

**AUDIT & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM #318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Members: Chairwoman Sayegh and Legislators Birmingham & Crowley

Wednesday February 19, 2025
(Immediately following Rules Meetings beginning at 7:00pm)

The meeting was called to order at 8:45pm by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested Legislator Birmingham lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislators Birmingham and Crowley and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

Item #3 – Correspondence/County Auditor

a. Sales Tax Report

Legislator Montgomery requested that the numbers be read into the record.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the sales tax collected in January 2024 was \$7,112,139 and in January 2025 was \$7,785,254.

Legislator Birmingham stated comparing those two months shows an increase of \$673,114, although the sales tax is not budgeted by month.

b. OTB Report – Duly Noted

c. Board In Revenue Report – Duly Noted

d. Transfer/Revenue Report – Duly Noted

e. 2025 Contingency/Sub–Contingency Report

Commissioner of Finance Michael Lewis stated he wanted to clarify the subcontingency line for the outside agencies as discussed earlier this evening in the Rules Committee Meeting. He stated that line began with \$75,000 for the outside agencies and the Legislature utilized some of it to meet the request of the Libraries. He stated the \$13,993 for Putnam Arts Council was then moved into that line. He stated if the Legislature wants to move funding out of subcontingency, he would need a memorandum requesting such to initiate the transfer.

Legislator Birmingham stated at the Rules Meeting, it was discussed that Legislator Ellner should have the opportunity to ask his questions. He spoke to the process if the request were to come from the Administration.

Legislator Montgomery stated this Committee has the opportunity to move the money as well.

Legislator Crowley requested Legislative Counsel Conrad Pasquale provide his recommendation for the Legislature providing funding to Putnam Arts Council.

Legislative Counsel Conrad Pasquale stated this funding would need to be initiated or approved by the County Executive.

Item #4 – Correspondence – Commissioner of Finance

a. Overtime – Temporary Report – Duly Noted

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to take the agenda out of order; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated items #4s, #11, and #12 would be addressed.

s. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A020 – DSS – Mental Health OASAS Abatement Funds

Department of Social Services Commissioner Sara Servadio stated this request is to utilize abatement funds for “go bags” which are used when responding to suicides in Putnam County.

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

Item #11 – Approval – Dept. of Social Services – Establish Youth Bureau Petty Cash Fund

Commissioner Servadio stated this fund will be about \$200 for the Youth Bureau for purchasing food or décor.

Legislator Crowley stated it is important to keep kids engaged and this is a tool to incentivize their participation.

Legislator Addonizio questioned if this is enough money.

Commissioner Servadio stated it would be replenished when needed.

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

Item #12 – Approval – Putnam County to Serve as Sponsor – FY2022 EPA STAG Grant Funding – Hudson Valley Shakespeare

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is a pass-through grant; the funding will come to Putnam County and then be given to Hudson Valley Shakespeare.

Artistic Director of Hudson Valley Shakespeare Davis McCallum stated he attended an Economic Development & Energy Committee Meeting in 2021 and since then Hudson Valley Shakespeare has been focused on their project to restore a 98-acre property. He stated he is grateful for Putnam County's assistance in receiving this grant funding. He stated the new theatre opens in 2026.

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

b. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 24A135 – County Attorney – Outstanding Legal Services for Remainder of 2024 (Tabled from 1/27/25 Audit to Feb. Rules)

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

c. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 24A136 – Finance – Year End Journal Entry #2

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

d. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A005 – Finance – Personnel Services – Fund New Public Health Director and Medical Consultant (Also reviewed in Personnel)

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

e. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A006 – Veterans Service Agency – Veterans Peer to Peer Program (Also reviewed in Rules)

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

f. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A007 – Dept. of Social Services – Safe Harbor Allocation (Also reviewed in Health)

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

g. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A008 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – Expenses other than Personnel for Child Advocacy Center (Also reviewed in Health)

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

h. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A009 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – Expenses other than Personnel for Child Advocacy Center (Also reviewed in Health)

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

i. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A010 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – Code Blue Allocation received from the Office of Temporary & Disability Assistance (Also reviewed in Health)

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

j. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A011 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – Include Administration for Community Living ARPA Adult Protective Services Grant Allocation (Also reviewed in Health)

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

k. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A012 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – Reflect Adjusted State Aid Levels in Accordance with NYS Office of Mental Health Authorization (Also reviewed in Health)

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

l. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A013 – Dept. of Social Services & Mental Health – 2024–2025 NYS Rental Supplement Program Allocation (Also reviewed in Health)

Commissioner Lewis clarified the budgetary amendments from the Department of Social Services are a result of estimations made during the budget process. He stated the previous years' numbers are used as a baseline and the estimations are made as conservatively as possible.

