

**BUDGET MEETING
OF THE
HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
HELD IN ROOM #318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Tuesday

October 10, 2012

6:30 PM

The Meeting was called to order by Chairman Oliverio at 6:30 P.M. who also led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon Roll Call Legislators Tamagna and Othmer, and Chairman Oliverio were present.

Chairman Oliverio welcomed everyone to the October 10, 2012 Budget Meeting, and explained that this meeting will only be dealing with items that pertain to this budget.

Legislator Tamagna made a motion to accept all additional. Seconded by Legislator Othmer. All in favor.

Chairman Oliverio stated that he knows the reason why many of the audience is here this evening. It is due to the budgetary cuts that were made last week involving the \$650,000.00, with the removal of Route #2, being Carmel/Mahopac/Baldwin Place and Mahopac Falls, and the Jefferson Valley Mall. Route # 3 being Fair Street/Kent and Patterson/Route #22 and Route #312. Many are here not only for those Routes being removed, but also what the impact will have on our Para Transit System, which are our wheelchair accessible Vans and other transportation modes, are hooked to existing Routes.

Chairman Oliverio asked that this issue also be moved to the Physical Services Committee, as we have an entire packet from our constituents regarding this proposed massive cut to our transportation system. There have been many- many phone calls, e-mails, telephone calls etc. from constituents regarding this massive cut to our transportation system. To be clear, it is not this Committees prevue to make a recommendation on the transportation system. That will be done under Legislator LoBue's Committee tomorrow evening under the Physical Services. Because the Health Committee also corresponds with the Council for the Disabled, and because there is an impact on our constituents who have special needs, Chairman Oliverio wants to entertain any comments that anyone may have this evening, regarding this important issue.

Mr. Louis Puleri was first to speak.

Mr. Puleri stated that he lives in Mahopac, and has a daughter who is disabled, takes the PART #2 Bus to get to her job in Baldwin Place.

Mr. Puleri also pointed out that along that same Route is the V.A. Clinic that serves our Veterans as well as the elderly who do not drive.

Norman stated that he takes the Carmel bus five days a week to get to work, and if they discontinue the bus Route, he will no longer be able to get to his job.

Arlene Keith of Mahopac is also physically handicapped, and that she is visually impaired and is no longer able to drive. If they bus is discontinued it will be a great hardship to her. This really has to be reconsidered as the buses are extremely necessary in her life as well as others who are in the same situation.

Chairman Oliverio stated that he has reviewed the Budget and he is looking into a solution for those people in this County that are most in need of this service. He understands that this matter is of great concern and he is not in favor of these cuts of transit Routes. He would like to see the services enhanced not reduced. Again, we do have to find the money. Chairman Oliver as well as his colleagues are looking into alternative revenue sources.

Isabelle Bradley also expressed her concern for the discontinuance of the buses, as she depends on them to get to work, as the others do. She feels that there should not be any interruption in service.

Cindy Stratton who has M.S., and feels as the others do, as she depends on the bus for everywhere she needs to go, such as doctors, shopping for groceries etc.

Legislator Tamagna stated that he agreed that "Para-transit was a critical service." "This was not our County Executive's intention to reduce Para-transit service." Sometime ago, the busses from the Western side of the County that were not operating like Putnam Valley and the Town of Philipstown, because it does not pay to have the large empty busses. That is **NOT** the Para-Transit these are the big busses where you see only one person riding. They will be looking into some alternatives to make this service cost effective. The cut was not to Para-transit, the cuts were made to some Routes that simply do not have the ridership, very similar to what was done on the Western side of the County.

Chairman Oliverio asked Mr. Joseph Bravo to speak.

Mr. Joseph Bravo of the Putnam Independent Living Services told the audience if the two Routes were eliminated more than 40% of all Para-transit services would also have to be cut. This cannot be allowed to happen". That would be devastating for people who rely on Para-transit.

Chairman Oliverio stated that he has received many other phone calls from constituents who do not have disabilities, that state they need the bus service to get to work as they do have a car.

Chairman Oliverio went on to state that the purpose of government is to provide for the Health and Safety of its residents.

