

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

**Members: Chairwoman LoBue and Legislators Albano, Castellano, & Scuccimarra**

**Monday** **6:30pm** **December 19, 2016**

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The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm. by Chairwoman LoBue who requested Legislator Scuccimarra lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislators Albano & Scuccimarra and Chairwoman LoBue were present. Legislator Castellano was absent.

**Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – November 14, 2016**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**Item #4 - Discussion/ Veteran's Peer to Peer Program Structure/ Executive Director of Putnam County Mental Health Association Megan Castellano**

Executive Director of Putnam County Mental Health Association (MHA) Megan Castellano stated Program Coordinator John Bourges will discuss the program and the scope of their service. She stated she has also brought information to address concerns that have been raised at a prior meeting.

Program Coordinator John Bourges stated the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer PTSD Peer to Peer Support Program is named after PFC Joseph P. Dwyer. He stated Joseph P. Dwyer was a Sergeant and after he served and returned home in 2003 he was suffering from PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), depression, and substance abuse which eventually lead to his death. He stated this program began in Suffolk County, where Sergeant Dwyer was originally from. He stated it is important to recognize that Joseph P. Dwyer was a person; he was someone's father, husband, and son. He referenced an iconic photograph taken in Iraq of Sergeant Dwyer carrying a child trying to bring him to safety. He stated this photograph epitomized everything that everyone wanted in an American combat soldier: duty above self. He stated it is unknown whether or not a program such as the Dwyer Program could have saved Sergeant Dwyer; however it was realized that the time when Joseph Dwyer was at his best, it was when he was with other Veterans. He stated the peer support model has been proven to work in many different ways such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Weight Watchers. He stated the peer model provides a person who has had similar experiences, someone to relate to. He stated one (1) of the major factors in peer to peer programs is trust, and the best way to earn trust is to be able to understand what the other person has been through. He stated this program began in Suffolk County and was so well received that it is now in 16 counties in New York State. He stated the structure of the program varied in each County. He stated art therapy has been very helpful in this program, whether it is

writing, drawing, or photography. He stated they started the studio program and they found that almost every Veteran that has participated in the program had already engaged in some type of art therapy on their own. He stated they printed a book of the various types of artwork done by Veterans in the program. He stated they will display the pieces of art in a studio in Brewster for a month in the near future. He stated he has also worked with Legislator Scuccimarra to bring Veterans and their families to Topfield Equestrian Center in Garrison. He stated the Veterans really enjoyed their time at Topfield. He stated the possibilities for the Dwyer Program are endless. He stated the statistics show that a majority of Veterans who have committed suicide did not access the VA service. He stated these individuals are who the Dwyer Program is designed to locate. He stated they have recently been in contact with parents of Veterans to try to get them involved. He stated they have found jobs for some Veterans. He stated another main goal of the program is to incorporate the Veteran with their family and to get them to work together as a unit.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned where the Studio group meets.

Mr. Bourges stated there are four (4) groups within the program. He stated the first group is the Studio group that meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Patterson Rec Center. He stated another group is the Family Group. He stated often, the Veteran themselves will report that they are doing well, however the family members may bring up issues they have noticed within that person. He stated there is also a group for female Veterans that will be held at Cornerstone and run by Edie Meeks.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated she has known the Edie Meeks almost 40 years and only knew she was a Veteran for the last 20. She stated this speaks to how closed-mouth many of these women are about their experiences.

Mr. Bourges stated most Veterans are not very vocal about their experiences. He stated he met with a young Veteran recently who appreciated the opportunity to involve his family in some of the events held by the program. He stated the final group they have is for younger Veterans.

Legislator Albano stated this is a fantastic program and thanked Mr. Bourges for his work.

Mr. Bourges stated each year, the members of the Putnam County Dwyer Program go to Albany to meet with members of other Dwyer Programs throughout the State. He stated at this meeting, they are able to discuss the program and learn from the other Counties. He stated a common issue among each County is the difficulty to find people. He stated it is easier to involve those Veterans who are going to the VFW and American Legion. He stated many Veterans are very particular about Veteran status. He stated the goal of the program is to help everyone. He stated a cooperative spirit exists between the Veteran's Services Agency, the Mental Health Association, and the PFC Joseph P. Dwyer PTSD Peer to Peer Support Program, which allows the program to operate more efficiently.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned how long the program has been in place.