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

**m. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A014 – Sheriff’s Dept. –
Implementation of GPS for Patrol Fleet (Also reviewed in Protective)**

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre–file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

**n. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A015 – Dept. of Social Services &
Mental Health – Child Advocacy Center – Expenses Funded in
Accordance with Contract Awarded by NYSOCFS (Also reviewed in
Personnel)**

Commissioner Lewis stated these are one-time retention bonuses coming from grant funding.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre–file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Birmingham. All in favor

**o. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A016 – Health Dept. –
Community Health Survey (Also reviewed in Health)**

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre–file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

**p. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A017 – Planning – SAM Grant
Award – Putnam County Veterans Museum Quonset Hut**

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is a wonderful use of these funds.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre–file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

**q. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A018 – DPW – East Branch Road
over Haviland Hollow Brook Superstructure Replacement – Town of
Patterson – PIN 8763.60**

Commissioner Lewis stated this is setting up the appropriation, of which is 5% local match and 95% federally funded. He stated there is a fiscal impact of \$30,579 being taken from contingency.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre–file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

r. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A019 – DPW – Peekskill Hollow Road over Peekskill Hollow Creek Bridge Repairs – Town of Putnam Valley PIN 8763.61

Commissioner Lewis stated this is setting up the appropriation, of which is 5% local match and 95% federally funded. He stated there is a fiscal impact of \$29,437 being taken from contingency.

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

t. Approval – Budgetary Amendment 25A021 – Finance – Legal Aid Society – Indigent Legal Services

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

Item #5 – Approval – Fund Transfer 24T536 – Dept. of Social Services – Projected Costs through 12/31/2024 (Also reviewed in Health)

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

Item #6 – Approval – Fund Transfer 24T537 – Dept. of Social Services – Projected Costs through 12/31/2024 (Also reviewed in Health)

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

Item #7 – Approval – Fund Transfer 25T032 – Finance – Funding for Ratified CSEA Contract (Also reviewed in Personnel)

Commissioner Lewis stated this represents the retroactive accrual for 2024 and 2025.

Chairwoman Sayegh clarified that this was budgeted for.

Commissioner Lewis stated yes, it was put into contingency and it is now being taken out to fund the lines.

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

Item #8 – Approval – Fund Transfer 25T037 – OSR – Reallocate Salaries to Appropriate Grant (Also reviewed in Personnel)

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

Item #9 – Discussion – Request from Towns and Villages – Sales Tax Sharing

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to waive the rules and accept the additional; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. Legislator Birmingham abstained.

Legislator Birmingham stated his law firm represents three (3) of the municipalities related to this agenda item; the Villages of Brewster and Cold Spring and the Town of Kent. He stated out of an abundance of caution he is going to abstain from this item in its entirety. He stated he will be exiting the room for the discussion.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated a letter was received from Village of Cold Spring Mayor Kathleen Foley and she requested that Legislator Montgomery read it into the record.

Legislator Montgomery read Mayor Foley's letter.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the Legislature also received a letter dated February 3, 2025 from all town Supervisors and Mayors within the County, which is included in this evening's backup.

Legislator Crowley read the February 3, 2025 letter into the record.

Legislator Gouldman stated every Supervisor and Mayor in the County has voiced their request for the County to share sales tax. He stated the County has a healthy fund balance and if this sales tax revenue is shared with the towns and villages it will be beneficial to everyone.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there are multiple ways the County does assist the towns financially. She stated the County guarantees school taxes, costing the county over \$23 million. She stated the County also pays the \$2.8 million contract for ALS (Advanced Life Support) Services which services all towns and villages. She stated the County provides funding to the libraries throughout the County and pays the \$4 million cost of community college as well. She stated these costs add up to about \$35 million annually.

