

**SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE
CALLED BY THE CLERK AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIR
TO BE HELD AT
PUTNAM GOLF, INC.
187 HILL STREET
MAHOPAC, NEW YORK 10541**

Thursday March 10, 2016 7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by Chairwoman Nacerino. The Putnam County Sheriff's Department, Civil Air Patrol and Putnam County Squadron presented the flag. Chairwoman Nacerino requested the Gold Star Mothers to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairwoman Nacerino led in the Legislative Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Scuccimarra, Addonizio, Gross, Castellano, LoBue, Wright and Chairwoman Nacerino. Legislator Gouldman arrived at 7:18 P.M. Also present was Legislative Counsel Van Ross.

Chairwoman Nacerino introduced Deputy County Executive Walker.

Deputy County Executive Walker introduced all the elected officials in attendance, party chairs, Department heads and a number of representatives from outside organizations. Deputy County Executive Walker then introduced the County Executive, MaryEllen Odell.

County Executive Odell stated that this is her 5th State of the County Address. She stated that Putnam County is dealing with many of the same challenges as we did ten (10) years ago. She spoke about how cancer affects the lives of many individuals both young and old, and that together we can make a difference. She spoke about the special individuals who recently lost their courageous battle with cancer; Jane Powell Smith, Sean Callahan, John Bodor and Kevin Blackman. She stated that Putnam County has been inspired to work as a team and she welcomed the Putnam Hospital Center and HealthQuest as partners in this year's Relay For Life event.

County Executive Odell stated that tonight's message could be summed up in these three (3) simple statements: "The vision is bold. The mission is essential. The initiatives are ambitious." She stated that the County provides discretionary Quality of Life services and many mandated programs and it is done with a revenue stream that is very limited. She explained that this revenue only comes from five (5) sources: 36% from Sales Tax; 27% from Property Tax; 16% from Federal & NYS Reimbursements; 16% from County Departments and 5% came from the General Fund to balance the 2016 Budget. She stated that while staying within the NYS Tax Cap, Putnam County continues to maintain the lowest County portion of your total tax bill in NYS. She stated that the NYS County Average is 21.52% and Putnam County stands at 9% which is less than half of the average of NYS counties. She continued and explained what made up the other portions of the Property Tax Bill: Towns 18.5%; Fire Districts .67%, and School Districts 71.19%. She stated that we needed to work together as a team with the school districts and municipalities to find ways to consolidate.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that in continuing to maintain a fiscally responsible fund balance, she stated that in 2015 we ended the year with \$23.1 million.