Ms. Castellano stated the program began in October of 2014.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned how many people have participated in the program.

Mr. Bourges stated the number of participants varies. He stated he prepares a monthly report to be sent to Albany. He stated for example, he breaks down an event by the number of participants, how many are Veterans, how many are family members, and when the Veteran served. He stated this year, the program has had thousands of participants. He stated they are making efforts to involve new participants.

Ms. Castellano stated they are focused on outreach and engagement.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated the program is very successful, which is evident by the funding provided to sustain its success.

Mr. Bourges stated the possibility of the program being done on a national level is being considered as well. He stated that this program began in four (4) counties in New York State in 2012 and has now grown to 16 counties.

Ms. Castellano stated she would like to address some concerns that were voiced at the September 22, 2016 Rules Meeting. She stated the peer to peer model builds on the mutual support framework that has recently been recognized as a "best practices model." She stated this model is based on shared life experiences and an inherent trust that cannot be achieved by a clinical intervention. She stated none of the services provided by MHA and Putnam are clinical in nature. She stated no clinical staff, social workers, psychologists, or psychiatrists are employed with this program. She stated peer support services have been provided since its inception. She stated the peer support model has been utilized successfully in partnership with other community based agencies. She stated if a need is identified within an individual, they will be referred to an organization or service that will be able to address their need. She stated some questions were raised regarding training of the staff. She stated all of the staff has completed or is in the process of completing the Academy of Peer Services training modules, which support peer to peer programs. She stated these training modules were developed by the New York State Office of Mental Health and are widely accepted in the credentialing of peers to provide billable services, although MHA does not currently bill for their services. She stated MHA and Putnam have been a leader in suicide prevention trainings for the community. She stated all of the staff is trained in SafeTALK, a best practices gatekeeper training, and this has been offered several times per year. She stated they have also offered ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), which is a more intensive two (2) day 14-hour training. She stated there is currently one (1) program director who has expanded the hours to 30 hours per week, with a future interest to have this position become full time. She stated the increased hours have fostered improved program coordination and the results have been evident

in the tremendous increase in both service provision and program development since Mr. Bourges officially took the coordinator position in February of 2016. She stated in addition to the program director, there are also seven (7) Dwyer team members who represent a wide variety of eras of service from Vietnam to Operation Iraqi Freedom and all branches of the military are included. She stated the program has no salaried employees, they are paid hourly wages. She stated the staff are employees of MHA and as such are entitled to all of the benefits MHA employees enjoy. She stated these employees are not County employees and no direct County funding is received for the program. She stated the total organization has about 30 employees, all but one (1) of whom are part time. She stated their annual operating budget is \$350,000 per year. She stated there were questions raised regarding the ages of participants in the program. She stated they have sought to develop programs that would appeal to a wide range of Veterans, such as the four (4) groups mentioned earlier as well as community events. She stated as was mentioned earlier, the younger Veterans are more difficult to identify and engage. She credited Mr. Bourges and his team for their outreach efforts. She stated the success Mr. Bourges has had has been noticed both locally and at the State level. She stated they have recently had several site visits where Mr. Bourges and his team were queried on their ability to connect to the young Veterans and to try to offer support and assistance for other Dwyer Programs around the State who are facing similar challenges. She stated as a recipient of funding from New York State, they are required to submit monthly reports on the activity of the program to the New York State School of Social Work. She stated these reports allow the State to evaluate the program in terms of meeting the needs of the local community as well as how the program initiatives compare with the programs throughout New York State. She stated there is no "one size fits all" approach, which allows the programs to meet the needs of their local communities. She stated copies of the monthly reports are provided to the Putnam County Veteran's Service Agency, who is their County liaison for the Dwyer Program. She stated there was also a question raised as to how the success of the program was measured. She stated included in the work plan provided to the County is a detailed outline of deliverables that includes a target number of individuals served and number of community events that they propose to host each year. She stated to date, they have been successful in meeting all but one (1) of those deliverables. She stated they did not receive the call volume they anticipated on their "warm line." She stated through the development and successful implementation of the groups, they are working towards having a higher number of Veterans served.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned what a "warm line" is.