Legislator Jonke stated in her letter, Mayor Foley charges that the Legislature identifies two distinct populations: County taxpayers and Town and Village taxpayers. He stated he does not agree with this statement; all taxpayers are taxpayers. He stated anyone who resides in the County, even if they are not a property owner, they are a taxpayer. He stated he is an assessor and has been in this field for over 30 years and has heard many complaints about the tax burden, most of which is from the school district. He

stated the County is sitting on a surplus. He stated after reading the February 3, 2025 letter from the Town Supervisors and Village Mayors he called Town of Southeast Supervisor Nick Durante who said he wants his .5%. Legislator Jonke then asked what Supervisor Durante planned to do with the money. He stated Supervisor Durante responded that he did not know. He stated the letter charges that the surplus funds are “absorbed into the County budget, funding new or unnecessary expenditures.” He stated this is offensive; the County is careful about all expenditures. He stated the County has a surplus and shares with the Towns through services such as ambulances and community college costs. He questioned when the County will stop unnecessarily taking money from the taxpayers. He stated he is in favor of lowering the sales tax; he is also in favor of lowering the property tax again. He stated two years ago the County Executive wanted to create a fund of \$2.5 million to award grants to towns. He stated the Legislature stopped that and instead cut property taxes by \$500,000 per year, resulting in \$1 million being given back to the taxpayers. He stated he feels good about giving money back to the taxpayers and wished the school districts felt the same way and were as careful with their money as the County is. He stated this money is all taxpayer’s money and he does not believe the County should take it when it is not needed.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated on top of the shared services provided to the towns, the County also has unfunded mandates that need to be budgeted for. She stated with changes at the Federal level it is unknown what changes may be coming down the line.

Legislator Montgomery stated the County has always had those expenses and beginning in 2019 when the Wayfair legislation was passed the sales tax revenue has been surpassing the budgeted amounts. She stated Putnam County is one of very few counties in the State that does not share sales tax. She stated she has brought forward the requests of her town and villages multiple times. She states sales tax generated in her district for Putnam County does not help with the impact on the towns and villages. She stated the #3 item on the taxable sales by category is restaurants and other eating places. She stated the Village of Cold Spring faces an ongoing issue with garbage generated from these businesses. She stated over the years she has requested \$2,500 from the County to supplement their garbage removal. She stated Dutchess County retains 82.74% of their sales tax revenue and shares 5.41% with the City of Poughkeepsie, 2.35% with the City of Beacon, and 9.5% with towns based on population and villages based on property value. She stated Westchester County shares with local municipalities including school districts. She stated Rockland County shares as well. She stated our towns and local volunteer emergency services are struggling to fund their needs.

Legislator Crowley stated the County Executive put out a survey that had 822 participants, 591 of them pushed for a property tax alleviation and 156 pushed to give it back to the towns. She stated it is important to recognize these results and what the residents want. She stated regardless of where the money comes from at some point it has to make its way back to the towns and residents.

Legislator Addonizio stated the County portion of the property tax bill is 9%, which is the lowest portion. She stated in other terms, for every \$100,000 of assessed value the County tax equals \$9.

Commissioner Lewis stated he wanted to bring up some expenses the County is facing such as the four bargaining units settling, which will cost an additional \$1.8 million in 2026, plus an assumed COLA (cost of living adjustment) for management employees. He stated he would also estimate a conservative 7.5% increase for retirement and health insurance, which would be about \$2 million. He stated these two items alone are an additional \$4 million expense for the County. He stated there are also mandates that the County cannot control, which needs to be factored in. He stated a lot of the surplus has been reinvested into capital infrastructure, which has saved taxpayer money in the long run by not having to borrow. He stated he believes there is an appetite to now invest in the employees; the County is facing an issue with salaries and health benefits that are not competitive. He stated there is a committee working on improving the employee health insurance. He stated the funds have been put into assigned buckets; they are not restricted and can be moved around with Legislative approval. He stated over the past few years, the County has lowered or kept the tax levy level through the hard work of the Administration and Legislature. He stated cumulatively since 2023, \$5.7 million has been given back to the taxpayers.