She stated that \$4.1 million was taken out for 2016 operating expenses and an additional \$3.6 million was taken out to pay down Pension Debt, leaving a total fund balance of \$15.4 million. She explained that by paying down the Pension Debt, we saved \$500,000 in interest payments and helped to secure our Moody's rating. However, more importantly we are securing pensions for everyone in New York State. She stated that over the last four (4) years this administration has maintained the desired Moody's Aa2 rating. She stated that this strong bond rating enabled the County to complete a successful bond refunding in 2015 which will save our taxpayers \$1.2 million over the next 16 years. She stated that her administration has consistently put forth a budget that has stayed within the Tax Cap. She stated that in October of 2015 the NYS Division of Budget approved the Tax Efficiency Plan submitted by the County which resulted in homeowners receiving a Property Tax Rebate Check in early 2016.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that in meeting our contractual obligations, there are four (4) Collective Bargaining Agreements in Putnam County which will expire and/or will be negotiated in 2016; CSEA, PBA, PCSEA and a new additional bargaining unit PUMA. She stated that Retiree Health Insurance premiums have continued to rise. She explained that in 2005 the County Executive and the Legislature passed a resolution to deal with the unsustainable growth of Retiree Health Insurance, however, the 2006 budget proposal was not adopted. If it had been adopted, Retirees would now be contributing \$799,000 of the \$4,655,000 cost of Retiree Health Care. She stated that in 2011, County Executive Eldridge looked at the unsustainable growth of Retiree Health Insurance, however, the 2012 budget proposal was not adopted. If it had been adopted, Retirees would now be contributing \$607,000 of the \$4,655,000 cost of Retiree Health Care. She stated that in October of 2015, the Administration proposed and the County Legislature adopted a comprehensive reform resolution. She stated that premium contributions were scaled based upon pension income. She stated that these contributions are still below what the average taxpayer would pay; if they even have health insurance at all. She stated the Administration also closed a loophole that allowed married retirees to have two (2) NYSHIP family plans; at a cost of \$41,000 to the taxpayers for this one (1) family. She stated that in 2016 retirees will now be contributing \$609,000 of the \$4,655,000 cost of Retiree Health Care. County Executive Odell then explained some retiree health insurance cost scenarios based on age and pension income. She explained that efforts must be continued to improve health insurance coverage for retirees while at the same time contain costs. She stated that Director of Personnel Paul Eldridge has been tasked with researching and recommending a plan to offer retirees over 65, supplemental insurance coverage as an alternative to NYSHIP.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that the Administration will continue to maintain a fiscally responsible fund balance, maintain the Moody's Aa2 credit rating, meet our contractual obligations, deliver mandated and quality of life services to our resident and stay within Albany's tax cap. She stated that in looking at our revenue, in 2016 we budgeted \$151.4 million in revenue to meet \$151.4 million in expenses. She stated that the revenue sources are: 36% from Sales Tax, 27% from Property Tax, 16% from Federal/State, 15% from Departments and 6% from General Fund Balance. She stated that if we lose any revenue from any of these sources, she questioned where we would make up the difference. She explained some of the reasons why sales tax revenue is vulnerable; with the growing trend of internet shopping and the downward spiral of gas prices. She stated that in 2015 Sales Tax revenue showed a deficit of \$785,000 because of this trending. She stated that it was anticipated that lower fuel costs would have an impact to our budget, therefore, we were able to cover the shortfall by

implementing cost containment measures. She stated that her Administration will continue their commitment to our social and fiscal responsibilities. She explained that the Putnam County Sales Tax Rate is 8.375% and is broken down by: 4% going to Putnam County (same rate that 42 other NYS counties use), 4% going to New York State and .375% going to the MTA. She explained that the drop in gasoline prices results in a drop in sales tax revenue. She stated that to stabilize our sales tax platform and meet our mandated obligation we must create a diversified sales tax revenue stream and her Administration has a plan.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that 70% of the County's budget is controlled by mandates. She mentioned State mandates such as: \$1.1 million for Child welfare, \$1.5 million for MTA Subsidies and \$1.8 million for HAVA (Help America Vote Act which is a Federal mandate). She stated that since the United States Congress passed HAVA in 2002, the costs for elections has increased significantly. In 2006 the Putnam County's Board of Elections entire budget was \$847,957. She stated that there are three (3) primaries this year and the 2016 Board of Elections budget is \$1,817,423. She stated that this was in addition to providing a new building at a cost of \$1.2 million. She continued and explained the unfair split of the costs associated with the mandate in the Probation Department. She stated that in 1990 NYS was paying for 46.5% and by 2015 it was reduced to 10% leaving Putnam County to pay 90%. She stated that the State reimbursement is \$206 thousand on our current budgeted amount of approximately \$2.1 million. She explained that a Community College is a Town mandate. However, in partnering with the municipalities the County puts this \$3.1 million mandate in our budget. She mentioned other mandates such as: \$4.2 million for the Pre-K and Early Intervention program, \$10 million for Medicaid for 6,000 residents in Putnam County and \$ [redacted] for Pensions.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that other mandates include: \$12.3 million in Highways & Facilities for roads and bridges, \$15.5 million for Sheriff's Department and Jail, \$24.1 million for Social Services/Mental Health and \$1.1 million for Indigent Defense Services. She stated that over \$106 million of our \$151.4 million budget goes towards mandates.

