

**BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE
PUTNAM COUNTY LEGISLATURE
HELD AT THE
HISTORIC COURTHOUSE
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Thursday

October 6, 2022

7:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Chairman Sullivan who led in the Pledge of Allegiance and requested Legislator Nacerino to lead in the Legislative Prayer. Upon roll call, Legislators Montgomery, Gouldman, Addonizio, Nacerino, Albano, Jonke, Castellano, Sayegh and Chairman Sullivan were present. Also present was Legislative Counsel Firriolo.

Item #4 – Committee to Meet with the County Executive and the Commissioner of Finance to Discuss the Proposed 2023 Budget.

Chairman Sullivan introduced County Executive MaryEllen Odell and Commissioner of Finance, William Carlin to present the Proposed 2023 Budget.

County Executive Odell proceeded to read the attached 2023 Executive Budget Remarks.

County Executive Odell stated that the 2023 Budget Address has a message behind it this year; “Laying the Groundwork for Future Generations.” She stated that this was her 11th and final Budget Presentation. She thanked everyone for the honor and privilege to serve them. She stated that the proposed 2023 Budget carries out her vision of laying the groundwork for a better quality of life for future generations.

County Executive Odell began with the Financial Strength Overview. She explained how the County has decreased outstanding debt by \$48,324,387 (46%) over the past 10 years, and short-term cash flow borrowing has been eliminated. She explained that \$8.5 million in NYS pension debt was fully paid off, saving taxpayers approximately \$1 million in interest costs. She explained how the general fund, a key indicator of financial strength has increased from \$16,895,220 in 2011 to \$65,679,390 as of December 31, 2021. She explained how her Administration’s responsible debt management and fund balances have resulted in a Aa1 bond rating from Moody’s, the highest rating among NYS Counties.

County Executive Odell continued with the Property Tax Levy explaining that the Administration would continue the tradition of presenting another budget that stays within the NYS Real Property Tax Cap. She stated that the property tax rate would be \$3.12 per \$1,000 of assessed home value; the lowest property tax rate since 2009.

County Executive Odell continued and stated that the proposed 2023 County Budget projects sales tax revenue at \$74,750,000 which remains the highest revenue source (42%) of the County budget. She provided details of her “Share the Growth” sales tax revenue sharing initiative from March of 2022. She hoped that this intermunicipal

partnership between the County and local municipalities to get vital infrastructure projects done would continue.

County Executive Odell stated that the 2023 County Budget uses \$1,731,473 of general unassigned fund balance. She explained that the Administration reduced the use of general unassigned fund balance by \$1,185,842 from 2022, leaving the County with a healthy fund balance of \$63,947, 917 which is necessary to help the County weather economic storms. She explained that appropriations in the proposed 2023 budget total \$179,080,469 an increase of \$11,340,799 (6.3%) from the adopted 2022 budget. She stated that government is not immune from the devastating effects of high inflation. She explained that there is an increase in expenses throughout the budget which are directly related to high inflation. A small example of the areas seeing high increases in costs are; Health Insurance, Fuel, Community College, Indigent Legal Defense, food, vehicles, supplies, etc.

County Executive Odell stated that the 2023 County Budget also included a one-year rollover contract with CSEA, our largest workforce. The funding represents a 3.5% cost of living adjustment (COLA). It will also provide the new administration time to negotiate a new contract with CSEA. She stated that the Administration also provided the 3.5% COLA to management/confidential employees and outside agencies. She stated that the budget includes the phase in of three (3) proposed E911 Dispatchers, which will complete the Dispatch Consolidation.

County Executive Odell stated that the Historic Courthouse will be lit in green for Veterans Day. She thanked Guardian Revival, a nonprofit that helps support the mental health and wellbeing of our veterans and first responders. She stated that they donated the green lightbulbs that were given out earlier this evening. She stated that this was not only her last budget, but also for our esteemed Commissioner of Finance, William Carlin. She stated that there was no other person that she could say cared more about the County's fiscal stability and the impact Covid-19 would have on all our families in our County than Commissioner Carlin. She stated that she is eternally grateful to Commissioner Carlin and honored to have had the opportunity to serve beside him for the people of Putnam County.

