

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING

Held in Room 318

Putnam County Office Building

Carmel, New York 10512

Members:

Chair DiCarlo, Legislators Gross & Nacerino

Wednesday

February 13, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 8:15P.M. by Chair DiCarlo. He requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Chair DiCarlo and Legislators Gross and Nacerino were present.

Item #3 – Discussion/Temporary Line #10123000 51094

Chair DiCarlo invited Personnel Director Eldridge to address the first agenda item.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that he would like to invite Commissioner of Finance Carlin to add to this discussion item. The Temporary Line #10123000 51094 is a line in the County Executive's Office that is used to hire temporary employees. He stated that the slot that is being filled is a position that has been filled for 20-25 years. He stated it is an Administrative Position. He stated that there have been two people, prior to the current employee, who have temporarily served in that personnel line.

Commissioner Carlin stated that the County Executive's Office is run on a shoe string, as several departments within the County. He stated that the temporary lines are there to be used when needed.

Chair DiCarlo questioned if this is a position that will be carried over to next year. He questioned if it would be carried over to the 2014 Budget as a position line.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that it is not a position budget line. It is a 1094 line, to be used when needed by Department Heads. He stated that there are some steady temporary employees, as in this particular case. He stated that in the Personnel Department he utilizes his 1094 line to call in Exam Monitors when needed. He stated that a "1094" account is a temporary account within each department. The Department Heads are given the flexibility to utilize the money as needed.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she believes that what precipitated this matter was the question "is the person who is filling the position currently being utilized in other offices outside of the County Executive's Office, specifically in the Tourism Office". She requested that Legislator LoBue correct her if this was not accurate.

Legislator LoBue stated that she found it odd that the employee who was hired as the Communications Director for the Visitors Bureau is now working for the County Executive. She stated she found it odd that the Legislature was not notified of this matter. She questioned if this means that the person currently listed in the Temporary Line of the County Executive's Office is no long working for the Visitors Bureau?

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that he is not sure. He stated that the County Personnel Department has nothing to do with the Tourism Office.

Legislator LoBue stated that she is aware of that. She stated that is one of the reasons she voted against moving an outside agency into the County Office Building. She stated that she believes that the outside agency (ies) should remain autonomous; the way they have always been. She stated that it makes no sense to her that someone who was hired by an outside agency is now hired by the County Executive's Office and the Legislature was not notified.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that in terms of providing notifications of employees being hired that is not something that is typically done, unless it is a "hiring" that is subject to confirmation.

Legislator LoBue stated that she is aware that there is no formal process on this item. She stated that she finds it very bazaar that this took place.

Legislator Othmer stated that this issue was raised at the January Full Meeting during the discussion regarding the "I Love NY" funding. He stated that he was confused at that time because one has nothing to do with the other. However, it was presented that way to the Public. He stated that it is a little clearer tonight of what is being addressed. He stated again that this Temporary Line has nothing to do with the "I Love NY" funding.

Legislator LoBue stated that it has been a policy that if a Department in the County applies for matching Grant Funding, the matching dollar amount must come out of their line. She stated that was not the case with the "I Love NY" funding. She stated that there was a fiscal impact and that is why she voted to table that item at the January Full Meeting. She stated that there is no other department in this County that can go out for a 50/50 grant and take the County's contribution portion from the General Fund.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she believes that the question here is whether or not the employee in question is being used by the outside agency, and if so can the County co-mingle the funds.

Legislator Othmer stated that is not happening.

Item #4 – Discussion/Commissioner of Planning/Salary

Personnel Director Eldridge stated that the budgeted amount in the salary line for the Commissioner of Planning was \$110,000. He stated that apparently during final negotiations, which he was not a direct part of, there was a promise made of \$112,000 versus \$110,000. He stated that in good faith, knowing that, he believes the County should honor that. He stated it is not a huge amount of money.

Legislator Oliverio stated that he agrees. It is not a huge amount of money being discussed. He stated that there were copious amounts of discussion on this one particular position. He stated the discussions dragged on literally for months. He stated that the \$110,000 was the salary amount that the Legislature approved. He stated that for that salary to be renegotiated without any input from a Personnel Director or the Legislature, this action is almost of a rogue agent. He questioned with all of the controversy involved with this hire, how is a mistake like that made. He stated that he is very upset with the procedural operations have a major flaw. He stated it is troublesome. We are the Legislature. The \$110,000 salary was agreed upon and put in the Budget and to have it ignored is very upsetting. He stated upsetting not only for the Legislative Branch of Government, but for the Constituencies that we, as elected officials, promise to uphold fiscal responsibility to. He stated in his opinion, this is not fair play; it is not the honorable thing to do. He stated that the Legislature is another branch of government, with equal strength, and we need to be involved and included in these decisions.

Legislator Nacerino stated that being a new Legislator she will have questions. She stated that as she reviewed the backup correspondence for this agenda item she saw that there was correspondence dated November 21, 2012, and then nothing again addressing this matter, until February 7, 2013. She stated that as she understands it the only thing that convened in between was a verbal conveyance. She questioned if there was any signed agreement for the salary in the amount of \$112,000.

Personnel Director Eldridge stated no.

Legislator Nacerino stated then this is all being based on hearsay and verbal conversation between November 21, 2012 and February 7, 2013. She questioned who brought this to the forefront.