County Executive Odell continued with County Government. She stated that in 1892 bold steps were taken to ensure the needs of the people were met in the most efficient way possible; Consolidated County Law of 1892. It codified County functions having; a Clerk (custodian of official records), a Treasurer (Chief Fiscal Officer), a Sheriff (maintain law and order), a District Attorney (prosecute crime), Judges, Coroners and Highway Superintendents. She stated that these were the first mandates imposed by New York State. She stated that they are the core services which the County continues to provide, along with many more since that time. She stated that whether these services are mandated or discretionary quality of life, our dedicated County employees will continue to provide our residents with the quality services they deserve while being fiscally responsible.

County Executive Odell continued with additional County government social responsibilities. She stated that 30% of our budget or \$44.7 million goes to support Discretionary Quality of Life services such as; the Sheriff's Department, Office for Senior Resources, Veteran's Service Agency, Advanced Life Support and Outside Agencies. She mentioned some of the Outside Agencies: Putnam County Libraries Association, Southeast Museum, Putnam History Museum, Putnam SPCA, Putnam Community Action

Program (CAP), Putnam Arts Council, Humane Society and Putnam County Fish & Game. She congratulated Executive Director, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Putnam County Marjorie L. Nichols Keith for her 40 years of dedicated public service. County Executive Odell explained that when you utilize our local Brewster Department of Motor Vehicle office to renew your DMV transactions, 12.7% of all revenue stays in Putnam County. She stated that we are asking our State representatives to push for an increase in this percentage. She explained that the County Clerk's office has been digitizing records for many departments and has scheduled a Passport Day on April 23, 2016 for individuals who need to obtain passports. County Executive Odell played a short video of Interim Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Nesheiwat who explained how the Zika virus contracted and the common symptoms associated with the virus.

County Executive Odell continued with the Putnam County Sheriff's Department who delivers mandated and discretionary Quality of Life services. She stated that they provide 24/7 Emergency Response, Patrol, Investigative Services, Civil Services, operate County Jail and provide innovative programs to keep our residents safe with "Operation Safe Child" and the "Are you OK?" program. She stated that they partner with the Putnam County Traffic Safety Board on many traffic safety initiatives. She stated that they enhance the safety of County residents and visitors in recreation programs with the Sheriff's Maritime and Bike Patrols. They provide leadership in fighting the war on drugs, especially heroin, by partnering with federal, state and local police agencies as well as the Office of District Attorney. They provide the SRO program to our local schools as well as Community and Youth Services programs. They also provide leadership for the Emergency Response Team (ERT) consisting of Carmel Police, Kent Police and the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. She stated that the Sheriff's Department also partners with community organizations including: PHC, Putnam Family & Community Services, Mental Health Association of Putnam, Communities That Care, the National Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Dependencies, Drug Treatment Court, Crisis in our Backyard, our local school districts and many others to promote education and awareness programs on the dangers of drugs and key quality of life issues. She stated that their Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) is a great example of our multidisciplinary team approach. Members of the Sheriff's Department and the Department of Mental Health recently attended training on how to respond appropriately to any situation where there is a person in crisis or with a mental illness. She stated that Putnam County is one (1) of five (5) counties/municipalities which have received grant funding from the State of New York for this training.

County Executive Odell continued with the Putnam County District Attorney's Office and she stated that newly elected District Attorney, Robert Tendy and his staff work cooperatively with all Law Enforcement Agencies to help keep Putnam one of the safest places in the nation. She stated that in 2016, all Assistant District Attorneys will receive specialized training in prosecuting Domestic Abuse Cases. She stated that District Attorney Tendy strongly supports the work of Judge James Reitz and the Putnam County Treatment Court.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that we are a County that is proud of our Veterans. She welcomed the Gold Star Mothers from our local chapter that were attended the State of the County. She stated that September of this year marks the 10th Anniversary of the Gold Star Monument in Putnam County, the first in the United States of America. She thanked the women for their continued service. County Executive Odell stated that Putnam County's Veterans Services Agency offers many programs such as:

the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer program which brings Veterans together in a secure, anonymous setting to help one another cope with the effects of Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). She stated the Putnam County is one of only 15 counties to receive funding for this program since 2014. She stated that in 2016, there are more than 5,000 veterans in Putnam County. She stated that the Vet2Vet programs include: Veterans Chowdown, monthly PTS Networking Call-in Group, partnering with the Mental Health Association of Putnam County, Veterans Outreach Studio, Military Family Appreciation Day and Putnam County Veterans Warmline.

