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Subject: For Immediate Release - Putnam County Tourism
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Putnam County Tourism – Carmel, NY

February 4, 2015

On February 3rd, David McKay Wilson of the Gannett Company's *Journal News* and *LoHud.Com*, published an article implying financial improprieties of the Putnam County Visitors Bureau. The story was an inaccurate representation, and failed to distinguish between the Putnam County Visitors Bureau and the Putnam Tourism Corp.

Pursuant to a resolution dated August 9, 2013, the Putnam County Legislature dictated that the Visitors Bureau privately fundraise one third of its budget. The resolution states, "The [Visitors Bureau] commits to raise funds privately to augment the County and State funding," and "To make this program a three-way County, State and private partnership."

Because private funds needed to be raised, the Putnam Tourism Corp. was born. The Putnam Tourism Corp. was never in possession of a single tax payer dollar, and operated completely separately from the Visitors Bureau. Never did Visitors Bureau funds end up supporting the Tourism Corp., but many times, privately raised Tourism Corp. funds were used to supplement the Visitor's Bureau.

The Resolution also states that, "Tourism growth will produce increased sales tax revenue from visitors' purchases of gasoline, food, and lodging in local establishments and dollars spent at local retail stores and will help reduce reliance on real property tax." In 2014, according to *The Economic Impact of Tourism in New York* published by Tourism Economics, tourism spending in Putnam County generated \$7,202,774 in State and Local Tax dollars. Using 2014 as an example, a total tourism investment just shy of \$300,000, of which only \$141,996 came from Putnam County, resulted in over \$7 million tax dollars.

Allegations that taxpayer dollars were used to bolster the Putnam Tourism Corp. are erroneous and factually incorrect. The Putnam Tourism Corp. played a pivotal role in being able to provide local organizations with funding in order to advertise, and promote events that would attract out of county visitors. This promotion would not have been possible by relying exclusively on taxpayer dollars, further illustrating the necessity of privately raised funds through the Corp.

The article was correct in that the Visitors Bureau did not meet the requisite level of corporate governance, and for that we apologize. This is not to say that appropriate levels

of oversight did not exist; every purchase made through the New York State Matching Funds program was approved, cataloged, and processed by Empire State Development in Albany. At the same token, we have always expressed an open door policy for residents to voice their concerns, or to provide us with promotional ideas. Our door is always open, and our office is situated between that of the County Executive as well as the Putnam County Legislature.

In short, the Putnam Tourism Corp. was created in order to serve the people of Putnam County, and to alleviate their tax burden. That purpose was met, and tourism spending within the County has increased without requiring additional taxpayer dollars. The Visitors Bureau will continue in striving to attract visitors to Putnam County, and do so in an efficient manner that respects and appreciates the local taxpayers' contribution to tourism promotion.