

**SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE  
PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE  
CALLED BY THE CLERK AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIRMAN  
HELD IN ROOM 318  
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING  
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Wednesday

July 24, 2019

(Immediately following Audit Mtg starting at 5:30 P.M.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 P.M. by Chairman Castellano who requested that Legislator Montgomery lead in the Pledge of Allegiance and Legislator Sayegh lead in the Legislative Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Montgomery, Gouldman, Addonizio, Nacerino, Albano, Jonke, Sayegh, Sullivan and Chairman Castellano were present. Also present was Legislative Counsel Firriolo.

Item #4 – Approval/ Discontinuation of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) was next.

Chairman Castellano explained that this item was discussed in multiple Committees; Personnel, Health and also the Audit Committee earlier this evening.

Legislator Montgomery explained that the request to schedule this Special meeting came last week. She stated that this meeting has been scheduled on a night when there are two (2) public hearings being held; one (1) at 3:30 pm and the second at 6:30 pm. She stated that this item was originally going to the Full Legislative meeting in August which is a date that the public is aware of. She read her memorandum to Chairman Castellano in response to his request to hold this Special meeting. She was not in favor of having this meeting even though two (2) Legislators would not be attending the August Full meeting; as there would still be a quorum and the public is familiar with the dates of our regularly scheduled Full meetings. She believed it was important to for consistency and transparency that we keep to our regularly advertised meeting schedule. She explained that she has spoken previously about process. She believed that what it came down to now was that we were cheating an employee out of her retirement. She stated that the contract with the State does not end for another year and this person has one (1) more year left in her 20 year dedication as a Putnam County employee. She stated that there was talk about finding other jobs within the County for these employees; however we are taking this vote before that would be confirmed. She stated that there was talk about Open Door, the agency taking over this program, employing these individuals. She stated that Open Door continues to advertise for these positions on the internet and she was not sure why they haven't called for a second interview with our County employees. She did not believe this was a good way to treat our employees.

Chairman Castellano stated that this item has been in multiple Committees and has been spoken about for a couple of months. He believed this should have gone to the July Full meeting; however it was not approved out of Committee until July. He stated that it came to his attention that two (2) Legislators were not going to be able to attend the August Full meeting. He stated that he polled all the Legislators about having a Special Full meeting; giving them the option of three (3) dates. He stated this was an important issue and he believed that all nine (9) Legislators should be in attendance. He believed it was

our job to look at the facts and make a decision. He did not believe it would be appropriate for Putnam County, the WIC recipients and everyone in general to push this item out until September.

Legislator Addonizio stated that the loss of County jobs as a result of discontinuing the WIC program is very important to her. She stated that the Personnel Department is working diligently to find these employees jobs. She believed there were many misconceptions regarding the discontinuation of the WIC program. She stated that she takes offense about comments made that the Legislature does not care. She stated that she had the opportunity to visit Open Door and stated that she was very impressed with the facility. She believed people did realize that the transition to Open Door would provide more opportunities and efficiency to the people in need. She stated that the facility in Brewster has full time medical staff, pediatricians, psychiatrists, quality dental care with mobile dental vans that visit schools, pre-natal care including midwives, OB/GYN doctors, ultrasound technicians, physician assistants and counselors that help individuals who are uninsured. She stated that Open Door is regulated by New York State and needs to abide by strict standards.

Legislator Nacerino stated that as the Chairwoman of the Personnel Committee she believed it was important for her, both personally and professionally, to cast her vote and was happy to be offered the opportunity to do so. She explained that having a special meeting was not unique and she stated that she remains steadfast that our focus remains on the people that we serve. She stated that she too toured the facility which is immaculate and the services they provide are wonderful. She believed that jobs will be found for the employees. She stated that she took issue with Legislator Montgomery's assertion that people are not happy and morale is low. She stated that the people she has spoken to are very thankful to have a civil service job, benefits and live and work in Putnam County when most people have to commute to their jobs. She stated that we do care about our employees. She stated that this issue was discussed in great detail. She stated that we are open and transparent. If there is a public hearing tonight, it was not by design. She stated to elude that the meeting was scheduled to prohibit people from attending both meetings was speculation which she takes offense to. She stated that we are doing the right thing for the right reasons and serving the clientele; providing them with the services that they are entitled to and should be able to access. She stated that she empathizes with the employees who are in question with their job security; however she believed it would be a moot point very shortly.

