

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

Members: Chairwoman Scuccimarra, Legislators Addonizio & LoBue

Wednesday

September 14, 2016

(Immediately Following the Personnel Committee Meeting beginning at 6:00pm)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairwoman Scuccimarra who led in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call, Legislator Addonizio, Legislator LoBue and Chairwoman Scuccimarra were present.

Item #3 – Approval of Minutes – July 21, 2016

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Approval/Fund Transfer Request (16T237)/Health Department/Purchase Two Vaccine Refrigerators

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that she spoke with Acting Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Nesheiwat and he stated that the Health Department has been having problems with two (2) refrigerators that hold up to \$100,000 worth of vaccines. She stated that she also spoke with Nurse Kathy Percacciolo, who stated that the refrigerators are sounding a high or low alarm which only tells if the temperature is outside the safe zone, without specifics. She stated when the alarm goes off, someone needs to drive over to the Health Department and check on the refrigerators. Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that the current refrigerators cannot keep up with the current need. She stated that the Health Department is asking for \$13,500 from contingency. She stated that these refrigerators are solely for vaccines.

Legislator LoBue questioned how old the current refrigerators are.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that they are 12 and seven (7) years old. She stated that at the time of purchase, those types of refrigerators were normally used for vaccines. She stated that this is a very important issue due to flu season approaching.

Legislator LoBue questioned if they are repairable.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that there have been attempts to repair them but it can no longer be guaranteed that they will work effectively.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if the State or Federal Government has a mandate as to which refrigerators should be used.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that there is only a recommendation as to which refrigerators to use.

Legislator Gouldman questioned what makes the new refrigerators different.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that she believes the size and the fact that they allow the necessary spacing that vaccines need.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move Fund Transfer Request (16T237) to the Audit and Administration Committee; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Ann Fanizzi, constituent, questioned if the refrigerators had a guaranteed lifespan when they were purchased.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that she believes the average lifespan of any appliance is 15 years but that due to the importance of what is going in these refrigerators, a more suitable replacement is needed.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if the current refrigerators had a warranty.

Legislator Addonizio stated that the new refrigerators have a two (2) year parts and labor warranty, with a three (3) year warranty for the compressor.

Legislator Albano stated that getting up to date on the monitoring system is also important.

Legislator Nacerino stated that this is very important because nobody wants to jeopardize anyone's health.

Item #5 - Approval/Resolution in Opposition to Coast Guard Proposed Rule 2016-0132/Hudson River Anchorages

Chairwoman Scuccimarra explained the proposed anchorages for barges along the Hudson River. She stated that it has taken decades to clean up the river and get it to where it is today. She stated that it would be dangerous to have these barges that could potentially have an oil spillage. She stated that the anchorages are unmanned and not lit, causing a safety hazard. She stated that these anchorages would take up approximately a mile of the river at each point. She stated that this would affect the fishing industry and the ecosystem of the river.

Legislator Albano stated that he supports approving this resolution. He stated that the Hudson River opens to other important bodies of water. He questioned who would police the anchorages.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that barges are not properly insured in case of a spill.

Legislator Gross questioned where barges are currently being stored.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that they are currently stored in Hyde Park and Kingston. She stated that only a few are stored up there now, if these anchorages are put in place there would be many more barges. She stated that she visited one of the sites and the anchorage would be right in front of a park area.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to move Resolution in Opposition to Coast Guard Proposed Rule 2016-0132 to the Full Legislative Meeting; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Item#6 - Update/Drug Epidemic – Putnam County/Sheriff's Department

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that the Sheriff's Department does a lot that people may not be aware of and she believes it is important to check in and get updates every few months.