Ms. Castellano stated a warm line is a step down from a hotline. She stated a hotline is for someone who is in an emergency state, whereas a warm line allows the individual to call and have a conversation.

Mr. Bourges stated the phone line is now always recorded and constantly checked. He stated many phone calls have been received. He stated they received a phone call from a Veteran in Texas who had searched online and found their webpage. He stated that individual was referred to Veteran's Services.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned what SafeTALK is.

Ms. Castellano stated the “TALK” in SafeTALK stands for Tell. Ask. Listen. Keep Safe. She stated it is a three (3) hour training that helps the staff recognize someone who is at risk for suicide, and put them in touch with suicide prevention resources.

Legislator Gross thanked both Mr. Bourges and Ms. Castellano for the work they do.

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

Legislator Addonizio clarified that no County funding is involved in this program.

Ms. Castellano stated that is correct. She stated currently, all funding is coming from the State with the County serving as the fiscal agent.

Alexandra Ballantine, resident, questioned if a similar program has ever been offered by the Federal Government.

Ms. Castellano stated she is unaware of a similar program offered by the Federal Government.

Brennan Mahoney, a State Veteran’s Counselor, stated he is the “tip of the spear” when speaking about Veterans in crisis. He stated he is the person Veterans will go to in order to address an issue having to do with compensation or a variety of other emergency issues. He stated the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is a large and complex organization with a variety of tools to meet the needs of the Veterans. He stated the problem is that there seems to be a space between the Veteran and the VA. He stated when he speaks to a Veteran about if they have reached out to the VA, their answer is often “no” and when he asks why the Veteran responds with “I didn’t know where to turn.” He stated as a front line Veteran Service Agency, he serves as a bridge between the Veteran and the VA. He stated the Dwyer program reaches far beyond where the VA can and involves the community.

Ms. Ballantine questioned if information about the services available to Veterans is provided before they are discharged from the Military.

Mr. Mahoney stated there is a process that entails all of the information. He stated when this process is going on, the individual is sitting in a room that is either too hot or too cold and the bus to take them home is outside waiting. He stated at that point in time, the only focus is getting home.

Ms. Ballantine questioned if this issue has been relayed.

Mr. Mahoney stated yes, the issues are relayed back and to combat this issue the Veterans are referred to him. He stated he does a lot of outreach with the returning unit. He stated he encourages them to collect their medical records and see him within a year. He stated the Veterans may come to the VA later on once they have been home and their head is more clear. He stated that is the best approach. He stated the Dwyer program is vitally important because it involves people within the community.

Ms. Ballantine stated her father-in-law is a Navy Veteran from WWII. She stated two (2) years ago he had serious medical issues that lead him to spend two (2) months in a nursing home. She stated he became very despondent. She stated he was not contacted by anyone from the Veterans Service Agency or the Dwyer Program. She suggested increasing the Program presence within the community. She stated she would assume that these organizations would reach out to hospitals and request to be alerted when a Veteran is there with a serious issue.

Mr. Mahoney stated reaching out to hospitals is not possible because of HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) laws.

Ms. Ballantine stated perhaps more outreach could be done where patients are encouraged to reach out to these organizations themselves.

Chairwoman LoBue stated a reason she wanted this item on the agenda for discussion was so more people may know it is available.

Ms. Castellano stated the program is relatively new and she appreciates the feedback as it will help the program moving forward.

Director of Putnam County Veteran's Service Agency Karl Rohde stated the VA is a passive organization; the Veteran needs to go to them for services. He stated the only outreach they do is in a setting such as the 4-H Fair. He stated the Veteran's Service Agency and the Dwyer Program are more proactive and are actively trying to bring Veterans in. He stated many of the Veterans do not want to go to the VA. He stated the computers in the National Department of Defense and the computers in the VA do not communicate and no information is transported between them. He stated it would make sense for the records to be transferable. He stated President Obama proposed a correction in this process; however they found that the expense was too high.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned why some Veterans do not want to go to the VA.