Legislator Gouldman requested clarification on the increase to health insurance.

Commissioner Lewis stated he provided an estimated increase for 2026. He stated currently, a family plan is \$41,000.

Legislator Gouldman stated the Employee Insurance Review Committee has been reviewing this and questioned if they have brought forward any suggestions and what the cost may be.

Commissioner Lewis stated the Committee is still working and has not yet submitted any suggestions.

Legislator Gouldman questioned Commissioner Lewis's opinion on whether the County should share sales tax.

Commissioner Lewis stated he is conservative and believes the best way to give money back would be through property tax. He clarified that the County is not hoarding money, it is reinvesting it into areas where it is needed.

Legislator Jonke stated it is possible to give taxpayers a break on both property tax and sales tax. He stated he would like to address the survey put forward by the Administration. He stated this is the least scientific survey he has ever seen; there are no restrictions on how many times someone can vote. He stated it is a push poll that directs the respondent to the desired result. He stated there was no option to choose both property and sales tax relief. He stated Legislator Montgomery made the

argument that Philipstown generates a lot of sales tax. He stated he believes the whole County is in this together so he has never felt compelled to highlight all the big box stores located in his district that bring in a great deal of sales tax such as Home Depot, Kohls, Restaurant Depot, Ace Endico and car dealerships. He stated if any sharing allocations are to be based upon which district brings in the most sales tax, he would argue his district should receive the lion's share.

Legislator Gouldman stated there is an imbalance of the eastern and western sides of the County. He stated the eastern side has more industry and the western side struggles to get services. He stated he would be in favor of allocating funding toward increasing services to the western side of the County.

Legislator Crowley stated sales tax on vehicles goes to the municipality where it is registered.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there are many representatives from the towns and villages here this evening and she would like to give them the opportunity to speak.

Town of Putnam Valley Supervisor Jackie Annabi stated the distribution of County sales tax to towns and villages is not a request for something new or unprecedented as it was done in 2022. She stated at that time, Putnam Valley utilized that funding to repair vital infrastructure. She stated when tax dollars stay local they make a direct and lasting impact. She stated the request being made is for 0.5% of the sales tax revenue be shared with the towns and villages, which would make a huge difference for them. She stated reducing sales tax at the register does little to reduce the financial strain on homeowners. She stated although it may sound appealing, it does not solve the real issues at hand. She stated the real solution is to invest these funds into local towns and villages, supporting the quality of life for those who reside there. She stated if Putnam Valley were to receive funding they would put it toward a senior outdoor exercise area, the creation of a mountain bike path, and expand community recreational space to include miniature golf or batting cages.

Town of Patterson Supervisor Rich Williams stated eight (8) years ago he and his fellow supervisors met with the County Executive to discuss sales tax sharing and at that time he was opposed. He stated since then many things have changed. He stated the taxpayers in Patterson are stressed and cannot be pushed any farther. He stated the unfunded mandates from New York State burden the town's budget. He stated they need a revenue source that does not punish the property tax owners.

Town of Putnam Valley Councilman Christian Russo stated Putnam County is one (1) out of 11 counties in the State that do not share sales tax revenue. He stated this lack of sharing is a significant loss of funding for the local communities. He stated the towns and villages are working very hard to find funds, struggling to fund their budgets, and essential services. He stated sharing the sales tax revenue would allow the town to fund critical infrastructure while directly reducing the tax burden on the residents.

Commissioner Lewis stated counties that do not have cities are not required to share sales tax.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there are 57 counties in New York State outside of New York City, 21 of which do not have cities.

Brett Yarris, resident of Carmel, stated there has been conversation about the discrepancies throughout the various towns in Putnam County. He stated that difference exists right within the Town of Carmel as well. He stated Mahopac gets the lion's share of the funding and services. He stated the difference is noticeable just driving from Route 6 to where it becomes Route 52 in the Hamlet of Carmel. He stated infrastructure is the core issue here and he would encourage the Legislature to earmark these funds for infrastructure. He state the Hamlet of Carmel is not getting support from the Town and this revenue is a great resource.

