all the deputies decide to cash out, the Sheriff's Department would be facing a \$1 million bill. He stated as a Legislative body, the Legislators refused to allow a line to go in for comp time to be paid out in the Sheriff's Department budget. He stated this is a two (2) way street, he is more than willing to work with the Legislators, but everyone needs to be realistic.

Legislator Castellano stated Sheriff Langley brought forward some great examples and this is why the Legislators would like to hear about the issues the departments are facing before they effect the budget. He stated at that point, decisions can be made. He stated he does not think this request is unreasonable.

Sheriff Langley stated the requested budget was arrived at by analyzing the budget lines over the years. He stated he would love to have money left over in the overtime line, however he cannot control the unforeseen. He stated everyone needs to be realistic.

Chairman Sullivan made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

### **Item #9 - Approval/ Amend Chair of Veterans Service Medal Advisory Panel**

Legislator Castellano stated 2019 was the first year the Panel was able to purchase some medals and present them within the community and they plan to continue doing so in 2020. He stated this is a great program and he was honored to be Chair of the Panel last year and he would be honored to do it again if the Panel so chooses.

Legislator Addonizio stated the resolution establishing the Panel states the Chair of the Legislature will serve as Chair of the Panel. She stated this resolution being considered tonight will change that to be the Chair of the Legislature or their designee.

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated the sole change this resolution makes is that it gives power to the Chair of the Legislature to serve as Chair of the Panel or appoint someone else.

Legislator Montgomery questioned if the Legislature approves the Chair of the Panel.

Chairman Sullivan stated the Chair of the Legislature appoints the Chair of the Panel.

Legislator Montgomery stated this has been an unbelievable program. She stated she has contacted the Panel a few times about the process as there were many applicants waiting to receive their medal. She stated she cannot stress enough how important it is to include stakeholders at the local level who would like to be in attendance when Veterans are receiving their medals. She stated there was a World War II Veteran from Philipstown who received their medal and the Mayor of Cold Spring would have liked to attend because his father went to war with the Veteran, but he was left out. She stated she believes the ceremony was organized by someone that is not on the Panel. She stated the Town Supervisor was also left out and she restated the importance of including local stakeholders in this process.

Legislator Castellano stated it has been the Panel's opinion that it is the Veteran who is being celebrated and they try not to make the event political. He stated they have never invited the supervisors in any of the towns. He stated in regard to the World War II Veteran Legislator Montgomery is referring to, the Panel invited him to attend the June 6, 2019 medal ceremony, but he unfortunately was unable to attend. He stated the Panel has limited funds and does the best they can to get the word out with about the ceremonies utilizing local newspapers and social media. He stated over 160 medals

have been distributed and there are 5,000 potential recipients in Putnam County. He stated the Panel as a whole decided to keep these events all about the Veteran.

Legislator Montgomery stated the Panel has worked very hard on this initiative and she means no disrespect. She stated she understands that the Panel does not want to make these events political, however this particular ceremony was organized based on a State Senator's schedule by a Councilperson from Putnam Valley who works for the State Senator.

Legislator Castellano stated that Veteran was invited to the June 6, 2019 event and he was unable to attend. He stated they had an event in Philipstown and Legislator Montgomery was invited; the Panel only invites County Legislators. He apologized if the representatives in Philipstown were unhappy and he will lean on the Panel with any future decisions.

Legislator Montgomery offered her assistance with events this year.

Chairman Castellano made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Albano. All in favor.

#### **Item #10 - Approval/ Litigation Settlement/ Reno v. County of Putnam**

Chairman Sullivan stated this settlement was delayed and therefore does not need to be addressed this evening.

#### **Item #11 - Discussion/ Establish Putnam County Human Rights Commission/ Requested by Legislator Montgomery**

Chairman Sullivan made the following statement: *"I ask all residents of Putnam County to show that we care for our fellow residents and that we always choose love over acts of hate and that hate and violence will not be tolerated in our community. Those that choose the evil deeds are a very small minority in our community. Tolerance, love, compassion will always win because we embrace our differences and that is what makes Putnam County a great place to live and raise a family. We stand together, working together, for our values of love, charity, and tolerance. We look forward to working together to find the solution that is right for the residents of Putnam County."*

Legislator Albano stated the Legislators received a large packet of information a couple days ago which he would like to have a chance to really look at. He stated he is happy to say that he has not seen this to be a big issue in Putnam County, but it is definitely a priority.