Director Rohde stated they may not want to go to the VA because they have been involved and working for the Government, and they want to separate themselves from the Government. He stated he avoided the VA for 25 years although he was active in the Veterans community. He stated many Veterans have a "tough guy" attitude and believe they do not need the help offered to them. He stated the Dwyer Program is not Government.

Mr. Bourges stated his father in law was a combat wounded Veteran from WWII and he never went to the VA. He stated many Veterans do not want to be part of the system again, but want to be part of the group, which is why some get lost. He stated in the Military, everyone is trained, taught, lives, and dies as a team. He stated once a Veteran returns home, they revert back to being an individual and they do not want to be part of the organization. He stated there are also logistic issues, such as the locations of the VA.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned if the services offered by the VA have improved.

Mr. Bourges stated Hudson Valley is one of the better locations compared to other areas. He stated the VA has recognized their weaknesses and are trying to make improvements.

Chairwoman LoBue stated she knows a Putnam County resident who had a medical issue that caused him to be at the Castle Point VA for a few months and he reported that the service he received was incredible.

Legislator Albano stated many times the Veteran themselves will not seek help, however the peer to peer model allows a family member or another Veteran to intervene and provide what that individual may need.

Mr. Bourges agreed and stated that the family oriented events and activities have major benefits.

Art Hanley, Deputy Director of Putnam County Veteran's Service Agency stated in regards to the VA healthcare in this area, he attended a Veterans Advisory Committee Meeting last week with representatives from many Veterans organizations and agencies. He stated one thing that was spoken about was the secret star rating that the VA had. He stated they were very proud to announce they have a five (5) star rating. He stated included in that rating are the hospitals and the seven (7) community based outpatient clinics. He stated only the top 10% have a five (5) star rating. He stated the only complaints they really receive is in regards to the wait time, however that is an issue in private practice as well. He stated in regards to PR (public relations), the Veterans Service Agency and the Dwyer Program have a large presence on social media and they advertise in the local VFWs (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and American Legions. He stated the individuals who utilize the VFW and American Legion are aware of the programs and services available to them, therefore they attend community events, which reaches more Veterans who may not be aware of such resources. He stated representatives from the various Veteran's service organizations in the area such as the VA, the Putnam County Veterans Service Agency, the State Department of Veteran's Affairs, and the Dwyer Program will attend community events together.

Chairwoman LoBue questioned if the Dwyer Program reaches out to the religious groups in the community.

Mr. Bourges stated yes. He stated at a suicide prevention workshop at the VA, it was learned that individuals who had some sort of spiritual connection had a lower incidence of suicide. He stated because of this finding, they will make an effort to foster this within the Veterans they are helping. He stated in regards to the PR in the community, the Veterans' Chowdown that was held in October had over 500 attendees, including Veterans and their families.

Deputy Director Hanley stated in regards to the comments made by Ms. Ballantine, the Veterans Service Agency does occasionally receive calls from nursing homes, but the Veteran must request that call to be made.

Director Rohde stated in relation to the statement about suicide, more service members died from suicide than were killed in combat in the wars we are currently fighting. He stated many of the individuals who commit suicide were not deployed and were not necessarily combat Veterans. He stated the problem is that many of those individuals who were not combat Veterans do not consider themselves Veterans. He stated many older Veterans are committing suicide as well. He stated Mr. Mahoney, Deputy Director Hanley, and himself are trained SafeTALK instructors and give SafeTALK training throughout the County. He stated one (1) of the things that is taught in the SafeTALK class is that it is not a bad thing to ask someone if they are contemplating suicide. He stated asking the question does not put it in the person's mind. He stated he would rather lose a friend by asking the question and having them live than lose a friend to suicide.

Legislator Addonizio questioned what the process is when a family member or friend of a Veteran in need contacts the Dwyer Program.

