

**HEALTH, SOCIAL, EDUCATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN ROOM #318
PUTNAM COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CARMEL, NEW YORK 10512**

Chairwoman Sayegh, Legislators Crowley & Nacerino

Wednesday

6:30PM

February 22, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 P.M. by Chairwoman Sayegh who requested that Legislator Nacerino lead in the Pledge of Allegiance. Upon roll call Legislator Nacerino and Chairwoman Sayegh were present. Legislator Crowley was absent. Legislator Castellano sat in place of Legislator Crowley.

Item #3 - Acceptance of Minutes – November 15, 2022 & December 14, 2022 Meetings

The minutes were accepted as submitted.

Item #4 - Discussion/Update/Putnam Hospital Center/PHC President Mark Hirko

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she was happy to attend the ribbon cutting for the new birthing center on February 7, 2023.

PHC President Dr. Mark Hirko stated the Hospital has been promising many things over the past year and it feels good to show that they are following through. He stated this past Monday the first baby was born in the new birthing center. He noted that there is 24/7 coverage for women's health. He stated a Nuvance based OBGYN will be starting in mid-August who is very experienced. He stated the emergency room has greatly increased its number of patients seen. He stated Putnam Hospital leads the health system in door-to-doctor time and the time it takes for people to be discharged who are not admitted. He stated it is good to know that people are trusting the emergency room. He noted that they hired two (2) full time Nuvance surgeons. He stated December and January were their busiest months for outpatient surgeries. He stated that cancer care was also a focus, and they have more specialists starting soon. He stated as far as the workforce, they are starting to convert a lot of their temporary help to full time. He stated they are down to approximately 160 full time job openings, down from around 400. He stated the healthcare system had about 2,000 job openings and is now down to approximately 1,400. He stated they are currently negotiating with NYSNA (New York State Nurses Association). He stated today he had a town hall where people were asking what is next instead of complaining about issues.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated it is exciting to see this progress come to fruition.

Legislator Nacerino stated the hospital has made great strides in a short period of time. She stated people in the community want to have their babies born here in Putnam County.

Dr. Hirko noted that on Fridays they have "Putnam Pride" day and wear t-shirts and dress down.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned the types of chemotherapy that will be available in the Oncology Department.

Dr. Hirko stated it will be across the board. He stated Dr. Davidson will be leading the Oncology Department and is very well known in the area. He stated previously the only cancer care at PHC was urology and breast cancer. He noted that an office will be opening in Mahopac later this year.

Chairwoman Sayegh questioned if there are any specific focuses for filling the current job openings.

Dr. Hirko stated the biggest is still nursing and will continue to be. He stated more nurses are looking for permanent positions instead of the travelling positions. He stated at its height, PHC was paying \$800,000 per month for temporary nurses, but it is now down to \$400,000.

Legislator Nacerino questioned how the relationship with Optum (formerly CareMount).

Dr. Hirko stated they are still working with the leadership of Optum and trying to find avenues of joint interest. He stated 75% of the surgical patients at PHC come from Optum.

Legislator Gouldman complimented Dr. Hirko and Putnam Hospital for a recent experience at the emergency room. He commended the proper mask wearing and the cleanliness of the facility.

Dr. Hirko stated they are happy with the ER and noted they are looking to open more urgent care centers in the area.

Legislator Gouldman noted that urgent care centers are needed on the western side of the County.

Dr. Hirko noted that a prominent Doctor in Putnam Valley has switched over to Nuvance and PHC.

Legislator Jonke thanked Dr. Hirko for coming to update the Legislature again. He stated he appreciates the answers to the tough questions the Legislators have had. He thanked PHC for reopening the Birthing Center. He questioned how many employees are currently on staff right now.

Dr. Hirko stated it is between 850-900. He added that around 1,000 is their goal. He noted that healthcare has changed over the years. He stated PHC is doing more outpatient than inpatient services.

Legislator Montgomery questioned what the function is of the Mahopac location that is opening.

Dr. Hirko stated it is a general practice facility.

Legislator Montgomery questioned how referrals for oncology will work.

Dr. Hirko stated anyone can be referred to their facilities.

Legislator Montgomery questioned where PHC stands on medically assisted addiction treatment. She stated the regulations surrounding it have been lifted.