Legislator Montgomery thanked Chairman Sullivan for including this discussion on the possibility of establishing a Human Rights Commission (HRC) on the agenda. He stated this request was driven by residents of Putnam County, in particular James Hyer, who she would request to come forward and discuss this with the Committee. She

stated Clare Kropkowski from the Westchester Legal Aid Society is also present and she is well versed in this. She stated to quote Rockland County's Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission Constance Frazier: *"We are a County of smart, caring individuals and I think together we can help solve this problem and bridge any divide we face. This requires compromise and it is going to take us all working together."* She stated she is excited there are many people present for this discussion and she looks forward to a healthy discussion. She stated she is hopeful that this will come to fruition. She stated she has received input from individuals who are interested in being a part of this commission.

Chairman Sullivan stated he spoke with Senator Pete Harckham about HRCs and the Westchester County HRC (WCHRC) specifically. He stated he looks forward to tonight's discussion.

Mr. Hyer stated he is an attorney and an Administrative Law Judge with the WCHRC. He stated he thought about this proposal a long time ago when he was discussing what other counties such as Rockland, Orange, Dutchess were doing in terms of human rights and he realized Putnam County is the only county in the lower part of the State that does not have an HRC. He stated Dutchess, Ulster, Orange, and Westchester Counties not only have County HRCs, but they have city and town HRCs as well. He stated all major cities in Westchester County have their own HRC. He stated the reason he revisited this idea and began working on the proposal in an expedited manor was because of the increase in hate incidents around the State. He stated it was mentioned previously that not much is happening in Putnam County, which is not necessarily true. He stated in 2018 the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services reported 525 incidents of hate crimes throughout the State and the report made it clear that most incidents of hate are not reported, therefore the number in the report only represents a fraction of what is truly happening. He stated in November 2018 Bronx News 12 reported that the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) issued a report that hate crimes were raising rapidly in the Hudson Valley. He stated in June of 2019 the New York Times reported that hate crimes were up 64% in our region. He listed recent specific instances in the Hudson Valley area: in September 2019 in Ulster County there was a hate crime targeting the LGBT community and the residents and town council acted immediately; in October 2019 in Westchester County the Holocaust Memorial was desecrated with graffiti and almost 1,000 community members came the following day to stand together against the crime; and in January 2020 in Fishkill a cross was vandalized. He stated just a few days ago in Carmel, a menorah was desecrated with a white supremacist sticker, an action that came a few days after an interfaith vigil was held in the same park in response to the stabbing at a Hanukah celebration in Rockland County. He stated this proposal is a tangible thing that can be done in response to such crimes. He stated these are not isolated incidences. He stated when we think of criminal justice, we think of how the victim has been impacted. He stated these types of hate incidents are worse because it impacts an entire community. He read a passage from an article entitled The Psychology of Hate Crimes from the American Psychology Association: *"People victimized by violent hate crimes are more likely to experience more psychological distress than victims of other violent crimes."*

*Specifically, victims of crimes that are bias motivated are more likely to experience post-traumatic stress, safety concerns, depression, anxiety, and anger than victims of crimes that are not motivated by bias. Hate crimes send messages to members of the victim's group that they are unwelcome and unsafe in the community, victimizing the entire group and decreasing feelings of safety and security. Furthermore, witnessing discrimination against one's own group can lead to psychological distress and lower self-esteem.*" He stated the message here is an incident of hate, which may happen in one specific area, impacts the greater community. He stated the creation of the Putnam County HRC (PCHRC) would put something in place that would protect all citizens. He stated the PCHRC would do the following:

- Focus on education and outreach in all communities across Putnam County
- Host educational seminars on discrimination in housing, employment, credit, and public accommodation, which is currently prohibited by State and Federal Law
- Host panel discussions addressing hate and intolerance within our community
- Host educational programs to celebrate diversity and inclusion
- Arrange for speakers at community events and schools
- Develop a collaborative relationship with houses of worship and other governmental agencies
- Facilitate existing resources coming to Putnam County