Ms. Bourges stated once they are contacted, they will reach out to that Veteran and try to get them involved. He stated recently, they were able to not only get a Veteran involved but they helped him find employment. He stated some Veterans who are involved may begin to separate themselves from the program and when this happens, the staff members of the program do not give up on them, they keep attempting to get them involved.

Legislator Gross stated as a Veteran of the Vietnam era, the level of service available to Veterans today has improved greatly from what it was when he was discharged.

Ann Fanizzi, resident, questioned what type of report was provided to the Committee at the September 22, 2016 Rules meeting by Director Rohde.

Chairwoman LoBue stated the report Ms. Fanizzi is referencing is included in the backup material on the agenda.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if there are interim reports that are sent to Ms. Castellano on a regular basis.

Ms. Castellano stated Mr. Bourges is part of the management team and she meets with him weekly to discuss the program. She stated a monthly report is submitted to the NYS School of Social Work.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned the connection to the NYS School of Social Work.

Ms. Castellano stated the NYS School of Social Work is connected to the funding; therefore they are interested in the outcomes of the program. She stated they furnish this report monthly and they also supply a copy to the Veterans Service Agency, as they serve as the liaison on the County level for this program.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned to whom the report included in the backup material is addressed.

Mr. Bourges stated that report is an internal document that he prepared and is not a formal report.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned what the focus of the program is. She stated PTSD and suicide prevention have been discussed.

Mr. Bourges stated the focus of the program is the Veteran and whatever their needs are.

Ms. Castellano stated the initial funding for the program was for Veterans who had post-traumatic stress and/or a traumatic brain injury. She stated many times when individuals come in, the issue is not readily identified and trust needs to be developed before a person will share what they may be experiencing.

Ms. Fanizzi stated when she was looking into the history of this program she found a heavy emphasis on PTSD and suicide prevention. She stated therefore, she expected the report to have things such as treatment plans and intake.

Ms. Castellano stated treatment plans and intake are not part of the Dwyer Program.

Ms. Fanizzi stated she understands the importance of the social component and the involvement of the Veterans' family. She questioned how many individuals have come into the program really demonstrating the symptoms of PTSD.

Ms. Castellano stated a clinical setting will provide a diagnosis, which many people perceive as a label. She stated the Dwyer Program is not a clinical program and a label is not put on the participants of the program. She stated their interest is ensuring that the Veteran feels connected and supported.

Ms. Fanizzi clarified that the staff members of the Dwyer Program are able to refer a Veteran to a clinical organization should it become necessary.

Ms. Castellano stated absolutely. She stated the Dwyer Program and a clinical service provider are not mutually exclusive, and hopefully both services are being utilized.

Ms. Fanizzi stated she has a copy of the book of artwork and enjoyed it very much. She stated the acknowledgement section states that the book is a product of the Peer to Peer program and has a nice dedication to Sergeant Dwyer. She questioned why there is no dedication to the organization; the Mental Health Association.

Ms. Castellano stated they have been very intentional about not having the Mental Health Association name attached to the Dwyer Program. She stated this is because they do not want Veterans to feel that they will be diagnosed or labeled. She stated originally, a posting for the program was put on Mental Health Association letterhead and they found that when they gave it to someone, the person was immediately not interested. She stated there is unfortunately a lot of stigma about mental health. She stated when the posting was removed from the letterhead, they found that people were more open to the program.

Chairwoman LoBue stated the book is very impressive. She questioned how the book was paid for.

Ms. Castellano stated the book was published utilizing money that came from the Row of Honor flags, which is why County Executive MaryEllen Odell is mentioned in the acknowledgements. She stated the County Executive chooses the beneficiary of those funds.

Chairwoman LoBue stated that program is not exclusive to the County Executive's Office.

Ms. Castellano stated she will note that going forward should this be done again.

**Item #5 - Approval/ Re-Appointments/ Plumbing & Mechanical Trades Board/ Capalbo, Alonge, Mancone, Raab, Losee, Boyd, Bleakly, & Sleight**

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

Legislative Counsel Clement Van Ross stated although not every board member's term was expired, they are being reappointed because they failed to file their oath of office.