Legislator Montgomery stated although the County is not mandated to share sales tax, it does not mean it should not be done.

Item #10 – Discussion – Approval – Putnam County's Request to Extend the 1% Increased County Sales Tax for an Additional 3 Years

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

Legislator Birmingham stated he would like to move the resolution on the agenda as presented by the County Executive with the draft in preparation from the County Law Department. He stated he would then need a second to introduce his amendments to it.

Legislator Birmingham made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution with the below proposed changes; Seconded by Chairwoman Sayegh to discuss. All in favor.

Legislator Birmingham suggested the following amendments:

- Title: Change from "Approval/ Putnam County's Request to Extend the 1% Increased County Sales Tax for an Additional 3 Years" to "Approval/ Putnam County's Request for the County Sales Tax Rate to be Established as a Rate of 3.5% for the Period from December 1, 2025 through November 30, 2028"
- Strike the first Whereas paragraph.
- 5th Whereas clause: Strike "and needs to be renewed; and" and replace it with "; now therefore be it"
- Strike the 6th Whereas paragraph.
- 1st Resolved clause: strike "the renewal of the expiring one percent County sales tax increase for an additional three years, that is," and add Putnam County's sales tax rate to be increased from three percent (3%) to three and one-half percent (3.5%) for the period from..."

Chairwoman Sayegh clarified that Legislator Birmingham is proposing to reduce the sales tax by 0.5%.

Legislator Birmingham stated that is correct.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she believes this is a lot to cut, the County has many unfunded mandates and there could be unknown costs moving forward.

Legislator Crowley stated cutting 0.5% is ambitious because sales tax is such a strong revenue generator for the County. He stated Commissioner Lewis has voiced his opinion on the fiscal responsibility he holds for Putnam County and how this cut could affect the County's economic standing. She stated the County currently has a healthy unassigned fund balance and if it is spent in place of tax revenue, a hole will quickly be created and could negatively impact the bond rating, eventually making borrowing money more expensive. She stated the sales tax rate is competitive with other counties and Putnam County has structural expenditures and if the fund balance is spent down the County will be in a bad position when it comes to the next round of contract negotiations. She stated in 2007 and 2008 the County had property tax hikes over 20%. She stated eliminating a portion of the sales tax could bring us back to those dark days. She stated there are other ways to accommodate the towns and our residents, but she does not believe this is it.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned what the impact of decreasing sales tax 0.5%. She questioned if budgeted based on sales tax is a safe way to budget.

Commissioner Lewis stated 0.5% comes out to about \$10 million.

Legislator Jonke questioned how much money is in unassigned fund balance.

Commissioner Lewis stated there is \$78 million in unassigned fund balance.

Legislator Jonke stated if the sales tax was reduced by 0.5% for three (3) years, at \$10 million per year, the unassigned fund balance would still be over \$40 million, barring unforeseen circumstances.

Commissioner Lewis stated the contracts need to be factored in now that they are settled, it will be about \$3 million or \$4 million more per year.

Legislator Jonke stated the County has the funds to cover those costs and we learned this evening that even in the first month of this year, we are ahead in sales tax revenue as compared to last January. He stated he does not believe potential events are reason to keep money from the taxpayers. He stated the County is sitting on a surplus and he does not believe we should continue to increase that surplus. He stated he believes the taxpayers should be given a break while the County has the surplus to cover the cost at this time.

Legislator Birmingham stated as stated previously the unassigned fund balance is about \$78 million however if you look at both the assigned and unassigned fund balance, it is closer to a total of \$134 million. He stated assigned fund balance is not restrictive; it can be assigned and unassigned as the Commissioner of Finance sees fit. He stated this is a Legislative power that was delegated to the Commissioner of Finance. He stated it is possible for that that authority to be revoked. He stated Commissioner Lewis has very wisely exercised that authority to assign fund balance over the last three (3) budgets. He stated it is important that when thinking about the decrease in sales tax, the full 1% would be \$20 million out of \$134 million rather than out of \$78 million.

Commissioner Lewis stated under the assigned fund balance are buckets of money being used to balance budgets such as capital projects and retirement costs.

