

PUTNAM VALLEY TOWN BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING
6:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 07, 2017

PUBLIC HEARING ON MUNICIPAL RECREATION BUILDING

Present: Supervisor Oliverio
Councilwoman Whetsel
Councilwoman Annabi
Councilman Mackay
Councilman Luongo

Also Present: Town Counsel Florence
Town Clerk Sherry Howard

SUPERVISOR'S OPENING STATEMENT

Supervisor Oliverio welcomed everyone to the Public Hearing on the Municipal Recreation Center.

Pledge of Allegiance and moment of silence for our armed forces.

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE MUNICIPAL RECREATION CENTER BUILDING

Presented by Supervisor Oliverio

Supervisor Oliverio announced that the vote for the Permissive Referendum will be held on July 13th from 6 AM – 9 PM at the Putnam Valley Ambulance Corp. Building. Absentee ballots will be available (in case you will be on vacation) in the Town Clerk's Office.

Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Phil Keating, and Parks and Recreation Director, Frank DiMarco, went to the podium first to give an overview of the project. Mr. Keating said the Recreation Center is something that has been discussed for over 20 years. He gave a brief history of how the park has been developed over the years. He said that former Supervisor Carmelo Santos floated a bond in the amount of \$1.35 million dollars to finish the Town Park – this included new fields, the pavilion area etc. He added that this was done under budget and in less time than anticipated. That bond will be paid off next year. Supervisor Oliverio promised a new Rec. Center when he was running and confirmed with the Parks and Recreation Commission that it is time to get this done. It is something that is needed. First we went to Insite Engineering to do a feasibility study because they have been working in the park for 20 years and already have the studies, surveys and maps in hand. They looked at where the Commission thought the building should be built, they tested the ground and septic, and decided that this was the perfect spot. Three (3) architects were contacted next and asked for a flat fee to put plans together. Two came

back with prices and Joel Greenberg came in with the lower price. He gave them preliminary plans and preliminary estimates. The Commission wants this to be a multi-generational facility, to be used by the community. There will be programs there for all ages. Mr. Greenberg finally came back with an estimated cost of \$3.8 million. Next we went to the Town Board and asked if we can borrow 3.8 million? The next step is to go to a bonding agency. A Bonding Agency is chosen because it suits a Municipalities needs vs. a Commercial Bank. A bond can be paid back in a longer amount of time and the interest rate is lower than a loan. Then, Ms. Villanova got enough signatures for a permissive referendum and the vote will be on July 13th. There has been much information around about the building. If the vote comes back in favor of the building the actual estimates will be gotten and we will know the real cost for the building. If it comes back much higher than anticipated maybe the Town Board will decide to not go ahead with it. We have not borrowed any money yet. If it is too high we can rebid it or change the specs. We need this building because the school district limits our gym use as they are using it for their programs. Right now it is estimated that it will cost \$22.00-25.00 per household. We used the Town of Patterson as our model since they have a building around the same size and they spend about \$50,000.00 in maintenance, heating etc. Fees will be charged for the programs in the new building to maintain the building and we will make a profit from the adult programs to pay for the low cost/free senior programs. That is how Parks and Rec has always worked. There is no room in our park for a pool unless we want to give up a ball field. A pool is also very costly to build and maintain. The building will be able to be rented out for clinics, birthday parties etc. The building is being put up for the residents of Putnam Valley and a non-resident will never bump a resident; and they will pay more to rent it. Mr. Keating showed the schematics of the new building.

Recreation Director, Frank DiMarco spoke next and said that he would like to begin by talking about our Day Camp. He explained that there is some misconception about our ability to move our day camp to the Town Park if we are able to build the new building. He said the camp pays for itself and makes a small profit as it stands now. So there is no reason to move it because we don't want to close down the park for the residents and there is no pool in the park. We will not discount it as an eventual possibility, but it really doesn't make sense. He continued by saying the \$21.00 - \$24.00 dollar cost per household is for the bond amount only. As far as the building itself, there will be part time help needed to keep the gyms open; but the rentals should be huge. There will be a lot of people that will want to use it and would be willing to rent it. The cost for the personnel increases for the extra programs are built into the programs. There will be a lot of opportunities to run extra classes for the community.

Supervisor Oliverio opened the meeting to the public and said there will be a three (3) minute time limit for comments.