Cindy Stratton, a part of the Putnam Accessible Community Transportation stated you will be isolating people by cutting the bus services. There is a problem with how the existing system is run at this time it is antiquated. Cutting from the Budget does not solve the problem. Everyone has to work together to find a solution.

A driver of the Para-transit system stated since he has been driving the bus, there has been a considerable increase in ridership. No matter where you drive you see advertisements for bus services. Advertisement is a very important part of this system. It is extremely important that people are aware of the services that are made available to them. At this time, there is no advertising, and people have no way of knowing that there is public transportation available.

Jessica of the Town of Patterson expressed the same mind set as the others involved with the possible disruption of bus service.

Kevin, the driver of the Patterson service stated that people do not know about the services available to them regarding the bus services. There needs to be advertising of the bus services.

Vivian visits the home bounds in Carmel and this would be an extreme hardship if the services are cut. These people need these busses to get to their doctors and shopping etc.

James Collins of Patterson takes the bus, as he works for PARC. If there is no service, he will no longer be able to get to work.

Marvin Novinsky also depends on the bus service.

Chairman Oliverio stated he is glad that so many people have come to the meeting this evening to express their concern about this situation.

Legislator LoBue stated that this is a fundamental service, and as far as she is concerned we are not going to balance the Budget on your backs. There is funding, and if we work together we

will be able to come up with the financing to cover this service. This is outrageous in her opinion.

Legislator Birmingham stated we get a lot of our subsidies from the Federal Government in regard to our transportation system. The Planning Department for the County has been decimated for the past 20 years. The Planning department is the one who runs the bus routes. They have very specific rules. There are many restrictions, but he is confident that we will be able to come to a decision on this. We need to pay attention to advertising, posting signs with schedules etc.

Legislator Tamagna stated that 80% of the bus routes are covered by revenue that comes from the Federal government. The Federal government will dictate to you the maintenance, the route, the frequency, and all of the things that need to be planned. In agreement with what Legislator Birmingham mentioned about needing to pay attention to the lack of advertising etc. All of these things are the function of the Planning Department that was basically gutted for about ten or twelve years. We desperately need to get these resources there so we can get these things to function the correct way.

Legislator DiCarlo stated that the State Government is cutting back and it therefore falls back to the County's responsibility. This is what happens when your hands are tied, and the State of New York has no mandate relief for us. We are going to work with these people and make this happen, but we are working under a 2% cap. When the individuals from the State Senate are running, and Assembly, these are the people who are controlling the purse strings. We cannot continue to do this; we have to collectively come together. We have to get relief. In the Budget that was presented last week, mandates are the majority of our Budget. As we move forward, and working with this cap, and not taking away things that the State says that we have to have, that is why we are in the situation that we are in at this time.

Robert O'Connell also stated he depends on the Para-transit to get to work as well.

Lana Kelly of Putnam County Independent Services also expressed her displeasure with this possibility of cutting the busses. People do not know about the bus services that are available in Putnam County.

Val Vadonkey also expressed his concern

Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health Mike Piazza stated that County Executive Odell was working on this. "Meetings are still taking place on a daily basis to rectify the Para-transit situation."

Chairman Oliverio stated that once the cut happens, it is too late. Regardless if there is a safety net in place, once you cut \$650,000.00 off that line item it no longer exists and he is not willing to cut that. He believes that the answer to the question about transportation in his opinion is to leave it in tact. Find other avenues to take the money from, as there are a lot of different positions that are being introduced into the Budget in excess of the sum of over \$500,000.00. If these positions are not created, then that money will be intact for transportation. You cannot take from one and give to the other. He has to agree with Legislator LoBue in that the last constituent groups in the world that he wants to put on the backs of to balance our Budget are those people with special needs. These are real important issues.

Chairman Oliverio stated that this item will continue tomorrow evening @ 6:30 pm in room #318, which is this room we are in this evening, with the Physical Services Committee that is chaired by Legislator Lo Bue.