Undersheriff Convery introduced Captain Vincent Martin and Senior Investigator Mark Gilmore. He stated that narcotics enforcement is the number one (1) priority in Putnam County. He stated that it is at an epidemic level right now across the Northeast and across the Country. He stated that the Sheriff's Department has a meeting scheduled with the Danbury Police Department. He stated that Captain Martin has partnered with Westchester County and Dutchess County through Senior Investigator Gilmore. He stated that they signed an agreement with all of Western Connecticut to share information via license plate readers. He stated that they are trying to figure out exactly where the drugs are coming from. He stated they are not just coming from New York City, they are also coming from as far as Waterbury, Connecticut. He commended Captain Martin and Special Investigator Gilmore on their hard work.

Captain Martin stated there are no boundaries to the narcotics issue. He stated that they are now working closely with the federal agencies. He listed the difference in narcotics arrest numbers from 2015 through 2016. He stated that the heroin case numbers are about even with 2015 and that the overdose cases may even be higher than last year.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that Captain Martin is referring to fatal overdoses, not overdose responses.

Captain Martin stated that the number of cases involving cocaine is slightly higher this year. He stated that the number of cases involving prescription pills has gone down drastically and credited the new regulations. He stated that the number of marijuana cases is on track to be higher than last year.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if they are seeing any new drugs out.

Captain Martin stated that they are not.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if both powder cocaine and crack cocaine are an issue. He also questioned if the heroin numbers included all opiates.

Captain Martin stated that the cocaine numbers include both powder and crack. He stated that the heroine numbers do not include the other opiates.

Legislator LoBue questioned the cost comparison between cocaine and heroin.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that in Putnam County a gram of heroin is about \$100. He stated that a gram of cocaine is \$125-\$150.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if Waterbury, Connecticut is where the drugs are mainly coming from.

Captain Martin stated that it is one (1) of the areas. He stated there are drug factories in New York City and Waterbury.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that it is mainly along the Interstate 84 corridor. He stated that there has been a big focus on lower Westchester and northern New York City area by the various task forces.

Undersheriff Convery stated that Captain Martin and Special Investigator Gilmore made 75% of the narcotics arrests by the Putnam County Sheriff's Department in 2015. He praised the commitment of the Sheriff's Department.

Legislator LoBue questioned how most of the arrests are made.

Captain Martin stated that they are made during purchases.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if there are any numbers for drug arrests in schools.

Captain Martin stated that there is not much going on in the schools.

Special Investigator Gilmore agreed and stated that there is confidentiality with arrests in schools so they really cannot say.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if the School Resource Officers (SROs) are a reason for the lack of drugs in the schools.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that the narcotics unit has a good working relationship with the SROs. He stated that if someone is arrested through the school or if there's an incident at school involving drugs, the case goes to the Youth Bureau.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if there are a lot of calls to the drug tip line.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that he is the one who screens the calls and that there are many.

Legislator LoBue questioned if anyone calls looking for help.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that there are no callers requesting help. He stated that there are calls for other Putnam Counties throughout the country. He stated that if the calls are believed to be verifiable, they are forwarded to the correct agencies. He stated that the Sheriff's Department's website gets many tips, as well as from the National Drug Computerized Tip Line, website administrator Michael Martin forwards those tips to the narcotics unit.

Legislator LoBue stated that this drug issue is an ongoing discussion. She referenced a new vape shop in Carmel.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if the drug arrest numbers that were given are Putnam residents or visitors.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that it is both residents and visitors. The numbers are all arrests in the County. He stated that when the annual report is done, there will be a separation of residents and visitors.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if the arrests are dealers or users.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that the numbers include both.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned how serious it is in the County, or if it is mainly people using the County to pass through.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that there are some traffic stops with people passing through but the vast majority of the reported numbers are cases within the County.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if the numbers have been broken down into age demographics.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that they have not been broken down into those categories yet. He stated that it will be in the annual report.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if the overdose victims were residents.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that that number includes anyone who dies of an overdose in Putnam.

Ms. Fanizzi stated that she does not want to downplay the severity of the situation, but she does not want the problem to seem worse than it is.

Captain Martin stated that there are people coming into the County and selling drugs to residents.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if the dealers or users are being arrested.