Resident, Pamela Acevedo, said she is involved in Real Estate in Town. She asked how much Joel Greenberg has been paid so far? Mr. Keating said he was unsure right now. He will get her those numbers. She feels that this building has not been presented in a proper fashion. She said there are many houses in Town being foreclosed on because people can't afford the taxes. We spent a lot of money for the High School so we should be able to use it. We need our property values to go up. She feels the Town Board should have been more forthcoming with information on the building. Supervisor Oliverio disagreed with Ms. Acevedo on this point. She feels that she

should have not had to go out to get signatures for a vote; the Town Board should have set that up in the first place. Supervisor Oliverio said that this issue has been out there since 2016, he ran on this issue, and it has been mentioned numerous times at the meetings since he took office. We also went to the Planning and Zoning Boards but he still thanks Ms. Villanova for showing us there is an interest in a vote. He is unhappy though, because this vote delays our putting a shovel in the ground and costs us money. We also have to expend money to have the vote; but we are doing it.

Resident, Jon Paul McGahan, spoke next and asked about the possibility of a pool. He is for increasing our taxes if that increases our services. He asked if a paid for feasibility study was done in reference to the Town getting a pool. What would the actual cost be? Supervisor Oliverio said he asked the Spain Agency (the Town's Insurer) what the cost would be per year for a pool. They told him \$34,000.00 per year. If we have a spot later on in time where a pool could be placed then we would have to consider the cost, but right now the Recreation Center has been a need for a very long time. Councilman Mackay said that a pool is not cost effective and this is what he does for a living. There is no space in the park presently for a pool. Mr. McGahan suggested that we give up a ballfield for the pool. Supervisor Oliverio said the fields are used all the time.

Resident, Helen Forsina, commented on how beautiful the lakes in Town are and how she learned to swim here when she was a child. Supervisor Oliverio said not everyone has access to a lake.

Resident, Dan Vera,

In order to make an informed decision the taxpayers of Putnam Valley need to know the estimated yearly cost of the 3.8 million dollar bond that will be going out to vote. They also need to know the estimate cost of operating the proposed rec center. Frank DiMarco has given us a lot of information but I believe that there are still some of the pieces of the expenses not accounted for.

The attached cost analysis has the potential increases in the budget for the proposed Rec Center but is missing basic increases in running this 14,000 square building, utilities for one. To heat, cool and provide electricity for this building with a full size basketball court (I assume 20-25 foot ceiling), four classrooms, three bathrooms, two locker rooms and two offices, will be a substantial amount of money. This number must be added to the potential increase in the budget.

Also Frank DiMarco has said that the maintenance of this facility will be handled by his existing staff. Either his current staff is vastly under utilized, which I doubt under Franks supervision, or he can preform a great managerial feat. I estimate the facility will need a minimum of one or more full time maintenance people to maintain the 14,000 square foot building to keep it clean and safe for the public.(a full size basketball court, four classrooms, three bathrooms, two locker rooms and two offices)

The items I have mentioned above are substantial expenses that will be part of the potential increase in budget. I realize that the center will generate additional revenue to offset some of these cost but these number must be included for the taxpayers to make an informed decision at the voting polls. The the estimated cost of funding and operating expenses must be disclosed.

My estimates are as follows on what has not been disclosed:

Yearly Bond payment \$190,000-\$220,000

Yearly Utilities (heating, cooling and electric) \$110,000 - \$140,000 (the gym floor has to have a constant temperature as to not warp)

Maintenance employee(s) with benefits \$75,000 - \$125,000

My calculations using 2016, 2017 budget numbers plus Frank's Cost Analysis figures show a loss of \$622,923 expenses vs revenue(see attached spreadsheet). That's about \$200,000 more then 2016 and 2017. That in itself is not terrible but it does not fit into the projected \$21-\$24 increase quoted as a tax increase.

The taxpayers of Putnam Valley also have to take into considerations that the School budget has been increased, Town taxes have increased by 10% over the last few years, the library with it's additional and expanded programs will more then likely go out for a 414 and an increase this year and the proposed fire house will also increase our tax burden. All of these small increase add up and will put an additional financial strain on the taxpayers.

Increased and additional services our Town gives it's residence is a great thing but at the expense of putting a financial burden on the single worker low income families, two worker middle income families, fixed income seniors and retirees is simply unconscionable. Our elected town officials who represent all of the residence must take into consideration the financial stability of the community.

Please report and disclose to the voters the entire financial impact the 3.8 million dollar bond and the increased budget to operate the recreational center will have on the taxpayers.

