

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

Monday October 27, 2025 7:00P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested Legislator Ellner lead in the Pledge of Allegiance and Legislator Crowley lead in the Legisaltive Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Montgomery, Gouldman, Addonizio, Russo, Ellner, Jonke, Birmingham, Crowley and Chairwoman Sayegh were present.

Chairwoman Sayegh requested that the Clerk read the Public Notice.

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Legislature of the County of Putnam will hold a Public Hearing on the Tentative Budget for the year 2026, as presented by the County Executive and the Report of the Budget & Finance Committee of the Legislature, on Monday, October 27, 2025, at 7:00 P.M. in the Historic Courthouse, Carmel, New York.

NOTICE IS ALSO GIVEN that any interested persons may review a copy of the Tentative Budget for the year 2026 at the Office of the Clerk of the Legislature, Room 321, 40 Gleneida Avenue, Carmel, New York, any time during regular business hours after October 2, 2025. A copy of the Tentative Budget may also be found online at putnamcountyny.gov under the Department of Finance.

PURSUANT TO SECTION 359 OF THE COUNTY LAW, the maximum salary that may be fixed and payable during the fiscal year 2026 to the members of the Putnam County Legislature and Chairperson, thereof, respective, is as follows:

Legislator's Compensation _____	\$48,173
Chairperson's Stipend _____	\$12,044

BY ORDER OF THE PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Diane Trabulsy
Clerk

Chairwoman Sayegh read the procedure for public comment on the proposed 2026 Tentative Budget.

Martha Elder, Town of Kent resident, stated she was present as a resident of the Town of Kent and the Executive Director of Second Chance Foods. She stated as a resident of Putnam County, she cares very much about meeting the basic needs of our residents. She stated unfortunately there are tragic things happening to the SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits scheduled to begin this Saturday, November 1, 2025. She stated that they are receiving phone calls from Putnam County residents worried about what will happen to their SNAP benefits. She stated she has been meeting

and strategizing with her staff and partnering organizations on how to address this matter. She explained they have limited resources to work with. She stated that she did present at the Rules, budget meeting. She did request the Legislature consider approving \$20,000 for the 2026 budget because they need it. She stated they have lost \$70,000 of federal funding. She spoke to the fact that Second Chance Foods does fund raise in multiple ways. She stated however they still need the help of the Legislature in order to do this vital work that they do. She stated the work they do serves the entire county and its organizations, which she listed. She concluded by repeating her request that the Legislature support the request for \$20,000 for Second Chance Foods for the 2026 budget.

Christine Nastasi, Town of Southeast, and 2025 Chair of the Putnam County Agricultural Farmland Protection Board (AFPB), She expressed appreciation for setting \$2,500 aside for use by the AFPB for training and other miscellaneous expenses. She stated that the Legislature had a meeting on October 1st of 2025 at which the County Executive presented the 2026 Tentative Budget, she was not present. She stated that the County Executive presented again in the Town of Southeast on another day, which she was able to attend that meeting. She stated at that meeting she had a discussion with the County Executive. She stated every question she asked County Executive Byrne replied, "it sounds like you need an Agricultural Navigator". She stated that she believes it would be more fiscally responsible for the County to pay for training versus funding an Agricultural Navigator position. She stated for the record, the recording from the Town of Southeast meeting does not show the entire time that she spoke. She requested if anyone knows how to correct that she would appreciate that.

Arielle Honovich, Town of Patterson resident, read from a statement that she had prepared. She spoke to her opinion that the County Executive uses Putnam County farming politically. She spoke about the lawsuit she filed against the County of Putnam and won. She continued with her statement. She recognized and stated her appreciation that some of the Legislators have taken the time to look closer and educate themselves, and recognized Legislator Ellner for his efforts and support regaining the support of the agricultural community. She stated that in this 2026 budget, there is a 3% increase for the County Executive. She expressed her reasons for not supporting that.

Cassandra Roth, Pawling & Patterson, explained to avoid talking too much about Soil and Water she prepared and read from a statement. She began by stating agriculture and conservation are not opposing forces. She stated healthy farms mean healthy soil, water and stronger, resilient communities. She stated the farmers in Putnam County want to be part of the conversation that directly affects their livelihoods. She stated that there are currently volunteers on the AFPB and the Soil & Water Conservation District Board doing this work without added cost to the taxpayers. She stated it is her opinion that there is no need to fund an Agricultural Navigator position with taxpayer dollars. She stated she believes that is work that falls under the Soil and Water Conservation District. She stated as a member of the Soil & Water Conservation District she knows that the structure, the State partnership and the neutrality to be most effective is in place. She stated the Soil and Water Conservation District is being rebuilt to where it should have been. She stated she personally has put a lot of volunteer work into rebuilding the Soil and Water Conservation District, and the Vice Chair Brett Yarris has put an immeasurable amount of work into ensuring that taxpayer dollars are not wasted on things that are already funded. She stated she and Brett Yarris were appointed to the Soil and Water Conservation District in July of 2025 (R#186-2025). She stated the Soil and Water

Conservation District is in place to support the AFPB. She stated the Soil and Water Conservation District is not an enforcing agency. She stated the Soil and Water Conservation District is in place to serve as a support system and to educate, and assist making it easier for landowners to protect their land. She stated for decades the County never treated the Soil and Water Conservation District with the respect it deserves. She stated the Soil and Water Conservation District was formed in 1966, not 1967 which is what she was originally told, and from that time, in her opinion the County has been getting it wrong. She stated this Legislature and the County Law Department, and the County Department Heads have been very cooperative. She stated it is crucial that the Soil and Water Conservation District is separate and has faith that it will be there by next year. She stated that the funding for an agricultural navigator or anything truly agriculture should come from there in the future. She spoke to her opinion of the lawsuit that occurred between Ridge Ranch and the County of Putnam. She stated she believed a functioning Soil and Water Conservation District could have assisted in that matter.

Brett Yarris, Hamlet of Carmel, began by stating he has come before the Legislature many times before, and he listed some of the topics. He stated that he was disappointed to see that Career Support Solutions (outside County agency) had a tentative funding amount of \$15,000. He stated there have been a host of issues he has addressed this board about. He stated he finds many fiscal matters frustrating, knowing the large amount of money in the unassigned fund balance. He spoke of a recommendation that was made by Legislator Jonke to put \$650,000 in subcontingency to explore the idea of giving money back to the taxpayers. He stated using the fund balance to offer direct relief to the taxpayer is a proposal he supports. He stated residents in Putnam County are facing an affordability challenge. He stated he is always in favor of a tax cut. He stated but with a house like his he ends up saving \$35 - \$40 year. He stated it is his opinion that it is helpful but not meaningful. He stated that he does not know the details of the proposal made by Legislator Jonke, but what he has heard, he hopes the Legislature considers carrying it out. He stated and he would hope the tax cut would be moved forward for the 2026 budget. He stated in his opinion if the tax cut is the only savings that comes from the 2026 budget for the taxpayers, the Legislature will have failed. He concluded by expressing his hope that the Legislature will continue forward with the funds placed in subcontingency to provide direct relief to the taxpayers.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated that the Adopt the 2026 Budget Meeting scheduled for Wednesday, October 29th at 7:00p.m. has had a location change. She stated the Adopt the 2026 Budget Meeting of the Legislature will be held in the County Office Building in conference room #318 at 7:00p.m. on Wednesday, October 29, 2025.

There being no more members of the public wishing to speak; at 7:31 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislators Birmingham and Ellner. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Clerk, Diane Trabulsy