County Executive Odell continued with the Office for Senior Resources. She thanked Senator Terrence Murphy who sponsored a \$550,000 grant for the Carmel Senior Center at the Donald B. Smith Campus which will soon receive much needed improvements. The new plan will increase the size of the activities room to allow more participants and more activities.

County Executive Odell stated that the Putnam County Department of Health is waiting to hear the news that they are the first County in the Hudson Valley Region to gain accreditation by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB). She then explained the process which was taken to prepare for this accreditation. She also explained how the County helps to supplement the Emergency Medical Services, provided by dedicated volunteers, by providing an Advanced Life Support (ALS) service (a paramedic that provides care to the hospital) and Basic Life Support (BLS) which is the transport to the hospital. The County provides four (4) dedicated ALS units and two (2) Basic Life Support (BLS) transport vehicles.

County Executive Odell continued and explained the County's Law Enforcement Partnership and Collaboration which brings all law enforcement agencies together working as a TEAM (Together Each Achieves More) to keep Putnam safe. She thanked all the emergency responders. She stated that Putnam is prepared and she elaborated on the Emergency Preparedness Drill which was held at the Metro North Train Yard in Brewster on November 21, 2015 where over 200 emergency responders participated. She stated that the drill was sponsored by the MTA and hosted by the Brewster Fire Department.

County Executive Odell stated that our first responders are also prepared and trained to administer Narcan to save an individual's life. She stated that last year's State of the County's message was "One Army on the War on Addiction." She acknowledged many of the County's departments and volunteer providers who continue to fight this war of addiction. She stated that in Putnam County between 2011 through 2015 there have been 63 overdose deaths. Admission for treatment involving prescription opioids as the primary drug of abuse has more than doubled from 47 in 2007 to 97 in 2013. She stated that in 2013 in Putnam County alone the rate of heroin treatment admissions per 100,000 residents was 272, the 12th highest rate of heroin admissions among all 62 NYS Counties. She stated that the opiate epidemic shines the light on the bigger issue of addiction. She thanked the Honorable Judge James Reitz for his countless hours, over the last ten (10) years, working with those looking for a way to fight back against their addiction through the Putnam County Treatment Court, and for his participation on the MSNBC program "America's Heroin Epidemic." She then explained how to properly dispose of unused medications by using medication drop boxes located at: the Sheriff's Department, Towns of Carmel & Kent Police Departments, Philipstown Town Hall and two (2) new locations coming soon at the Putnam Valley Town Hall and a location near the Route 84

corridor. There is also a Medication Take Back Day on April 23, 2016 from 9:00 am – 2:00 pm at the Putnam Hospital Center.

County Executive Odell continued by looking at a glimpse backward and a vision forward with the Putnam County Golf Course and Tilly Foster Farm. She explained that in 2006 Putnam National was a County run operation. It was primarily a golf destination which was severely outdated and was plagued with drainage problems. She stated that it hosted 38,000 rounds of golf and posted an operating loss of \$170,000. She stated that ten (10) years later, 2016, we are engaged in a successful Private/Public partnership with 100% County oversight. It is run by contracted golf and food service professionals; Appliedgolf and Homestyle Catering & Food Service and managed by General Manager, Mike McCall. She stated that major improvements have been made to the course, but it's no longer just about golf. She stated that it is a Golf and Event destination for the Hudson Valley. She stated that the facility has been updated. She stated that in 2015 32,438 rounds of golf were hosted; that's up from 30,221 in 2014. She stated that there were many events in 2015 such as: Corporate events, outdoor concerts, baby showers and weddings. She stated that despite hosting 6,000 less rounds of golf from 2006, we posted an operating profit of \$200,000 in 2015.