Steve Unger, Chairman of the Putnam County Coordinating Council for People with Disabilities also expressed his deep concerns relating to the possible discontinuance of the buses. The roll of the Council is to advise the Legislature of the needs of the people with disabilities. There is no issue more important that comes before their Council, other than people with disabilities. This service gives them a sense of independence, so they can go where they need to go, when they need to go. Last year, with the cooperation of the County Legislature and the County Executive a two day working conference on transportation needs in Putnam County. Part of the reason for that conference was that we discovered that there was no county specific planning, for as long as anyone could remember. The planning done for the county by the Metropolitan Transportation Council was insufficient to meet their needs. One result of that conference was a Proclamation that was issued and signed by at least one County Legislator and the County Executive, who at that time was Paul Eldridge, committing everyone in the coalition to support and enhance public transportation within Putnam County. Assuming that there is \$650, 00 in the budget for public transportation, it would be calamitous with people with disabilities if this were to be cut.

At 7:15 PM Legislator Tamagna made a motion for a two minute recess to allow the people in the audience to leave if they so choose. Seconded by Legislator Othmer. All in favor.

At 7:19 Chairman Oliverio made a motion to return from Recess. Seconded by Legislator Tamagna. All in favor.

Chairman Oliverio called upon Commissioner of Social Services and Mental Health Mike Piazza.

Chairman Oliverio stated that in looking at the Personnel Budget he noticed that the Personnel Line for the Office of the Disabled no longer exists. It was requested \$23,171.00 and the tentative have no figure on that line.

Chairman Oliverio asked Commissioner Piazza to explain.

Commissioner Piazza stated that at one time that position was filled by one full time person. That person at one time was 60% coordinator for People with Development Disabilities. That person had become part time and focused only on development disabilities about two years ago. This worker has been running both sides of the office. Because of the Budget situation and knowing that there had to be some reductions, that was one position that we felt could be part time and still manage the office with that part time person.

Chairman Oliverio's concern is by having this position removed we are going backwards.

Commissioner Piazza stated that they are still running the office with that part time person. She has been a part time employee for two years.

Chairman Oliverio questioned how this was being funded.

Commissioner Piazza stated that it is being funded by the person who is working part time and to be funded by the coordinator for fundamental disabilities. She is also filling in the roll for the Office for the Disabilities.

Chairman Oliverio asked if the individual who has been attending Council meetings, will that person continue to show up.

Commissioner Piazza stated yes. Her hours are not being cut; she has been part time for two years now.

Chairman Oliverio asked if this money is being moved to another line.

Commissioner Piazza stated no, it is being removed.

Chairman Oliverio asked Commissioner Piazza to explain his comment, as he is confused.

Commissioner Piazza stated that the person began as full time, and requested to go part time. They honored her request. The other part of her position was kept in the budget for a couple of years. That is the part time position that you now see removed.

Chairman Oliverio stated so that is why in 2012 there is no actual accounting of that.

Commissioner Piazza stated yes, that is correct.

Legislator Birmingham asked Commissioner Piazza to identify for the Committee any instances, perhaps one or two places where your requested budget was cut in the tentative budget.

Commissioner Piazza stated he did not have any instances.

Chairman Oliverio asked if our Pegasus group will be kept intact at our current level.

Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Social Services/Mental Health & Youth Bureau Joseph DeMarzo stated yes, they will all remain intact. The 2013 Budget currently reflects what we now have in 2012.

Legislator Birmingham stated that last year the state funding for the Pegasus program was cut, essentially now it is a totally County subsidized program. Is there anything in the 2012 budget where the state has done the same thing by cutting money. Are there any identifiable projects like Pegasus?

Deputy Commissioner DeMarzo stated that they have budgeted 2013 at the 2012 levels, as they have not gotten as the preliminary numbers are not as yet out from the state. He is anticipating there is going to be some sort of cut, but they have not been able to identify that through their contacts in the state. They have been very closed mouthed about what next year's budgets will be.

Legislator Tamagna asked with the anticipated Fuel Assistance, how that is affected through the state budget and is there enough money in that budget at this time.

Commissioner Piazza stated that so far there have been no issues as far as HEAP is concerned.

Chairman Oliverio asked that Commissioner Beals, Commissioner of Health to come forward for an overview of the Health Department.

Dr. Beals gave the Committee a brief overview on the recycling program.