Legislator Albano stated that we are obligated to perform our duties in the most efficient and economical manner. He believed this was a good financial decision for the County. He stated that he has been with the County for 10 years and has never seen an issue with the employees. He stated, as the head of the Personnel Department pointed out, the last time something similar happened many years ago it all worked out. He stated that he was hopeful and believed it would be fine. He stated that Open Door can and will provide quality service.

Legislator Jonke explained that when this issue came forward he too was concerned with the employees. He stated that nobody wants to see anyone's job in jeopardy. He explained that our Personnel Director, who he has great confidence in, cannot guarantee anything; or can any of us for that matter. However, he has assured us that people will find a suitable job within the County. He believed we were doing the right thing for the taxpayers and for these employees by finding them jobs. He stated that he also has

great confidence in the Commissioner of Health who came forward and suggested that we make this move. He believed that many of the individuals who have voiced a complaint have not visited Open Door's brand new facility. He believed it was a better service for the consumers who utilize the WIC program. He believed we were doing the right thing for our employees and consumers.

Legislator Sayegh explained what the New York State WIC program provided. She stated that the fundamental purpose of the program was to ensure the health and wellbeing of income eligible families. She explained how Putnam County's client base for WIC is dwindling. She stated that currently the WIC grant is not covering all the expenses associated with continuing this program. She stated that for 2018 and 2019 the program cost taxpayers \$125,504.00 and \$111,285.00 respectively. She stated that this is not a State mandated program. She stated that Commissioner of Health, Dr. Nesheiwat should be commended for acting to solve this very difficult and complex issue; not only for saving tax dollars, but in serving this important population. He not only found an outstanding facility for WIC, it also provides so many more services for these women, infants and children. She explained that in May the President and CEO of Open Door provided our Personnel Committee with an overview of the services provided by Open Door. She stated that the Brewster location opened in 2013 and she listed the many services provided by Open Door which is far more than what our Health Department can provide. She stated that Open Door has operated the WIC program for three (3) decades, in their Ossining, Sleepy Hollow and Mount Kisco locations. She stated that Westchester County Health Department made the same decision to transfer their WIC program to Open Door. She stated that the Brewster location has access to public transportation and is not far from our current Health Department location. She stated that many other counties have done the same. She stated that her one concern is the potential of employees losing their jobs. She stated that losing dedicated employees is difficult. She stated that these employees, like all public servants, are not in it to get rich; but to serve people in need of their special skills and talents. She stated that it is her understanding that Personnel Director Eldridge is working diligently to find positions for these misplaced employees within Putnam County so we do not lose these valuable employees. She stated that it is also her understanding the Director Eldridge feels confident that employees will be retained by the County in other department positions. She stated that others in the WIC office, according to Open Door, have been interviewed and may potentially be offered positions at Open Door. She stated that the WIC client base is dwindling and our budget is increasing which will increase tax and spending for Putnam County taxpayers. She explained how difficult decisions are often made to find alternative solutions to meet the needs of those we serve. It is a solution that goes above and beyond what the County can provide with added benefits and that lowers the tax burden to our overtaxed families in Putnam County.

Legislator Sullivan concurred with most of what everyone has said. He stated that this issue has been discussed for months. He stated that since he has been a Legislator he did not believe we have discussed an issue more than we have with the WIC issue. He stated that as a Legislator, a taxpayer and as a Co-Chair of Fiscal Vision over the last 10 years we have worked with School Districts, County and Town Officials to find ways to save taxpayers money to make government more efficient and effective. He believed that this was one of those unique opportunities. He stated that it is often very hard to make changes in government for many different reasons. He explained that many people have worked on this matter for months. They considered every possibility to take care of our employees, to make our services better for our constituents and to make government

more efficient and lower costs. He did not understand why we keep discussing this same topic over and over again. He stated that the Health Department, the Personnel Department and the Administration have worked tirelessly to make sure this is done prudently, caringly and professionally.

Chairman Castellano clarified with Legislative Counsel if we followed all the rules to hold a Special meeting.