He stated the New York State Division of Human Rights (NYSDHR) has a very significant budget and there are educational and outreach services being provided by the NYSDHR to our surrounding counties, but not in Putnam County because it has not been asked for here. He stated some of the organizations with programs that could be beneficial to Putnam County are the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and HUD (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development). He stated he has brought the idea for the PCHRC to various groups within the community and he has not gotten any negative responses. He stated he created a Facebook page for the PCHRC about two (2) weeks ago and have since gotten over 350 "likes". He stated when he speaks to community groups such as libraries or places of worship, they inquire as to what they can do to help once the PCHRC is established. He stated the programs held by the Orange County HRC in 2019 include Human Rights Awards to recognize the good work done by community members, art responses to human rights, "Undoing Racism" seminars, "Responding Not Reacting" classes, anti-Semitism training, age discrimination workshops, sex trafficking education programs, and racial justice programs. He stated the great thing about having a local HRC is that they perform a needs assessment within the community and then cultivate programs to address those needs. He explained how to establish an HRC; under article 12-D of the New York State (NYS) General Municipal Law there is an "enabling statute" meaning the NYS Legislature has enabled local governments to establish HRCs. He stated in the packets he provided the Legislators he attached a two (2) page proposed law which pulled language from the NYS law and laws from local governments. He recommended that the PCHRC be made up of 12 volunteer members with a minimum of two (2) representatives from each town within the County. He stated the members would be appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the Legislature. He stated the proposed law also outlines the duties and obligations of the HRC, which essentially outlines the General Municipal Law. He stated the PCHRC would not cost anything,

there would be no budget, and no staff. He stated all activities of the PCHRC could be fundraised for through partnerships with organizations within the community. He stated in reference to the large packet he provided the Legislators, the first 28 pages are the substance and the rest are exhibits so the Legislators can go through and read this information firsthand. He stated Putnam County needs an HRC and he would like to see this passed in the near future. He stated on the cover of the submission he included a quote from Eleanor Roosevelt when she addressed the United Nations in 1958, which he read into the record: *“Where after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm, or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”* He stated what he takes from this quote is that in order to change the world, we must first change our communities. He stated he believes establishing an HRC is one of the things the Legislators can do that after their tenure they can look back on and be proud to have been a part of. He stated not only would he like this to be passed, but he would like it to be passed unanimously. He stated this would send a strong message that Putnam County is a place that does not tolerate hate, but rather a place that welcomes diversity and inclusion. He stated the PCHRC will not cost anything but can do so much to help. He thanked Chairman Sullivan for putting this on the agenda and he thanked Legislator Montgomery for her willingness to help in this endeavor. He stated an HRC is something that helps all residents.

Ms. Kropkowski stated her “Westchester County name” is Clare Degnan and her “Putnam County name” is Clare Kropkowski. She stated she is the head of the Legal Aid Society in Westchester County and they represent indigent individuals who are charged with felonies. She stated she works with the WCHRC all the time. She stated education is the core mission of the HRC; educating individuals to know their own rights as a human being, resident, non-citizen, or any category they may fall into. She stated quite frankly, she does not understand how anyone could object to this proposal because it is reaching out to people and understanding who they are and finding a commonality. She stated although Putnam County is not as diverse as its surrounding counties, there is a caring, loving quality here. She stated she lives and raised her children in the Village of Brewster and they are good kids with good friends. She stated education can have a big impact. She stated some of the younger individuals she works with who have committed a felony hate crime have done so because they wanted to fit in and do not always understand the impact their crime has on the affected community or what that group may have gone through; but education can change that. She stated this type of education is not going to come from schools, it’s going to come from people within the community who care. She requested that this move to a vote if possible. She thanked Legislator Montgomery for bringing this forward. She stated as a resident and as an advocate in criminal justice, this is a good thing to do in our community.

Chairman Sullivan thanked Mr. Hyer and Ms. Kropkowski for the informative presentations they provided. He stated this is on the agenda tonight for discussion and there is a lot of information for the Legislators to go through before moving this to a vote.

Ms. Kropkowski stated she is willing to partner with Putnam County to assist in the education aspect as she has done similar work in the surrounding counties.

Legislator Castellano questioned the difference between the WCHRC and the NYSDHR.

Mr. Hyer stated the NYS Legislature enacted a two (2) prong approach to addressing human rights. He stated under the executive law there was an establishment of the NYSDHR and under the General Municipal Law there was the enabling statute that allows municipalities (counties, cities, towns, and villages) to establish their own HRC. He stated the intent of the NYS Legislature was to allow the NYSDHR to work on mostly enforcement. He stated the NYSDHR is headquartered in the Bronx and they have satellite offices throughout the State, including in White Plains, and they have a staff of administrative law judges, investigators, mediators. He stated the NYSDHR has an education and outreach component that is utilized upon request. He stated most local HRCs do not do enforcement work, rather they forward the complaint to the NYSDHR for enforcement. He stated complaints can also be filed by individuals, there is no filing fee, no need for a lawyer, and they have alternative dispute resolution mechanisms so most of the cases do not even need to go to trial. He stated Westchester County is one of the only local HRCs that has an enforcement mechanism. He stated the HRC being proposed for Putnam County does not include an enforcement mechanism, which is the piece that would require funding. He stated the PCHRC would be limited to education and outreach which can be done without a budget or paid staff. He stated the PCHRC could also work in tandem with the NYSDHR to ensure that the residents can utilize the NYSDHR to find a remedy to the issue they are facing. He explained that while the NYSDHR can assist with enforcement, they are not well suited to address local issues, which is why it is important to have a local HRC.