Dan Vera
Putnam Valleys Taxpayer Advocate
Concerned Taxpayers of Putnam Valley

Mr. Vera would like a real number not just what it will cost for the bond, what it will be with the other expenses? Supervisor Oliverio said that he believes that building will make a profit once the programs are in place. The best guess we can give them is about \$22-24.00 more per year. Between the rentals and programs the building should take care of itself with a profit. We already have the staff needed to maintain it. This will add to the value of the community. It enhances the value of our Community. Councilwoman Whetsel said if we had not floated a bond for the park, we would not have the park as it is today.

Resident, Maryann Gribbon, said she has three (3) young children. To give us some background she said that she oversees four (4) different preschools where she has grown programs and understands risks have to be taken sometimes. She thinks the recreation center is an opportunity for our children and the community to have a central location to tie us all together. The cost of the pool would be too high that's why we have "Y's". People move their children up here from the city to enjoy what we have to offer.

Resident Patty Villanova, read her statement as follows:

To: Putnam Valley Town Board
Re: Comments for Public Hearing on Rec Center bond

In a few weeks we will go to the polls to vote on spending \$3.8 million dollars for a new rec center. This is just for the building itself and does not include all the costs to maintain and run it once it is built.

It should be noted that the Town board did not want to have this referendum, and it was only because we were able to get enough signatures on our petitions that they were forced to allow us to vote.

This rec center is being touted as one of the greatest things ever to be built for our town. It will solve the drug problem, end juvenile delinquency and provide endless activities for our townspeople that they otherwise would not be able to do on their own. If you believe Mr. Oliverio and Mr. DiMarco, taxes will either go up slightly - just the cost of a cup of coffee- or we will even make a profit from the center. Regardless, money is no object- especially when it's other people's cash they're spending.

For the most part the rec center was conceived and executed in the back rooms of town hall with little or no input from the general public. We were able to obtain detailed information about the size, scope and cost of the project only by filing numerous FOIL requests and reviewing documents, videos and other records that otherwise would not have been made public.

Keep in mind that the presentations you are seeing tonight are taking place two months AFTER the board originally passed the bond resolution on April 5th.

Based on what I've seen so far, it is my opinion that not only is this Rec Center unnecessary and duplicative, but it is also poorly planned, fiscally irresponsible and unsustainable for the taxpayers who will be paying for it long after the current administration is gone. All the programs and activities that are mentioned could easily take place at our existing facilities with little or no additional cost to the taxpayers. We are being asked to write a blank check for almost \$4 million to people with little or no real world or professional experience in building, finance, construction or project management.

This project has not put out to bid, there were no feasibility or other studies done, there was no cost/benefit analysis and there were no surveys of the residents to see what if anything we wanted in the way of a rec center or what would make sense for our town. From Day One, this project has been presented as a zero sum equation- it's either this \$3.8 million dollar structure or nothing.

Despite numerous statements by Supervisor Oliverio that the project was "vetted" by the board, such was not the case; in fact, the town board has acted as a rubber stamp for whatever the

supervisor presented, regardless of whether his assertions and claims were factual or not.

Even though the Parks & Rec Commission is legally obliged to advertise and hold at least four public hearings a year on recommendations for parks & rec projects. (Town Code Sect. 8-7) this was never done and there were no hearings about the rec center. In fact, according to Mr. DiMarco the Commissioners who were the main proponents of the center, claim that they "unaware" of these requirements, because, as they explained, they were never informed that this was necessary.

If this is the case, then why are we paying all this money for lawyers, counsel and other professionals who can't even figure out when the law is being broken? Since when is ignorance an excuse for wrongdoing?

The regular public town board **meetings** that were held were to allow the councilmen to vote on money and expenditures that were approved by Mr. DiMarco and the Rec Commission, or to further advance the misinformation that was being circulated about the project. Often no public comment was allowed at these meetings because, as we were told, they were not **public hearings**.

[We also have found out that no competitive bids or RFPs were put out before the very lucrative jobs were awarded to the architects and engineers prior to the vote being held. Instead the Parks & Rec people took advantage of the General Municipal Law and gave these professional contracts to an architect and engineering firm that already have close ties to the town. Was it legal? I guess... Was it morally or ethically correct? That's another story.

The taxpayers have not been given any choices- including the option of doing nothing and not spending the money. Instead, we have been fed a lot of misinformation, half truths and phony statistics to justify this multi-million dollar expenditure. Nor has there been any explanation as to why the cost more than doubled in a year.

