

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

Chairwoman Montgomery, Legislators Addonizio & Russo

Wednesday

6:00PM

March 11, 2026

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairwoman Montgomery who requested Legislator Addonizio lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Addonizio and Chairwoman Montgomery were present. Legislator Russo arrived at 6:03 p.m.

Item #3 - FYI – Fund Transfer 26T037 – Social Services – Move Allocated Code Blue Funds from Misc. to Contracts for Brewster Cares and CoveCare

Department of Social Services Fiscal Manager Kristen Wunner stated there are two contracts with local agencies to support the warming center and outreach efforts for Code Blue. She stated that an annual allocation from the NY State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance previously allocated funding to overtime and miscellaneous for outreach efforts which were not used and would be repurposed here to the contracts budget line to maximize the funding that ends on June 30th.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated the total amount of \$180,000 went to Brewster Cares and \$19,281 to CoveCare. She questioned if the original budget allocation was insufficient and if there was a higher utilization rate of the centers in shelters this season.

Department of Social Services Commissioner Sara Servadio stated it started off slowly, but the nightly numbers are higher than average with about 8-12 individuals more than last year.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if the transfer reflects any ongoing funding trend that we want to be ready for as we enter the 2027 budget season.

Manager Wunner stated some funding will be put in for the 2026-2027 Code Blue season, and that money will probably be shifted around based on need. She stated that this is to maximize the allocation for future funding.

Commissioner Servadio stated on the operations side, they will be discussing expanding daytime warming shelter hours with the County Executive and Health Committee, as Brewster Cares currently runs it until 2:00 p.m. every day, but they would like coverage though 9:00 p.m.

Legislator Addonizio questioned where those who are homeless would go now through 2:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m.

Commissioner Servadio stated people will go to the library, laundromats, or restaurants.

Legislator Addonizio stated that Code Blue means temperatures of 32 degrees or under and questioned if the very cold winter this year caused the increase of 8-12 more people.

Commissioner Servadio stated yes, along with the fact that people are struggling.

Legislator Birmingham stated that this is a vitally needed program in his district, as Brewster Cares is an organization that helps the homeless and those with housing insecurity. He stated that a few years ago there were residents of Putnam County that froze in the woods, and this service is very much needed. He stated that state funds cannot do everything and thanked Commissioner Servadio on behalf of his constituents.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if there is zip code information on the increase of individuals using shelter services and questioned if there is any plan to centralize services, as opposed to individuals having to travel from the west side of the County for services.

Commissioner Servadio stated that data is not collected, as individuals don't have to give it. She stated that she will have a conversation with Brewster Cares and her housing staff regarding centralizing.

Legislator Crowley stated that we should be able to track where individuals seeking services are coming from.

Commissioner Servadio stated that not everyone is willing to give their information.

Legislator Crowley stated our tracking should enable us to help individuals get back on their feet, by offering other services they need too, including job placement, transportation and others.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated there is not enough shelter for those who are unhoused on her side of the County and questioned if a regional approach could be explored. She stated that getting to Brewster Cares may not be as convenient as going to Peekskill or Garrison.

Commissioner Servadio stated if Putnam residents were to utilize Peekskill facilities, since that's Westchester, they would have to register with Westchester DSS (Department of Social Services) and could use a facility for up to 29 nights, which isn't a longer-term solution.

Chairwoman Montgomery stated that a longer-term vision would be to work across counties and for that reason, a regional approach is worth considering.

Item #4 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A010 – Social Services – Adjust State Aid Levels- Shelter Arrears Assistance

Chairwoman Montgomery stated it's her understanding that this program pays household overdue rent to prevent evictions, and this amendment would add \$15,600 for shelters arrears assistance. She questioned if Commissioner Servadio had anything to add.

Commissioner Servadio stated as \$15,600 is a such a small annual amount, they try to do as much with it as they can. She stated that it's used to help one or more families, but it all depends on how much is needed to get them to a zero balance with their landlords. She stated that work is also done with landlords, to make sure people are allowed to stay in their apartments.

Manager Wunner stated the first allocation came for this program in September of 2024, for around \$13,000, and notice was received in January this year to extend the program an additional year to add \$15,600 with zero fiscal impact.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if this is all state aid.

Manager Wunner confirmed.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned how many households they anticipate serving with this additional funding.