Legislator Montgomery stated there are many organizations and programs within the various towns in the County that are working on these issues and providing resources to residents. She stated some may wonder why another organization would be necessary, but what makes the HRC unique is that it brings the entire County together with representatives from each town and brings the conversation to the County level. She stated she believes this County needs more of an opportunity for public participation and this is the way to accomplish that. She thanked Chairman Sullivan for including this on the agenda so quickly. She stated the interest in a PCHRC is apparent and she is hopeful for a great outcome.

Terry Raskin stated she has been a resident of Putnam Valley for close to 30 years and is the President of the Board of Trustees at the Putnam Valley Library. She stated she

would like to reinforce some points made by Mr. Hyer earlier. She stated education is key to preventing discrimination of any kind including religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. She stated it is vital for community leaders to do everything they can to make sure our homes, public spaces, workspaces, and houses of worship are safe and inclusive. She stated the focus of the HRC will be education and the Putnam Valley Library is excited to continue holding programs that promote understanding. She stated this is key to preventing discrimination because if it is addressed before it becomes an issue, perhaps there would be less discrimination in the world. She stated the Putnam Valley Library already holds these kinds of programs, for example their successful "Community Read" program is in its third year and it promotes the community to read the same book and come together to discuss it. She offered the Putnam Valley Library as a focal point for the PCHRC to hold meetings or programs. She stated Mr. Hyer mentioned alternative dispute resolutions earlier and she is one of the mediators for the Dispute Resolution Center of the Hudson Valley, which is a non-profit organization. She stated this is a great way to resolve issues before they go to court. She stated right now, they work with the Town courts, but it is being looked into by the NYS courts as well. She read a statement into the record on behalf of Rabbis Laurie Levy and Steven Altarescu from the Reform Temple of Putnam Valley: *"It's very unfortunate that we need a commission to help foster the right of the residents of Putnam County, to be afforded the dignity and equality that are inherent to all of us as human beings. At the same time, it's surprising that our County is the only one in the lower Hudson Valley that does not have such a commission. We live in a time where those who are seen as different, or other, have had to endure stereotyping, prejudice, and acts of discrimination and violence in words and actions. All of these acts are motivated by fear, lack of education, and baseless hatred and they are happening here in Putnam County. Even our young Hebrew School students have shared personal stories about witnessing and being on the receiving end of such acts in their public school. We fully support the establishment of a Human Rights Commission in Putnam County, one that provides education, resources, and support to all of our citizens to ensure we are doing everything in our means to end all violations of human rights in our communities. If we did anything less, then we would be shirking our responsibility as leaders and public servants."*

Marsha Waldman, resident of Mahopac, stated it is easy to live in a bubble and not realize what is really going on when you are part of the majority. She stated as a parent she has seen what has happened in the schools. She provided examples of bullying her daughter and her classmates have endured and examples of prejudices faced by families she knows within the community. She stated unfortunately, most of these incidents are not reported. She stated this issue is pervasive and insidious. She stated these education programs are needed to change the culture. She stated our children become our citizens and we need to do better and stop being blind to the reality of the prejudices in our community.

Lillian, resident, stated this is a sensitive topic and it can be difficult to hear examples of things happening right in the community. She stated she appreciates that Chairman Sullivan spoke to the next stages of this and it is great to hear that the Legislative process has resources and opportunities to give input. She questioned if there is a

timeline set for the process moving forward. She stated she would like to hear the Legislators' opinions on this topic as well.

Chairman Sullivan stated the concept of the HRC is great, it is something that everyone should be cognizant of. He stated in terms of the process moving forward, there is a lot of information to review and the County Attorney or Legislative Counsel will do so in order to put together something that will be a good fit for Putnam County. He stated he spoke to Senator Pete Harckham today about the WCHRC and he provided some great insight as far as what similar things he thought would work in Putnam County, or what from the WCHRC would not. He stated it would be difficult to provide a concrete timeline, but it will be worked on moving forward.