Captain Martin and Special Investigator Gilmore both stated that both dealers and users are arrested.

Ms. Fanizzi questioned if marijuana arrests are still being made.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that they are.

Commissioner of Department of Social Services Michael Piazza stated that deaths from narcotics are skyrocketing in New York and across the Country. He stated that treatment facilities have become overwhelmed. He stated that the Governor has advised that doctors limit the amount of prescriptions they give out for pills associated with drug use.

Undersheriff Convery stated that the County Jail is the last resort. He stated that 80% of the inmates are drug induced. He stated that approximately 30 people were in the Emergency Room over the weekend because of drugs. He stated that the narcotics issue is systemic to society.

Captain Martin stated that many of these people are brought in for other crimes.

Legislator LoBue stated that it is a case of cause and effect.

Special Investigator Gilmore explained the procedures and inner workings of the narcotics unit. He stated there have been 126 arrests for purchasing drugs in the County. He stated that the Alcohol Beverage Control has made 12 arrests this year which is up from the usual three (3) or four (4) per year.

Legislator LoBue stated that the workers selling the alcohol to minors need to be more responsible with checking identification.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra questioned if people are giving false identification.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that the unit sends in people who look like they are around the age of 21, without ID, and have them attempt to buy alcohol. He stated that they are told to leave if asked for ID.

Undersheriff Convery clarified that the task force does not handle only narcotics. He stated that they also handle cigarettes and alcohol. He stated that they are very concerned about the welfare of the county. He stated that the various partnerships with different agencies have given the unit more power and information. He commended the Sheriff's Department for their work.

Reporter Eric Gross questioned what the follow through is with the people who are arrested. He questioned if it is simply a slap on the wrist before they are let go.

Captain Martin stated that it is up to the courts.

Mr. Gross suggested that a judge come in to talk about the process.

Legislator Wright questioned if there are any statistics kept on how many of the narcotics arrests wind up in drug court. He stated that while a laudable program, it is a grey area in law enforcement. He stated that there are not often severe consequences.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that the unit stays out of the follow up process.

Legislator Wright requested the statistics from the District Attorney's office on which cases were diverted to drug court and which were tried.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that the drug court, DA's office, and the Sheriff's Department are working very well together.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that he tries to stay neutral in the process so that, in the future, he cannot be accused of targeting someone from a previous arrest.

Legislator LoBue requested the more specific information, such as age and residency, on the arrests Captain Martin talked about previously. She thanked Captain Martin, Special Investigator Gilmore, and Undersheriff Convery for everything they have done.

Undersheriff Convery stated that the vast majority of the arrests are of residents.

Captain Martin stated that a grant the department received in 2015 allowed them to bring on a narcotic drug analyst, Jessica Cundari. He stated that is where he gets most of his statistics and commended her on her work.

Undersheriff Convery stated that Captain Martin has organized a robust intelligence meeting that is held once a month. He stated that Federal, Westchester, Dutchess, and some of Connecticut officials attend to share information.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra thanked Captain Martin, Special Investigator Gilmore, and Undersheriff Convery for what they do for the County.

Item #8 - FYI/Medication Drop-Off and Take-Back

Undersheriff Convery stated that through a partnership with Putnam Hospital, Department of Social Services, and the Drug and Dependence Coalition the prescription drug take-back boxes have been very successful. He stated that they are now becoming a dumping ground for hypodermic needles and various liquids. He stated that they are emptied twice a week.

Legislator LoBue questioned why these boxes are being used when it seems to be costing more money and manpower to maintain them than the previous way it was done, through one (1) drop off location, twice a year. She questioned if the County should go back to the previous situation.

Legislator Scuccimarra stated that it was good, but it only targeted the Eastern side of the County. She stated that drop-boxes are important for keeping dangerous medicine out of medicine cabinets.