Legislator Birmingham acknowledged that long term investments have been made, which is great. He stated in 2024 the County surpassed the budgeted sales tax revenue by over \$7 million, which would pay for 70% of the 0.5% sales tax cut. He stated as Legislator Jonke pointed out, the sales tax revenue in the first month of 2025 is even higher than in 2024.

Commissioner Lewis stated in 2025, \$6.1 million from the general fund was used to balance the capital plan budget, \$1.5 million was used to offset the increase in retirement costs, and \$3 million was used for appreciated fund balance. He stated about \$10 million was used to balance the 2025 budget.

Legislator Birmingham stated even after utilizing \$10 million to balance, there was still \$134 million left in the fund balance. He stated there are other options such as delaying projects if it really became an issue.

Legislator Gouldman agreed that taxes should be lowered, but it is important to figure out the best way to do it. He stated this Legislature has removed sales tax on clothing and footwear purchases under \$110. He stated over the past 15+ years Putnam County has used sales tax revenue to stabilize or lower property taxes. He stated the residents he has spoken to about taxes all mention the property tax burden and none mention sales tax. He stated property tax is paid by property owners where sales tax is paid by residents and non-residents. He acknowledged that the majority of the property tax bill is the school tax and County property tax makes up 9% of the bill. He stated residents are paying too much to live in New York. He stated lowering the sales tax at this point is jumping the gun. He stated the towns and villages have voiced their requests for the County to share sales tax revenue. He stated there are unknown future costs the County will be facing. He referenced the survey discussed earlier when Legislator Jonke said it was unscientific. He stated it is unscientific, but it what we have to base everything on at the moment. He spoke to the results of the survey, most of which were concerns over property tax.

Legislator Montgomery stated she has consistently voted against the 1% sales tax extension over the years. She stated she has always wanted to share this money with

the towns and villages and there now seems to be more of an interest. She stated she is so happy to see the local municipalities at our meetings; it is a great opportunity for collaboration. She stated the towns are being decimated in storms. She stated former Commissioner of Finance Carlin stated the sales tax revenue is the most important piece of legislation for the fiscal health of the County. She read minutes from a previous Legislative Meeting where this was discussed. She stated this year she will be in favor of extending the 1% sales tax because she sees hope that the towns and villages can benefit.

Commissioner Lewis stated the County allocated \$3 million for FEMA related repairs to assist.

Legislator Birmingham stated he too has a mixed record on voting for the sales tax extension, which he spoke to during his former terms as Legislator. He stated he has always based his vote on the health of the budget and fund balance. He stated the ratio of fund balance to budget has never been higher than it is now. He stated he believes it is possible to lower both sales and property taxes in a responsible manner. He stated it is important to adopt something soon because it needs to go through the State Legislature as well.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned what the timeline is for this.

Legislative Clerk Diane Schonfeld stated once our resolution goes to the State, we usually receive the two (2) bills back in May and our second resolution should be approved before the State is out of session in June.

Commissioner Lewis stated he believes the latest should be April.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the County has cut sales tax on gasoline when the prices were increasing. She stated it is so difficult to budget based on sales tax.

Commissioner Lewis stated he has an estimation of \$1.5 million going back to the taxpayers as a result of the sales tax break on clothing and footwear purchases under \$110.

Legislator Crowley made a motion to table this for further discussion. There was no second.

Chairwoman Sayegh called for a roll call vote on Legislator Birmingham's earlier motion on the amended resolution (0.5% extension). By roll call vote: One Aye – Legislator Birmingham. Two Nays – Legislator Crowley and Chairwoman Sayegh. Motion fails.

Legislator Birmingham explained that now the Committee will consider the original proposal (1% extension).

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to pre-file the necessary resolution; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. By roll call vote: Two Ayes – Legislator Crowley and Chairwoman Sayegh. One Nay – Legislator Birmingham. Motion carries.

Item #13 – Other Business

a. Approval – Authorize Application – NYS Assistance – Household Hazardous Waste

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to waive the rules and accept the other business; Seconded by Legislator Birmingham. All in favor.

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

Item #14 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 10:51pm, Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Crowley. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Beth Robinson.