Mr. Hyer stated he included a two (2) page proposed law as well as the local laws from all municipalities with an HRC within the Hudson Valley to be reviewed. He stated if the PCHRC is going to be limited to education and outreach the law will not have to be anything substantial.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if the PCHRC would have jurisdiction within the schools if they were made aware of an incident.

Mr. Hyer stated the PCHRC would not have jurisdiction to go into a school without request. He stated the HRC serves as a place for people to discuss issues and to facilitate bringing together the resources that already exist in our community. He stated at times, a school may request that the HRC come in to provide training to teachers or to bring a speaker to talk to the students in an assembly.

Legislator Sayegh questioned what the objective of the PCHRC would be. She stated she believes education is important for the entire community. She stated based on the statistics from the State, there have not been many reported hate crimes committed in Putnam County. She stated of course, there are some that go unreported. She stated she spoke with the Superintendent of the Mahopac Central School District about their procedure when dealing with discrimination and she learned that they have very strict guidelines and filing procedures. She stated she is glad to hear that the PCHRC would not usurp any procedure already in place by the schools.

Mr. Hyer stated a lot of this discussion has been based on hate crimes, but that is not the only focus of the HRC. He stated there is a robust State law that deals with the prohibition of discrimination in various aspects. He stated one thing that all the HRCs have in common is the focus on education. He stated he has done educational seminars in many different types of businesses in an effort to prohibit the negative acts from happening. He stated as a judge, he sees cases where there is no malice; but the individual just does not know the law. He stated the ability to facilitate educational opportunities can keep individuals and business from violating the law, even when they are not intending to do so. He stated he believes the PCHRC would be welcomed by local Chambers of Commerce, Rotary Clubs, and the business community in Putnam.

Legislator Sayegh referenced the quote by Eleanor Roosevelt that Mr. Hyer read into the record and stated this is also something that should be addressed in households. She stated she believes a lot of this education is important to teach our children at home. She stated schools do make an effort to teach this as well. She stated her husband is Arab-American therefore her children are dark-skinned and her son, who is currently a senior in high school, has been called names based on his ethnicity, which went unreported. She stated she does not believe kids always mean malice when they pick on one another. She stated this is where the education comes in although it would be through the school rather than an HRC.

Mr. Hyer stated the Commissioner of the HRC in Rockland County started a program for arts in schools dealing with human rights, which gave students from all over the County the opportunity to express themselves through art. He stated each year there would be a competition with a focus on various topics such as diversity inclusion or tolerance. He stated this was an amazing way for kids to express themselves. He stated every community does things differently and what works best for each community in Putnam County will be discovered through the members of the HRC.

Legislator Sayegh stated she would also like to add that although the negative instances are what make the news, she believes the kids in our community are really good. She stated if you go to her house on a Friday night, her basement looks like the United Nations. She stated her children have diverse friends of all races and sexual orientations and she loves them all as though they were her own. She stated although there is always bullying for one reason or another, she believes kids today are very inclusive and she would like to give the kids and the schools a lot of credit for this.

Judy Farrell, Town of Philipstown Councilwoman thanked Chairman Sullivan for including this item on the agenda tonight. She stated the discussion tonight has been encouraging and helpful. She stated she was glad to hear Eleanor Roosevelt quoted tonight as she was the first Chairwoman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. She read another quote of hers into the record: *"The destiny of human rights is in the hands of all of our citizens in all of our communities."* She stated Putnam County Legislators represent all of the citizens across Putnam County and she hopes the Legislature embraces the noble cause of establishing an HRC so goals can be developed to protect the rights of every Putnam resident. She stated many counties around Putnam have HRCs. She stated the NYSDHR was established 75 years ago in 1945. She stated since 1945 Putnam County has experienced significant growth and expanding diversity and it is appropriate to recognize this now as the population grows. She thanked Legislator Montgomery for her efforts as well.

Chairman Sullivan stated the information provided and comments made tonight have resonated with him. He stated he looks forward to working on this together to establish the right thing for Putnam County.

### **Item #12 - Update/ Putnam County Veterans Medal Advisory Panel**

Legislator Castellano stated the Panel will hold a meeting later tonight. He stated there are about 200 medals to still be distributed. He stated they are working in conjunction with the Putnam County Joint Veterans Council to fundraise for this endeavor. He stated the Panel will be looking to hold more events in 2020. He encouraged anyone who knows a Veteran who would like to receive a medal to contact the Panel.

### **Item #13 - Other Business – None**

### **Item #14 - Adjournment**

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

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Beth Green.