Legislative Counsel Firriolo stated that he conferred with the Clerk. He stated that the meeting was put out to the Legislators for consent and noticed properly.

Legislator Montgomery clarified that she did not accuse anyone of not following the rules as far as public noticing of the Special meeting. She stated that the meeting was posted on our calendar last Wednesday. She stated that the agenda went out on Friday which only allows for three (3) business days at a time when we have public interest on the Public Hearing taking place next door. She stated that it was her understanding that the State needs to get their letters out on August 1<sup>st</sup>. She believed the reason for this Special meeting was not so much that two (2) Legislators couldn't attend, she believed that we were on a timeline with the State. She believed that they already promised their funding to Open Door and they need to let their WIC clients know they will be transitioning. She stated that we are talking about WIC. She stated that she does not want to promote Open Door for healthcare or tell anyone where they should be going for pre-natal care, dental visits or anything. She believed that was a slippery slope that reminds her of a country where they shuffle poor people and tell them where they have to have healthcare; she will not do that. She stated that it was one thing if we want to bring WIC to Open Door, but to suggest this is why we are doing it is not a good idea. She stated that there is a year left on the County's contract and she questioned why we were getting out of the contract before it ends. She believed it would be a cleaner transition.

Chairman Castellano stated that he called the Special meeting because he believed all nine (9) Legislators should be here for the vote. He stated that he represents the Village of Brewster and had driven passed Open Door hundreds of times. He stated that he visited the facility and was blown away by the environment, professionalism, the staff and the many clients happy to be there. He believed it was one (1) of the best businesses in the Village of Brewster. He stated that while he was visiting he questioned how the WIC program was being run by the County. He explained that they said the County did an excellent job and that Open Door referred people to the WIC program. However, they did not have that continued conversation with them, which was not their fault or the County's fault. He stated that they explained that they could now handle the WIC in-house and continue to monitor these patients going forward. He stated that the facility is conveniently located near the bus route and not far from the train station.

Legislator Nacerino believed that Legislator Montgomery is correct in saying the State is anxious to get this resolution because they cannot move forward until the resolution is executed and received by the State. However, in no shape or form, because we have cited enhancements of Open Door that we have suggested that we are trying to indoctrinate anyone into believing that this is their only choice for healthcare. She stated that all we are doing is citing the enhancement of prevention and wellness, the services provided and the top shelf facility that it is.

Chairman Castellano moved the following and called for a Roll Call Vote.

**RESOLUTION #159**

**APPROVAL/ DISCONTINUATION OF SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION PROGRAM FOR WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)**

**WHEREAS, the County of Putnam currently provides a Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) through the Putnam County Department of Health; and**

**WHEREAS, the WIC program utilizes federal grants funds to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, post-partum and breastfeeding women, infants and children up to age five who are found to be nutritionally at risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating including breastfeeding promotion and support, and referrals to health care; and**

**WHEREAS, the number of individuals that the Putnam County WIC program serves has been slowly declining, thus resulting in the possibility of a reduction in reimbursement of federal funds over the next contract cycle; and**

**WHEREAS, the Putnam County Department of Health has indicated that the WIC program is currently running at a deficit for 2019 and is projected to run at a deficit in 2020 as well; and**

**WHEREAS, the Putnam County Commissioner of Health has recommended that the County discontinue the provision of this non-mandated program so more enhanced services can be made available to the residents of Putnam County, particularly in light of the availability of Open Door, Inc., which is a private, not-for-profit corporation; and**

**WHEREAS, Open Door, Inc. provides primary medical care, women's medical care, dental care, behavioral health services, podiatry and several other specialty services in Putnam County, and these services are also provided at numerous locations throughout Westchester County, in addition to WIC program services; and**

**WHEREAS, the Legislature has been advised that the loss of County jobs that will result from the discontinuation of this program will not violate the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the County of Putnam and CSEA Local Unit #1850 and that the required impact bargaining will be taking place; and**

**WHEREAS, the Legislature has been further informed that Open Door, Inc. has been open to discussing potential ongoing employment opportunities with many of the individuals who work for the County WIC program; and**