In my opinion, the Rec Center has become a giant boondoggle designed to be the legacy of the politicians and their cronies who are bombarding us with phony statistics and platitudes to encourage a YES vote. The proposal is an affront to the hardworking people of Putnam Valley, many of whom do not consider recreation and paying for other people's fun and games to be a priority when they are struggling to pay their taxes, mortgages and energy bills.

I sincerely hope that if the bond proposal for the Rec Center is voted down that the people who have been pushing it will go back to the drawing board, do their homework and consult with the residents. When it comes to spending millions of dollars on a project like this, the taxpayers must have a say and be able to make an informed decision. The current proposition does neither and is a disservice to our community.

Resident, Megan Brown expressed her fear that the Recreation Center will be rented out too much. I want to be able to have lots of open gym for my family. Supervisor Oliverio said we could bring back Teen Center like we used to have. We want to have open gyms - that's one of the key features - so kids can feel safe. We talked about the needs of the community at length. When he worked at the school the kids would ask him over and over – why don't we have a place to go and play like Cortlandt? The Board is unified in seeing the need for the Rec. Center. Ms. Brown asked if only residents will be allowed to rent the Center? Supervisor Oliverio said a non-resident will never unseat a resident.

Resident Dawn Powell, said one (1) of the things that is bothering her about the way Parks and Rec. has proceeded is when the Comprehensive Plan and Granite Mountain happened there were meetings when people could come and say what they would want to happen. She wants the Town Board and Parks and Rec to have those meetings. There might be ways to approach a pool if people could talk about it. Once the Rec. Center is built there will be no pool. There are judo schools and dance schools here already. Why aren't people going there, we should promote what is already here. The Day Camp is already in a wonderful space - why we can't we use that resource for adults too?

Council William Florence, said that as Putnam Valley has no debt and pays its bills we will be eligible to float a bond at a low interest rate. The bond agencies rate the communities, and we have a very fine rating. Our current bond will be up next year. He went on to say that someone mentioned that we have already paid Architectural Visions \$100,000.00 – Mr. Florence's recollection is that Joel Greenberg (who got the bid as he was the low bidder), from Architectural Visions, signed a contract naming him as the overseer of the entire project. He will be the General Manager. Mr. Greenberg can only get \$57,000.00 of the \$98,000.00 for all of the architectural work; and he wouldn't get any more money until he finished supervising the construction of the building. Two (2) things happened, it cost us less to do the architectural work and we saved money by having Mr. Greenberg be the project manager rather than having to hire someone else.

Resident Priscilla Keresev, said she would like to remind everyone that as residents we have a responsibility to keep up with what is going on in our Town. If we have questions or are unsure there is someone to call. It is irresponsible to blame an agency when we don't know about something, especially when the information has been out there. The onus is on us. Her understanding is that there were a number of Public Hearings on this subject. As a member of the human race, she is willing to pay taxes to live in a community. It is still important for her neighbor's children to be educated even if she herself does not have children. We can all share in the bounty of living in a community. Taxes have never gone down. It will never happen. We have to manage how they go up. She thinks the Recreation Center is a good idea.

Resident John Orlando, said this project is something he has been a big advocate of for a very long time. The continuous work in the park has been great. He have been involved in coaching many leagues so he can strongly say without any doubt there is a need for recreational space in this Town. When we want to have baseball clinics or practice in the winter we have had to go to Elmsford and Fishkill to rent space. It would be great to stay here. Basketball has been cancelled many times because the School District has cancelled us at the last minute. There is a big need for this space. The School has been good to us but they do not enough space either. He am glad that this is a non-partisan decision on the Board's part.

Resident and Town Employee Susan Manno, said she is speaking on behalf of herself as a resident. She knows we are living in tough times. Many of us are living hand-to-mouth. She still thinks this is a good idea. We are throwing out this huge number. A majority of it has already been accounted for in the Town Budget because of the bonding we already took out years ago for the original park project. We are just re-upping the bond we already have. For Municipalities, they have the opportunity to float a low interest bond.

Our Town has a Triple “A” rating; we are in a good position. Over the years the Town Board decided to make the park what it is today. No matter what time of the day you go in there it is always been used by people of all ages. We never had that before; there was nothing to do growing up here. You have to take a leap of faith. Sometimes you have to spend money to make money.