Legislator Tamagna stated he feels that we need to do more with the early intervention, as we are talking about a Mandate. Somehow as a Legislature, we need to pass a Resolution that comes from Putnam County and gets sent to Albany that says they have to stop fooling around, wake up

and we cannot possibly stay within the 2% Cap, as there are only so much that we can cut before County Government does no longer exist anymore.

Chairman Oliverio stated this is two parts, first is the transportation, and the second is the actual Preschool component.

Legislator Tamagna stated we need to send the message to Albany about these two issues.

Legislator Birmingham stated page #110 of Item# 288, he noticed we are down in supplies and up in contracts.

Legislator Birmingham asked Dr. Beals if we were going to be doing the Rabies Clinic.

Dr. Beals stated yes. The next Rabies Clinic is November 3rd. As you know we are mandated to have these Rabies Clinics and we are in compliance at this time.

Dr. Beals went on to state that his Task Force has already reduced the need for Rabies treatments. He feels that this is more related to the fact that there is a white nose syndrome effecting Bats, and the estimated number of Bats is said to be down over 70%.

Legislator Birmingham asked about the Pre-K program, and how comfortable is Dr. Beals with the tentative Budget set for this coming year.

Dr. Beals stated we had a situation not too long ago, when there were more enrollees, and they needed to come to the Legislature for additional funds. At this time, they are comfortable with the 2013 Budget, but they cannot predict what will be needed for the future. He has absolute confidence at this time, but if there comes a time when there are more children, he will need to come back to the Legislature, as this program is mandated and they do not turn people away.

Legislator Birmingham asked Dr. Beals if there is any substantial difference between your requested Budget, and the Tentative Budget, that he would like to talk about at this time.

Dr. Beals stated that this is a truly lean Budget, and truly reflects what we anticipate, but by the same token he is absolutely confident that if he has a legitimate need, he will be able to come to the Legislature to receive Funds. He does believe that his department can operate on the proposed Budget.

County Executive Odell complemented Dr. Beals on the Household Hazardous Waste Day that his department has just done. There were 250 registered participants ready to drop off their unwanted chemicals pesticides, etc.

Dr. Beals stated that it was a very positive experience, and feels that the community really appreciated the service.

Director for the Office for the Aging, Patricia Sheehy was next to speak to the committee.

Chairman Oliverio asked Ms. Sheehy if the funds set forth in the 2013 Budget what she needs to move forward.

Ms. Sheehy stated it is good moving forward.

Ms. Sheehy went on to state that we will need to keep our eye on the issue of transporting our seniors and how we can consolidate.

Legislator Birmingham stated that he has noticed that how the senior nutrition is down about \$12,000.00. Is that part of the consolidation?

Ms. Sheehy stated that is part of the consolidation, as they are purchasing larger pieces of meat and having them cut down by the Sheriff's Department's chef, as well as other items along those same lines, which are a part of the consolidation.

Chairman Oliverio asked that a couple of items that he did not see in the budget, be added on.

Legislator Othmer stated that the Lake Carmel Park is letting the Kent Seniors use their facility. The facility is in need of \$10,000.00 worth of work, which would be a onetime fee for next year. There are adjustments needed in the bathrooms, as well as 24 feet of ramp, handicapped toilets which would cost approximately \$3,000.00. There is also a need for a lift which is approximately \$7,000.00 installed. The Town of Kent puts \$24,000.00 per year into what is necessary for the Kent Seniors.

Legislator Othmer is asking his fellow Legislators if we can tentatively put this into the Budget for 2013.

Chairman Oliverio made a motion to allow the \$10,000.00 to be placed into the 2013 Budget. Seconded by Legislator Tamagna. All in favor.

Chairman Oliverio also made a request to the County Executive's Office for approximately \$3,000.00 to aid Feral Cats situation, as this will really help Putnam Felines.

County Executive Odell stated for the record that this is not to disparage or take away any of the work or Budget of the Humane Society, which remains intact. The Humane Society is not obligated under contracts to take care of the Felines. She is stating that this \$3, 000.00 is additional.

Being no further business to discuss, Legislator Othmer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Legislator Tamagna. All in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted:
Claire E. Muller
Administrative Assistant