Chair DiCarlo stated that he too was taken a back on this matter. He stated that he was not going to argue over \$2,000. He stated the discussion of the matter is that this committee voted and passed the \$110,000 salary. He stated that Personnel Director Eldridge did approach him and communicated that a mistake was made. He replied to him that he was supporting the amount that was passed in the budget.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she believes that the budgeted salary amount of \$110,000 needs to be honored. She stated it is an issue of principle and it is respecting the integrity of the budget process.

Legislator Gross stated that he agrees that the salary proposed and passed during the 2013 budget process is the salary amount that he will support. He agrees with Legislator Oliverio that the Legislature needs to be kept in the loop.

Legislator LoBue stated that she agrees with Legislator Nacerino, Oliverio, Chair DiCarlo and Legislator Gross. She stated that she will vote against any salary increase. Regardless of whether it was a mistake or not.

Item #5 – Discussion/Senior Public health Nurse at Dept. of Social Services (DSS) Position

Commissioner Piazza stated the letter Personnel Director Eldridge sent to Chari DiCarlo Dated: February 7, 2013 was very comprehensive. He stated that when the Health Department had CHHA (Certified Home Health Agency) they would assign a nurse to the Personal Care Unit of DSS for nursing assessments of persons eligible for Medicaid. He stated that when the license for CHHA was sold in 2010 by the County the solution was to hire a nurse as an employee of DSS that was done. He stated the prior arrangement was that DSS had a contract with the Health Department and paid them through a complicated formula. The convoluted system requires a great deal of paperwork and really no longer makes any sense, since the individual is now an employee of the Social Services Department. He stated that by putting the nurse service on a salary basis it will save the County money. He stated that he thinks Personnel Director Eldridge's figures, as stated in his correspondence may be off approximately \$2,000 or so. He stated the new billing process and salary payment would result in a 10% savings.

Legislator Nacerino made a motion to approve the New Billing Method as proposed by Director Eldridge and Commissioner Piazza for the Senior Public Health Nurse; Seconded by Legislator Gross. All in favor.

Item #6 – Discussion/Director of Real Property

Commissioner Carlin stated that when the former Director of Real Property retired in 2012, he decided to evaluate what other Counties around New York State were doing with their Real Property Offices. He stated that there has been a lot happening in that field. He stated that the ORPS (Office of Real Property Services) now falls under the State of New York Department of Taxation and Finance. He stated that in his research he found that Dutchess and Ulster recently passed local laws that made their Real Property Department's an independent division of the Department of Finance. He stated in Putnam County's Charter back in 1979 the Putnam County Real Property Tax Department is supervised by the Commissioner of Finance. He stated that the candidate who will be mentioned tonight to fill this position has been working in the Real Property Tax Department since 1996 and has worked her way up. She was the recommended candidate to fill the position by the former Director of Real Property Michaud. He stated that he agreed with that recommendation. He stated there was a matter to address, since the candidate, Lisa Johnson, is a resident of Dutchess County. He stated that he wanted to wait until the matter of the residency issue was resolved with the Commissioner of Planning Department position. He stated that he did not believe it would be fair to either candidate to have them addressed at the same time. He stated that the two jobs are different. He stated that he knew that the Director of Real Property did not have to be a resident of the County because Mr. Michaud was first hired; he did not live in Putnam County. He stated that Deputy County Attorney Harris researched this matter and provided the reason. Deputy County Attorney Harris reported that there is a section of the Real Property Tax Law that says you need to be a resident of the State. He stated that he has actually heard it recommended that the assessors not be a resident of the communities that they assess in. Also there was an approval required from the State Agency that Ms. Johnson had the qualifications to be certified. He stated that letter was received. He stated that now all of the steps have been taken and completed the County Executive has made the appointment of Lisa Johnson to the position of Director of Real Property.

Chair DiCarlo stated that he is very happy that Ms. Johnson will be put in that position. He stated that they did receive a letter, however it was not from the County Executive; for the purpose of protocol he asked that they receive a letter from the County Executive stating this appointment.

Commissioner Carlin stated that he will see that is done.

Legislator Gross stated that this is a term. He questioned if she will pick up a full term?

Commissioner Carlin stated that she will fill the unexpired term and will be back in September or so to be confirmed for the next six (6) year term. He stated the beginning of the next six (6) year term begins October 1, 2013. He stated that he has also brought forward a Charter Amendment that addresses the qualifications needed, which he believes are stronger than what Putnam County currently has.

Legislator Gross stated that he would like to say this is great. Firstly, he supports the internal promotion; secondly Ms. Johnson is a wonderful candidate who has been doing an excellent job covering the vacancy of the Director of Real Property position while doing her own job for the past approximately seven (7) months. He stated he would support giving her the \$2,000 previously discussed for another position.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she is very happy that the residency issue was not a deal breaker here. She stated that her opinion is to question if the County's objective is to hire within the confines of residency or hire the best candidate for the job. She supports getting the best person for the job. She stated that she too wanted to congratulate Ms. Johnson.

Legislator Gross made a motion to approve the appointment of Lisa Johnson to Director of Real Property; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Legislator Gross made a motion to approve the amendment to the Charter; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Chair DiCarlo recognized Deputy County Attorney Harris, who was in the audience, and thanked her for all of the time and information that she compiled to address this matter.

Item #7 – Other Business - None

Item #8 - Adjournment

There being no further business at 8:40P.M., Legislator Gross made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature - Diane E. Trabulsy,