County Executive Odell continued with Tilly Foster Farm. She stated that the primary goal of the acquisition was to preserve open space and protect water quality. She explained that in 2002 approximately 199 acres was acquired for \$3.8 million using money received from NYS DEP. She introduced a proposed new brand of the Tilly Foster Farm; now known as the Tilly Foster Farm Educational Institute. She stated that in order to complete Tilly Foster Educational Institute we must invest an additional \$1.1 million so this property can realize its full potential and deliver to the people of Putnam County a destination for all to benefit from. She explained that the partnership with Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES will offer: an Educational Center, Culinary Arts Training Center and Bioscience Education. She stated that the County looks forward to partnering with local restaurants to showcase their culinary expertise; hosting special dining experiences, weddings and family events. She stated that it is also about keeping Putnam Farming. She stated that there is approximately 11,000 acres of farmland in Putnam County which range from two (2) to 1,200 acres in size. She stated that Putnam residents want access to fresh local produce and meats. She stated that farmers have identified a need for education and networking. She stated that as the County continues the partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension, it brings Cornell University's research and knowledge to Putnam's residents by providing high-valued educational programs. She explained Cornell Cooperative's Workforce Development such as; Farm to Table, "Green Collar" Workforce Training, Landcare Professional Training & Re-Certification, Career Exploration – 4-H Junior Vet Science & 4-H Junior Farmer, 4-H Clubs – Skill Mastery, Leadership & Service Learning. She explained her hope to keep Early Intervention & Pre-K programs in Putnam County through the use of the Tilly Foster Farm Educational Institute and by continuing the partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that 2016 is the year of business development. She stated that we will work with our businesses in order to drive our economy. She stated that the economy impacts our ability to provide quality government services. She stated that per the January 2016 unemployment rates, Putnam County has the lowest unemployment rate (4.3%) in the Hudson Valley Region. She explained ways in which Putnam County is working with our business; Bizcon (largest

business and home expo), the Putnam County Chamber of Commerce's mission to partner with the County to attract businesses through EDC, IDA and Tourism. She stated that in partnering with all the local chambers, Tourism, EDC and IDA to drive smart economic development, she believed that we could increase; our property tax base, our sales tax revenue, our employment rate and provide opportunities for the next generation to live and succeed in Putnam County. She believed that we must also maintain our infrastructure; water & sewer, transportation, medical services, etc. She stated that we needed to build careers and develop a workforce. She explained the "Sisters in the Brotherhood" who assists female members in obtaining craft training and leadership skills. She stated that the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC) is a regional council of governments that is the metropolitan infrastructure planning organization for New York City, Long Island and the lower Hudson Valley. She stated that on March 4, 2016, she and NYS DOT Commissioner Matthew Driscoll were appointed Co-Chairs to this organization. She stated that it will give them the opportunity to make sure we receive the infrastructure, repairs, projects and funds that we are entitled to here in Putnam County and the Hudson Valley Region. She explained opportunities with our communities such as revitalizing the Village of Brewster, partnering with Regional Hospice and Home Care of Danbury. She stated that borders should not stop neighbors from helping neighbors. She introduced the Mayor of Danbury, Connecticut Mark Boughton and explained how Putnam County will work together with Mayor Boughton to explore the following: enhance our public transportation system, share recreational services and explore the expansion of the sewer system from Mill Plain Road in Danbury to Danbury Road in the Town of Southeast. She believed this would help bring Stateline Retail Center in Putnam County from concept to reality; increasing our tax base and workforce. She stated that they are also exploring reciprocity agreement that will allow residents of Danbury and Putnam County to share recreational opportunities. She stated that we now have two (2) local professional minor league hockey teams to root for; Brewster Bulldogs and Danbury Titans.

County Executive Odell closed by stating that the Vision is Bold, the Mission is Essential, the Initiatives are Ambitious and the Time is Now!

There being no further business, at 8:17 P.M., Legislator Castellano made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.