Legislator LoBue stated that people are more educated about the dangers of medicine than they were 10 years ago. She stated that she does not remember people complaining that they could not get to the previous drop off location.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that she has been in contact with Riverkeeper who has helped the Coalition That Cares. She stated that there is a hope that grant money will be available to help this program. She stated that the Committee can have the Coalition That Cares come in to talk about the importance of the drop-boxes.

Legislator Nacerino stated that it's unfortunate that people are abusing the boxes because it is a service to the community. She stated that the Town of Patterson recently got a drop-box and is very grateful for it.

Captain Martin stated that the people who work at the boxes should police what is getting put in there.

Legislator Nacerino questioned if the boxes with problems can be identified.

Captain Martin stated that he believes all the boxes are faced with some sort of issue.

Legislator LoBue questioned who has the data for the drop-boxes.

Captain Martin stated that there is not much data because it's meant to be anonymous.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that it is anonymous, but what is taken from the boxes is recorded.

Legislator Gouldman stated that putting the materials in a drop-box is safer than just throwing it in the garbage because it exposes less people. He stated that having them disposed of in a controlled environment is best.

Legislator Addonizio stated that the people who empty the boxes need to be prepared for any dangerous material that could be inside.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that it is not just needles, it is also the various chemicals people are putting in.

Legislator Addonizio suggested making the boxes smaller to make it more difficult for people to put in things that are not supposed to be in the boxes.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that each respective Town Hall should be spoken to about how they are checking in on the boxes.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that it will need to be a multi-faceted approach to figuring out this problem.

Legislator Albano stated that since they are being used, they just need to be adjusted to counteract the dangerous materials going in them. He questioned why the boxes were called cost prohibitive.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that the boxes were bought with a grant.

Undersheriff Convery and Captain Martin stated that next year there will be a cost for disposing of the materials in Dutchess County.

Legislator LoBue stated there is a cost to have the Sheriff's Deputies go and empty the boxes.

Legislator Addonizio stated that the deputies go while being paid.

Legislator LoBue stated that this takes them away from other duties.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that the permit to destroy the materials costs money.

Legislator Gross questioned how they are destroyed.

Special Investigator Gilmore stated that they are put in a certified incinerator in Dutchess.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra thanked Undersheriff Convery, Captain Martin and Special Investigator Gilmore for the work they do.

Item #7 - Discussion/Plastic Bag Fee/Suffolk County Local Law

Chairwoman Scuccimarra noted that Suffolk County recently passed a law implementing a fee on plastic bags.

Legislator Albano stated that this is a serious issue because it's wrecking the environment, however plastic bags are very convenient. He stated that people need to bring the bags back. He stated that he does not believe a nickel fee will help. He suggested a significant, refundable fee to incentivize bringing the bags back to the store.

Legislator Addonizio pointed out that many times stores double bag heavy items, this adds to the total bill.

Legislator Gouldman questioned who would receive the fee.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that the store does.

Legislator LoBue stated that she believes the bags should be banned. She stated that the plastics are bad for the environment and are harming the waterways. She stated that she sees a lot of people bringing their own bags. She stated that a fee is not the right way to go and that she believes the people of Putnam would not be happy with a fee. She stated that she was told by

employees in the Highway Department that people use the bags for their dog droppings in the winter and when the snow melts, the bags are everywhere.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that Canada has a five (5) cent fee on their bags that causes many people to bring their own bags. She stated that Cold Spring has a bin filled with reusable bags for people to borrow.

Legislator Nacerino stated that raising awareness is the key and she is not in favor of a fee because it would mean imposing a hardship. She noted that reusable bags may replace the plastic bags in the waste stream. She stated that she does not want to put any more of a financial burden on anyone.

Legislator LoBue noted that Costco does not provide bags and people do not have a problem with it. She stated that if you change the mindset surrounding the bags, people will get used to not having them. She stated that the grocery stores will love reducing costs by not providing plastic bags.