Commissioner Servadio stated 2 or 3, and that they are doing whatever they can to save a living situation, including working with CoveCare. She stated that if not by using this, funds would be pulled from another budget line.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if there is a current waiting list.

Commissioner Servadio stated no, there are other means to pay and help people.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned what other organizations are partnered with.

Commissioner Servadio stated CoveCare and sometimes, the Putnam Women's Resource Center.

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

Item #5 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A018 – Social Services – Adjust State Aid Levels- OEOP Crime Victim (Office of Educational Opportunity Programs)

Manager Wunner stated that she came before the Legislature in November or December in regard to the Office of Victims Services (OVS) contract, which was extended for one year from the original award, and that funding was honored to supplement a County match for one of the contracts to bridge the gap between the original award and what was clawed back. She stated the grant contract was approved last month, and brings back current levels to grant levels, allowing ability to spend, and adding \$33,000 with zero fiscal impact.

Legislator Birmingham stated we have just had 3 transfers that seem to be state grants and questioned whether there are any County or local dollars devoted to these programs.

Manager Wunner confirmed and stated that the OVS contract was discussed back in December for \$116,000 County match for a contract with the Putnam Women's Resource Center for mental health services, and that is the only local contribution to the three items spoken about here.

Legislator Birmingham stated that as far as policy, he wouldn't think that any of the state programs would mind if local dollars were also allocated.

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

Item #6 - Approval – Budgetary Amendment 26A015 – County Historian – Fund Newspaper Digitalization Project Utilizing Greg Amato Trust Proceeds

Putnam County Historian Jennifer Cassidy stated Greg Amato was a cherished volunteer at the Historian's Office for many years, and at the time of his passing he asked that donations be made to support the work of the Historian's Office along with other charities. She stated that her office is committed to continuing the digitization of additional issues of the Putnam County Courier in his name. She stated this amendment is to put more funding into special projects to make archives available for free to the public on the website news.hrvh.org, which includes microfilm too and is hosted in partnership with Mahopac Library. She stated that there are many digitizing projects in progress which will help make all of the archives available to the public.

Chairwoman Montgomery thanked Historian Cassidy and stated that she loves projects like this, as there was a similar project with the Putnam Arts Counsel to archive music and she knows the newspaper archives are used a lot more by residents than is realized. She questioned how much archiving would cost and how much money is needed.

Historian Cassidy stated each year they will chip away at the archives, and she hopes to get up to 1976 with the Courier, but that would hit the budget hard, so working in increments of 5 years to 10 years is manageable. She stated there are also other titles to work on, including Cold Spring News and Reporter and Putnam Valley and Peekskill titles.

Legislator Gouldman questioned if there are plans for preserving the online only publications.

Historian Cassidy stated that is a continued conversation, and she has had conversations with the Highlands Current and Putnam Press Times regarding formats. She stated that she is concerned about the future of local newspapers, and that here, records management and being prepared for the digital world is critical.

Legislator Gouldman questioned what titles are online only.

Historian Cassidy stated she would have to look into what other papers cover Putnam County news. She stated that one example is the Journal News, and she uses physical copies that she gets from Kent Library to clip articles and build critical vertical files so that research can be pulled on any topic when requested.

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

Item #7 - Approval – County Historian – Accept Funding from NYS Education Department’s NYS 250th Commemoration Commission, in support of “Revolutionary Putnam County”

Historian Cassidy stated that NY State recently shared news regarding funding for Rev250 that Putnam County qualifies for funding based on K through 12th grade enrollment. She stated there is no money coming from the federal government, but she’s grateful for this non-match state grant of \$15,000. She stated that as long as all paperwork is completed properly, the grant can be shared with towns County-wide for their free programs in historic organizations or museums.

Chairwoman Montgomery questioned if all the programs are all set and are centered around Rev250.

Historian Cassidy stated that there are a lot, but it depends on the group hosting. She stated for example, the Historian’s Office represents the Putnam County Rev250 Committee and has a month-long set of programs at Mahopac Library where there was a history exhibit and guest speaker and there is also an ongoing exhibit of the Putnam County Quilt. She stated there will be many programs throughout this year, including lectures, music programs and reenactments.

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

Item #8 – Other Business - None

Item #9 – Adjournment

There being no further business at 6:29pm Chairwoman Montgomery made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Russo. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Dechiaro, Administrative Assistant.