Dr. Hirko stated it is still early in the process.

Legislator Montgomery stated she is a big advocate for it. She questioned if PHC is still talking with the County about a Stabilization Center.

Dr. Hirko stated they are and are working with architects. He stated the County is looking at other sites on the PHC Campus.

Legislator Addonizio thanked Dr. Hirko for the update. She commended PHC for the care of her husband who just had a total knee replacement there and it was a wonderful experience.

Dr. Hirko noted that the signage has been changed at the Hospital. He stated it is now officially "Nuvance Health Putnam Hospital," no longer Putnam Hospital Center.

Chairwoman Sayegh thanked Dr. Hirko for the thorough update.

Item #5 - Approval/Memorialization/NYSAC Resolution Calling on NYS to Continue to Pass-Thru Federal Affordable Care Act Enhanced Federal Medicaid Assistance Percentage Funds

Social Services Commissioner Michael Piazza stated was originally put in place to help counties deal with the effects of certain economic conditions. He stated it typically came to approximately \$1 million a year. He stated the County share of Medicaid is capped at \$9 million. He stated these are federal funds that were given to the State with the intention to alleviate the cost to the Counties. He noted that County Executive Byrne signed onto a letter that NYSAC (New York State Association of Counties) wrote in opposition to the State keeping this money.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated the County's 2023 budget for Medicaid is almost \$8.4 million and it is estimated that if the State keeps this funding, the cost would increase to \$9.6 million. She stated Medicaid is an unfunded mandate that the County must cover, but has no say over who is covered or how the money is spent. She stated this does not do anything to manage the out of control Medicaid spending. She stated NYSAC projects that the elimination of this funding will cost counties \$280 million more in 2024 and over \$600 million when including New York City.

Legislator Nacerino stated she is in support of this resolution. She stated this move would be unprecedented and would be another burden on the County and its residents.

Commissioner Piazza stated this would set a precedent for removing funding that was in place to reduce the burden on the counties.

Legislator Castellano questioned what the Governor's intention is in keeping this funding.

Commissioner Piazza stated he believes there are State programs that they are looking to fund with this money.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there are a list of programs in the Governor's budget proposal.

Legislator Gouldman stated he strongly disagrees with this decision by the Governor.

Legislator Montgomery stated in response to Legislator Castellano's question regarding the Governor's intention, it is because the Governor is looking to create more programs to meet the current needs. She noted that workers are not attracted to the low pay that these services offer.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated New York and California have the highest cost of Medicaid in the County. She stated this would result in spending more money on an already overpriced program.

Commissioner Piazza noted how broadly New York handles Medicaid, while other states do not.

Legislator Nacerino stated the burden still falls onto the taxpayers.

Commissioner Piazza gave an overview of the positives of Medicaid.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated there are other ways to lower the cost.

Legislator Nacerino stated Medicaid as a program is not being challenged here, it is the fiscal impact of the shortfall that has a trickle-down effect.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she wants to amend the resolution to say "Putnam County" instead of "NYSAC" as this was a model resolution from NYSAC.

Legislative Counsel Robert Firriolo stated the first and third resolve clauses would be modified, and the second resolve clause would be deleted.

Chairwoman Sayegh stated she would also like the resolution to reflect the potential increase in cost of \$1.3 million to Putnam County.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to amend the resolution as noted; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve the amended resolution; Seconded by Legislator Castellano. All in favor.

Item #6 - Approval/Fund Transfer 22T418/Social Services/Reallocation to Cover NYS Office of Children and Family Services Chargeback

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 22T418; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #7 - Approval/Fund Transfer 23T017/Office for Senior Resources/Philipstown Rent

Chairwoman Sayegh stated this is just moving the funds to the correct budget lines to accurately reflect reimbursements that will be applied to the rent.

Legislator Montgomery requested clarification on the timeline of the rent.

Legislator Castellano stated we can get the answer at the Audit & Administration Committee meeting.

Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to approve Fund Transfer 23T017; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Item #8 - Other Business - None

Item #9 – Adjournment

There being no further business, at 7:32 P.M., Chairwoman Sayegh made a motion to adjourn; Seconded by Legislator Nacerino. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Assistant Ed Gordon.