**Item #6 - Approval/ Re-Appointment/ Home Improvement Board/ Diaz, Domin, Porcelli, Rossano, Cusanelli, Meagher, Hull, Korin, & Harnish**

Legislator Albano made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Chairwoman LoBue made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated although not every board member's term was expired, they are being reappointed because they failed to file their oath of office.

**Item #7 - Approval/ Memorialization/ Concurrent Resolution of the Senate and Assembly Proposing the Addition of a New Article 20 to the Constitution, in Relation to Providing for the Recall of an Elected Official**

Chairwoman LoBue stated New York State Senators Terrence Murphy and Sue Serino moved this recall provision through the Senate in June of 2016. She stated this is a republican measure fighting for ethical reform. She stated States that currently have similar legislation are Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, and Kansas.

Legislative Counsel Van Ross stated unless the Legislature gets back in session before the end of the year and passes a bill, anything that has happened in the past must be done over.

Chairwoman LoBue stated it is important to support the Senators and Assembly members who represent this area in the State.

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

Ms. Fanizzi stated she believes this is a great feather in the cap of Putnam County.

**Item #8 - Discussion/ Possible Inquiry to Attorney General**

- **Use of County Buses**
- **Influence of Constituency by County Department Head**

Chairwoman LoBue stated she sent a letter to Director of the Office for Senior Resources Patricia Sheehy inviting her to the meeting. She stated she received a letter back stating that Director Sheehy would not be able to attend.

Legislator Albano stated he would like to end this discussion. He stated if the Legislature was not okay with the use of the County buses or the notice put out by the Director, they can state their disapproval, however he does not believe this matter is worthy of sending to the Attorney General.

Legislator Scuccimarra agreed with Legislator Albano. She stated she does not know where the Attorney General came into this discussion. She stated if the Legislature has a concern, it can be discussed and a decision may be made from there. She stated Director Sheehy's job description states that she is supposed to be an advocate for seniors. She stated Director Sheehy cares for many seniors, and does a great job. She

stated Director Sheehy was an advocate for the Butterfield Senior Center project because it benefits the seniors that have been so under-served on the western side of the County. She stated she believes further discussion on this topic is not necessary.

Chairwoman LoBue stated after the September Full Legislative Meeting, discussion on this matter was requested and it was first discussed at great length at the September Rules Meeting. She stated at that meeting, both Legislators Castellano and Scuccimarra requested that the item be tabled so that Director Sheehy could be invited to attend the next meeting to participate in the discussion. She stated she has invited Director Sheehy twice and she has been unable to attend. She stated that she believes this is a matter worthy of inquiring to the Attorney General. She stated it is not an issue of her advocating for the seniors; it is that public transportation was offered to a certain group of residents, which is discriminatory and against the law. She stated if busing is being offered, it must be offered to everyone, including members of the public who were not in favor of this legislation. She stated a resident mentioned at a meeting that Legislator Scuccimarra was somehow involved in this. She questioned how Legislator Scuccimarra was involved.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated she knew a bus would be available; therefore she notified attendees at a meeting in Cold Spring that it would be available. She stated there are seniors in Cold Spring that are uncomfortable driving at night. She stated they needed help, and Director Sheehy offered help to them.

Chairwoman LoBue stated that is not really what the issue is. She stated Legislator Wright, former Putnam County District Attorney, wanted to make sure this went to the Attorney General's Office.

Ann Fanizzi, resident, stated she was in attendance at the meetings when this issue came to be. She stated she finds it disturbing that a Department Head who has been requested to appear before a Legislative Committee has chosen not to. She compared this situation to members of the Internal Revenue Service not appearing before the Senate Committees on a Federal Level. She stated Director Sheehy is the best person to come and defend herself on this matter.

Legislator Albano stated Director Sheehy spoke at a Full Legislative Meeting and explained herself. He stated she has appeared each time she was been requested to appear; however she has been unable to attend the last two (2) meetings. He stated everyone who was interested in the Senior Center and wanted to utilize the bus was welcome to do so; it was not restricted to those who were in favor of the project. He stated there was also a payment made to the County for those bus rides. He stated there may be different opinions on the matter within the Legislature; however he believes sending such a simple matter to the Attorney General would make the Legislature look foolish. He stated Director Sheehy provides transportation to seniors and this was a project that will affect seniors. He stated in the future, a similar situation can be handled differently. He stated if Director Sheehy would like to come in and speak to the Committee on this matter, he would support that.

