

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

Chairwoman Addonizio, Legislators Gouldman & Sayegh

Thursday

April 25, 2019

(Immediately following the Economic Development Mtg. beginning at 6:30pm)

The meeting was called to order at 7:23 P.M. by Chairwoman Addonizio who requested that Legislator Gouldman lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Gouldman, Sayegh, and Chairwoman Addonizio were present.

Item #3 - Approval of Minutes – March 18, 2019

The minutes were approved as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/Foster Care in Putnam County/Social Services Commissioner Michael Piazza

Chairwoman Addonizio stated she requested that a representative from the Department of Social Services come speak to raise awareness about the foster care program in Putnam County. She stated she believes that many people are not aware of the program.

Director of Children and Family Services Frank Marocco provided the attached PowerPoint presentation. He stated encouraging people to become foster parents is extremely important. He stated it can be very difficult but also very rewarding. He stated there are two (2) training sessions per year for potential foster parents. He encouraged anyone interested to attend. He stated recently a foster parent who has fostered over 60 children was honored.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned how many foster children are in Putnam County per year.

Director Marocco stated currently there are 23 foster children.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned if that is around average.

Director Marocco stated that is around the average, but the numbers did increase in 2018. He stated in 2018 28 children entered foster care, while the number in 2017 was 14.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned what the average age of the children is.

Director Marocco stated it depends. He stated the largest group of children is from newborn to five (5) or six (6) years old.

Legislator Sayegh questioned how many foster families are in Putnam County.

Director Marocco stated approximately 15 to 20. He stated the County also utilizes the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie. He stated some children are in residential treatment centers or other facilities. He stated most of the children come through the abuse and neglect proceedings. He stated in 2018 there were 691 investigations by Child Protective Services. He stated there are also many children who are voluntarily given up by a parent who feels that they cannot properly care for them.

Legislator Gouldman questioned what the qualifications to be a foster parent are.

Director Marocco stated there is a certification process and training process. He stated there is a house visit and a background check on every adult in the house.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned how the foster parents are paid.

Director Marocco stated they are paid through Social Services, as well as the State and Federal Government.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned approximately how much they are paid.

Director Marocco stated it depends on the situation. He stated there are a lot of reimbursements through the State and Federal Governments. He stated starting in 2020, the PINS (People In Need of Supervision) will need to be entirely County funded.

Legislator Castellano questioned what percentage of PINS is currently funded by State and Federal funding.

Director Marocco stated it is approximately 35%. He stated it is due to the State and federal governments trying to push to get children out of PINS.

Legislator Sayegh questioned what the average length of stay is for a child in foster care.

Director Marocco stated it depends on the child and situation. He stated they have had children in their care for many years. He stated if a child is in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, Social Services must file for a termination of parental rights which would mean the child is able to be adopted. He stated this can also be done if the parents abandon the child for six (6) months. He stated most of the time the foster parents adopt the child.

Chairwoman Addonizio stated she has heard instances of a child bouncing between foster homes.

Director Marocco stated they try to not have that happen but sometimes homes are disrupted or the child could have behavioral issues.

Legislator Sayegh stated being a parent is very difficult and she commends all foster parents.

Director Marocco stated the Child Welfare Unit provides many services to families in order to try to keep the children with their families instead of going into foster care. He gave out copies of his PowerPoint.

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

Item #5 - Discussion/Veteran Suicide Awareness/Director of Veterans Services Karl Rohde

Chairwoman Addonizio stated it is estimated that 22 veterans commit suicide every day. She stated there will be a Joint Veterans Council Meeting on May 2nd to address the issue of veteran suicide.

Director of the Veterans Service Agency Karl Rohde stated he will be providing the Legislature with reports on veteran suicide. He stated unfortunately there are conflicting reports on veterans' use of the VA (Veterans Affairs) and how useful it is. He stated six (6) in 20 of veteran suicide are recent users of the VA Veterans' Health Administration. He stated he believes that Putnam County should take the lead in combating this issue.

Executive Director of the Mental Health Association Megan Castellano stated she is Co-Chair of the Suicide Prevention Task Force which applied for a \$15,000 grant for multiple initiatives, including raising awareness regarding veteran suicide. She stated there is an outreach at VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) and American Legion Posts to make them aware of what is available to them. She stated there have been discussions with mental healthcare providers to make sure veterans are being identified and can be helped. She stated part of the grant will be used to measure if the initiatives taken have had an impact. She handed out copies of the plan for the grant.

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

Director Rohde stated the majority of veterans committing suicide are older veterans, age 60 and over. He stated they usually feel like they no longer have a "mission" and older veterans are mission-driven. He stated the majority of younger service members who are committing suicide have never been deployed. He stated survivor's guilt is very prevalent.

Chairwoman Addonizio questioned if a veteran feels suicidal or stressed is there a phone number they can call.

Executive Director Castellano stated the national suicide hotline is 1-800-273-8255.

Director Rohde stated if you press one (1) after calling, there is a line specifically for veterans.

Executive Director Castellano stated they are hoping to have a kick-off event in connection with the grant in June for Post-Traumatic Stress Awareness Month.

Director Rohde stated Safe Talk training has not been utilized enough.

Executive Director Castellano stated there are Safe Talk trainings scheduled at Putnam Hospital on June 27, 2019 and October 28, 2019.

John Bourges stated they are trying to change the perception that the veteran suicide rate is a failure of the VA, but it a failure of everybody to address the problem. He stated in 2018 more first responders died by suicide than in the line of duty. He stated many first responders have a connection to the military.

Executive Director Castellano provided informational sheets with support lines for first responders.

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

Legislator Sayegh questioned how to get the word out to the various VFW and American Legion Posts.

Director Rohde stated the Joint Veterans Council will be traveling to many of the different posts to spread the word and raise awareness.

Item #6 - Approval/Appointments/Mental Health Community Services Board/Colon, Limongello, Rock, Murphy

Item #7 - FYI/Teen Health Day – Duly Noted

Item #8 - FYI/Medication Take Back Day – Duly Noted

Item #9 - Other Business - None

Item #10 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 8:03 P.M., Chairwoman Addonizio made a motion to adjourn: Seconded by Legislator Gouldman. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.