Resident Dawn Powell, returned to the podium and said she appreciates the fiscal responsibility; but she is wondering if Parks and Rec. can provide more free programs for people who need it. Phil Keating said there is financial aid for day camp and our other programs. Ms. Powell feels that there are a lot of people who would not admit that they need help.

Resident Patty Villanova returned to the podium to clarify two (2) things. She said that every statement that she makes can be backed up by information provided to her by the Town Employees, i.e. Mr. DiMarco, Supervisor Oliverio etc. She can send copies if needed. The other thing pertains to what Ms. Manno said about the bond. The current bond will be ending next year so it’s like us paying off a mortgage. So, if we borrow again it’s like taking out a new mortgage. Supervisor Oliverio said that is true.

Resident Tom Carano, said the point he wants to make is that someone in Garrison stalled the building of a school for so long that when it was finally built is cost over \$1 million dollars more. He works in the high end of the construction industry and \$4 million dollars is not really that much when you consider how much some of these houses cost to build. It is about quality of life. This Board has done their job. There are some great people in Putnam Valley and great things happen here. Look at the Tompkins Corners Church and the new bridge at the library - there are so many positive things happening here.

Resident Pam Acevedo returned to the podium to say that she agrees it is about quality of life. We have a lot of other things besides the Rec. Building going on here. She heard the Ambulance Corps. wants to spend money to buy some property next door to put up some cell towers. The Fire Department wants to put up a new building. We have a lot of projects in this Town coming up and what good is the quality of life if you can’t afford to live here anymore? That is what she is concerned about. The taxes have gone up and we have to have a handle on them. She is around a lot and she was originally given different information then she is hearing now. She does pay attention. People don’t come to these meetings so we need to find a way to let everyone know what’s going on. The taxes are high in this Town. How much can we afford?

Resident Helen Forsina, reiterated that she spent her summers here even though she lived in the city. Her children learned to swim here and they were involved in many activities such as the Explorers Club. This building is a wonderful thing for the children here. She will never forget her youth up here. There is no place like Putnam Valley.

Resident Maryann Gribbon, returned to the podium to say that right now there is no place to share information as to what services are available to residents. There is no central conduit. The building will hit a lot of different populations and demographics.

At 7:39 PM, Supervisor Oliverio moved to close the Public hearing. It was seconded by Councilman Mackay and unanimously carried.

At 7:42 PM, Supervisor Oliverio reopened the meeting by saying it had been a very good Public Hearing. He reminded everyone that the vote for the Recreation Center will be held on July 13th at the Putnam Valley Ambulance Corps. Building from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM. It is a simple proposition - yes or no.

Supervisor Oliverio said he would now like to discuss a proposal that was put forward by State Senator Sue Serino and Assemblyperson Kevin Byrnes to make the Peekskill Hollow Creek a New York State recognized Waterway. This would allow us apply for grants for improvement of the waterway or for environmental studies that we may need in the future. It does not give carte blanche to anyone to develop or build along the creek. Michelle Smith from the Hudson Highlands Conservatory would like us to subscribe to this as well as the Riverkeeper. Supervisor Oliverio needs a consensus from the Town Board Members. Councilman Luongo asked what kind of restriction this would put on for building. It is the same as what the zoning code would allow. Councilwoman Whetsel said it sounds like a good opportunity, as did Councilwoman Annabi. Supervisor Oliverio said it is not a resolution so a vote is not needed. The Town Board agreed that Supervisor Oliverio should let Senator Serino know that we indeed would like to designate the Peekskill Hollow Creek as a recognized protected waterway.

Councilwoman Annabi announced that the Putnam Valley Business Network will be having a Health and Wellness Fair on June 17th at the VFW between 12 noon and 4 PM. Free admission.

Supervisor Oliverio reminded everyone that September 23rd is Town Day. Please don't forget the fireworks will take place at 8:30 PM. The Elementary School entrance will be blocked off to the public. Parking and shuttle bus service will be at the MS/HS complex. Non-profits please get your applications in and please note if you need electricity and how many AMPS.

Supervisor Oliverio moved to go into executive session at 7:47 PM for a discussion on a contractual matter concerning the Town's water supply and a personnel issue concerning Little League. No new business will be conducted afterward.

Seconded by Councilman Luongo, unanimously carried.

Supervisor Oliverio closed the meeting at 7:28 p.m.

Seconded by Councilman Luongo, unanimously carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherry Howard
Town Clerk 6-15-2017