Ms. Fanizzi stated as a taxpayer and resident she would like to hear an explanation from Director Sheehy.

Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, stated she is speaking as a resident of Southeast. She stated she believes the notice that was put on the calendar and distributed to the Senior Centers in the County is inappropriate. She stated Director Sheehy has been present at meetings in the past and has really explained her position on matters having to do with seniors; however it gives the appearance of impropriety that she did not attend this meeting. She stated the taxpayers have a right to know what the reasoning behind this situation is and it does not pass the "smell test" that Director Sheehy has missed the past couple meetings.

Ms. Fanizzi stated whether or not an inquiry is submitted to the Attorney General is a separate issue. She stated the point is that this Committee has asked Director Sheehy to attend and explain her position on this matter and it gives a bad impression that she has not attended.

Ms. Ballantine, resident, stated there is a difference between doing a good job as the Director of the Office for Senior Resources and advocating for a particular piece of legislation that involves expenditures of taxpayer money. She stated she has never heard of any other constituency being provided free transportation to a Legislative Meeting. She questioned if this is a regular procedure in Putnam County.

Chairwoman LoBue stated no, providing such transportation is not regular procedure.

Ms. Ballantine stated that is a big source of her concern. She also stated her concern with the posting of an event for Senator Sue Serino on the Senior Center calendars. She suggested obtaining an opinion on what matters should be sent to the Attorney General. She stated such an opinion would be helpful moving forward, especially when taxpayer funded equipment and facilities are being utilized. She suggested inquiring to the District Attorney if it is decided not to send this issue to the Attorney General. She stated in her opinion, availing taxpayer funded facilities to people who happen to promote a particular piece of legislation is lobbying, not providing services.

Legislator Gross stated he does not agree with getting the Attorney General involved; however Director Sheehy did admit at a public meeting that she sent an email out encouraging people to come and support the Butterfield project. He stated on the contrary, if a Department Head had sent an email encouraging people to come out and argue against the Butterfield Project, this situation would be much worse. He stated in his opinion, this is an unfortunate situation and believes that Director Sheehy is well aware of the transgressions.

Chairwoman LoBue stated it is unprecedented for a Department Head to be requested by the Chairperson of a Committee and then not to attend twice in a row.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated Director Sheehy called her boss in Albany to obtain an opinion on this situation and she would like to read what was sent to her. *“The Director serves under law as the advocate for the older adults within their planning and service area - which in your case is all of Putnam County, and on behalf of Putnam County residents at the State level.”* She stated part of her job description is to advocate for anything that would help the seniors in Putnam County, which the Butterfield project does.

Legislator Albano stated Senator Serino represents the New York State Office for the Aging; therefore advertising an opportunity for seniors to hear her speak is not a far stretch. He stated Director Sheehy supplied an explanation as to why she was unable to attend the meetings. He stated perhaps she will be able to come to a future meeting. He stated the Legislature has made it very clear that they are uncomfortable with this situation.

Chairwoman LoBue stated this is not an issue about advocating for seniors; it is an issue about offering services to everyone. She stated transportation cannot be provided for one (1) group of people for one (1) issue without providing transportation for all residents for all issues.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if another letter would be sent to Director Sheehy requesting her attendance.

Chairwoman LoBue stated she does not believe it is the will of the Board to do so, but will make a motion to table this item.

Chairwoman LoBue made a motion to table Discussion/ Possible Inquiry to Attorney General/ Use of County Buses & Influence of Constituency. There was no second.

**Item #9 - FYI/ Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc./ Mandated Apprenticeship Programs – Duly Noted**

**Item #10 - FYI/ Litigation Report – Duly Noted**

**Item #11 - Other Business - None**

**Item #12 – Adjournment**

There being no further business at 8:05pm Chairwoman LoBue made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Scuccimarra. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Beth Green.