In closing, County Executive Odell asked everyone to keep in their hearts and prayers, our fellow Americans whose lives have been upended and devastated by Hurricane Ian, those residents in Puerto Rico and those families in Ukraine who are fighting for their right to freedom. She thanked everyone and stated that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve each one of you.

Chairman Sullivan thanked County Executive Odell, her staff and all the departments for their preparation of the 2023 Budget. He believed that County Executive Odell's final budget was her finest. He explained that County Executive Odell has led Putnam County for the last 11 years, leaving a legacy of extraordinary leadership and accomplishments. He stated that, as a Certified Public Accountant, he can say that the County is in superb financial condition. He stated that the financial stability, integrity and strength of the County has never been better, and we are extremely well positioned to weather any bumps that may be in the road ahead with a fund balance of \$65.7 million. He stated that the County's debt has also been reduced by 50% over the term of the County Executive. He stated that the County Executive has invested in areas that matter to the quality of life of our residents, public safety, infrastructure, educational and recreational facilities,

including Tilly Foster Farm and the Putnam Golf Course. He thanked the County Executive on all her accomplishments. He explained the “Share the Growth” initiative established this year which shared millions of County sales tax revenue with the towns and villages for important infrastructure projects and social programs that they otherwise would not be able to do without our support. He stated that his father always said, “actions speak louder than words.” He stated that with the leadership of County Executive Odell, a solid foundation has been laid to ensure Putnam County exceeds and prospers for generations to come.

Legislator Montgomery questioned what has been done in the budget to increase our mental health services. She stated that they have not been increased since she came into office in 2019.

Chairman Sullivan stated that the Legislature will be reviewing the budget through the Committees. He explained that is the time we will go through the information in detail. He did not believe we would have that detail tonight, other than asking questions for the Commissioner to have those answered during the Committee meetings.

Legislator Montgomery explained that overtime in the Sheriff’s Department has always been a big issue. She stated that it appears that the overtime lines in the Sheriff’s Department have been increased. She believed that a whole patrol unit was eliminated. She questioned why there was a big jump in overtime.

Chairman Sullivan stated that it would be discussed in the Protective Services Committee budget meeting.

Legislator Addonizio thanked the County Executive for leading Putnam County in the right direction. She stated that she was proud of our Aa1 Bond rating and very proud of all the work we have accomplished over the years.

Legislator Albano stated that this was his last budget, and he was completing his 12th year as a Legislator. He explained how the County has improved financially over the years. He stated that as the Chairman of the Physical Services Committee, he believed it was imperative to improve our facilities. He stated that he was honored to have worked with County Executive Odell and his fellow Legislators over the years.

Legislator Nacerino thanked County Executive Odell for her fine leadership. She stated that it was an honor and a privilege to work with her. She stated that County Executive Odell has done an outstanding job.

Legislator Gouldman thanked County Executive Odell for her dedicated leadership in Putnam County. He thanked County Executive Odell for always presenting very responsible conservative budgets.

Legislator Sayegh thanked County Executive Odell for her vision, insight, conservative fiscal budgeting and for being a strong woman in government. She stated that she has represented us all very well. She explained how she was proud to have a Commissioner of Finance who was very well-known throughout the State when she attended the NYSAC conferences, along with County Executive Odell who served as NYSAC President. She thanked County Executive Odell, Commissioner of Finance Carlin for all their hard work.

She also thanked Legislator Albano for taking her under his wing when she became a Legislator.

Legislator Castellano stated that, at first glance, he believed that County Executive Odell has put forward a great budget this year. He thanked County Executive Odell and Commissioner Carlin for their leadership through the budget process, and he was looking forward to the month ahead as they review the budget.

Legislator Jonke stated that for him the key here is that our property tax levy was frozen. He stated that Putnam County's tax rate is very low to begin with; the lowest rate since 2009. He stated that property tax is what impacts our taxpayers. He congratulated Commissioner Carlin for the great job he has done for this County as the Commissioner of Finance.

There being no further business, at 7:39 P.M., Chairman Sullivan made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Legislator Jonke. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Schonfeld, Clerk.