Legislator Wright stated that the savings the supermarket would make from not buying plastic bags would be offset by the necessity to retrofit “five (5) items or less” lines.

Legislator Gross stated that he spoke with a few senior citizens and they are totally opposed to a fee on the bags. He stated that educating people on recycling may be the answer.

Legislator LoBue stated that this comes down to self-responsibility and mindset. She cited the retailers who do not use bags. She stated that there will be people who have a problem with one option or the other. She stated the main goal is to reduce the plastics in the environment and the only way to do that is to eliminate the use of plastic. She stated that she believes recycling is not making much of a difference and noted that the oceans and rivers are still filled with pollution.

Legislator Gouldman questioned where Costco is located and if it is in Putnam County.

Legislator LoBue stated there is one in Yonkers and Connecticut. She stated that she is not promoting Costco, but talking about copying the idea of not using bags. She stated that people understand when they go to certain stores that there will not be plastic bags available.

Legislator Albano stated that while the paper bags do not work as well, at least they are biodegradable. He noted that the reusable bags are a good alternative. He stated that people can be educated about the use and return of plastic bags. He stated that he is not in favor of a fee, but of a price that is refundable if the plastic bags are returned.

Legislator Addonizio noted that paper bag usage was reduced because they killed trees.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that this discussion is not done and it will continue in the future. She noted that constituents have reached out regarding the plastic bag discussion.

Legislator Albano suggested sending a letter to the stores requesting more signage and education for the recycling and use of the plastic bags.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra noted that she reached out to all the stores requesting their input on a plastic bag fee but she did not hear back.

Legislator Nacerino stated that awareness is key. She stated that people bring their own bags when they shop at stores that do not supply bags.

Legislator Gross suggested that the County sell its own reusable bags and put educational signs on the County buses.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated that she would speak with the Health Department about getting educational signs on the buses.

Legislator Albano stated that a key is making sure people know that the plastic bags are not meant to be recycled. He stated educating people on where to bring the bags back is important.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra thanked everyone for their input.

Item #9 - FYI/Brochure/“Trees Pay Us Back”- Duly Noted.

Item #10 - FYI/ProAct Report

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated this program is very popular and it saves County residents money.

Legislator Albano noted that this program was brought to the county from the New York Association of Counties’ conference.

Item #11 - Other Business

a. Town of Southeast – E-Scrap Containers – Legislator Castellano

Chairwoman Scuccimarra noted that Legislator Castellano wanted this to be discussed because the e-waste containers in the Town of Southeast are overflowing. She stated she called the Health Department and spoke with Recycling Coordinator Victoria DiLonardo who is in charge of the e-waste. She stated she believes that she, Legislator Castellano, the Southeast Town Supervisor, and the Health Department should sit down to discuss a solution to the problem.

Legislator Castellano stated the program is great, but the container is always overflowing.

Chairwoman Scuccimarra stated Recycling Coordinator DiLonardo believes people from Connecticut and Westchester are bringing their e-waste to the Southeast container. She stated the other e-scrap containers are monitored much better.

Legislator LoBue noted that the Carmel container had its location changed and had a camera put in place to monitor.

Legislator Castellano stated people are doing the right thing in dropping off their e-waste, it just is not getting picked up fast enough.

Legislator LoBue stated a signature is needed when e-waste is dropped off in Carmel and the camera is used for after hours. She stated residency is monitored by taking license plate numbers.

Legislator Castellano questioned if Lynne Eckardt, Town of Southeast Councilwoman, had any input.

Councilwoman Eckardt stated the container is a mess and is not monitored much. She stated she is sure people are coming from outside the Town to drop stuff off.

Legislator LoBue stated in Carmel, residents are not allowed in the container, a worker is there to situate the e-waste in the container.

Legislator Castellano stated this is still a good thing because it gives everyone a place to bring their e-waste.

Item #12 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:12 p.m. Chairwoman Scuccimarra made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator LoBue. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant, Ed Gordon.