**WHEREAS, the Putnam County Personnel Department has also explained that it will ensure that the civil service law is followed, and that all personnel who may no longer be employed as a result of the discontinuation of this program will continue to receive whatever rights and benefits they may be entitled to under the law; and**

**WHEREAS, the New York State Department of Health has been fully informed of the County's intentions to discontinue the WIC program, and has indicated that it is in support of the proposal; now therefore be it**

**RESOLVED, that the County of Putnam shall discontinue the WIC Program effective close of business September 30, 2019; and be it further**

**RESOLVED, that all positions associated with the WIC program are hereby abolished effective October 1, 2019.**

**BY ROLL CALL VOTE: SEVEN AYES. TWO NAYS – LEGISLATORS GOULDMAN & MONTGOMERY. MOTION CARRIES.**

Item #5 – Approval/Budgetary Amendment (19A042)/ Commissioner of Health/ Defund Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program was next. Chairman Castellano moved the following:

Chairman Castellano stated that although we are defunding the position and some jobs may be lost in the process, he stated that we have done everything possible to salvage the jobs. He stated that he was confident with all the discussions that have taken place over the last few months that these people will find employment with Putnam County or wherever they choose to find employment.

**RESOLUTION #160**

**APPROVAL/BUDGETARY AMENDMENT / COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH/ DEFUND WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC) PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, by Resolution #159 of 2019, Putnam County discontinued the WIC Program effective close of business September 30, 2019 and abolished all positions associated with the WIC program effective October 1, 2019; and

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of Health has requested a budgetary amendment (19A042) to defund the WIC Program as of October 1, 2019; and

WHEREAS, the Personnel Committee and the Audit & Administration Committee have reviewed and approve said budgetary amendment; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED, that the following budgetary amendment be made:**

**Decrease Estimated Appropriations:**

10408200 51000	Personnel Services	80,570
10408200 51094	Temporary	15,457
10408200 51093	Overtime	500
10408200 52110	Furniture	200
10408200 52130	Computer Equipment	22
10408200 54310	Office Equipment	714
10408200 54311	Printing	100
10408200 54329	Promotional Materials	400
10408200 54330	Medical Supplies	2,339
10408200 54634	Telephone	275
10408200 54635	Cell Phone	580
10408200 54636	Internet	406
10408200 54640	Education & Training	2,270
10408200 54782	Software	6
10408200 54989	Miscellaneous	6,000
10408200 58002	FICA	7,387
10408200 58008	Health Insurance	17,300
10021000 51000	Personnel Services	23,637
10021000 54310	Office Supplies	550
10021000 54320	Food	1,019
10021000 54329	Promotional Materials	900
10021000 54330	Medical Supplies	700
10021000 54560	Equipment Rental	500
10021000 54634	Telephone	595
10021000 54636	Internet	700
10021000 54989	Miscellaneous	100

10021000 58002	FICA	1,809
10021000 58008	Health Insurance	13,000
11401000 51094	Temporary	7,500
11015000 51094	Temporary	<u>1,472</u>
		187,008

**Decrease Estimated Revenues:**

10408200 444821	Federal Aid – WIC	87,863
10021000 444821	Federal Aid – WIC	53,244
11401000 434011	State Aid – Public Health	8,100
10131000 427705	Vacancy Control Factor	<u>57,000</u>
		206,207

**Increase Estimated Revenues:**

10408200 43401L	State Aid – WIC	14,552
10021000 444821	Federal Aid – WIC	<u>4,647</u>
		19,199

2019 Fiscal Impact (\$57,000)  
2020 Fiscal Impact (\$112,000)

**BY ROLL CALL VOTE: SEVEN AYES. TWO NAYS – LEGISLATORS GOULDMAN & MONTGOMERY. MOTION CARRIES.**

**Item #6 – Recognition of Public on Agenda Items**

There were no members of the public that wished to be recognized.

**Item #7 – Recognition of Legislators**

Chairman Castellano stated that he appreciated that all nine (9) Legislators showed up tonight for this meeting.

Legislator Nacerino stated that she was glad that we all had the opportunity to cast our votes and that we are providing this service in Putnam County.

There being no further business, at 7:18 P.M., Chairman Castellano made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Addonizio. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.