



Hon. Mary Ellen O'Dell
Putnam County Executive
Putnam County Office Building
40 Gleneida Avenue
Carmel, NY 10512

Hon. Maureen Fleming
Town of Kent Supervisor
25 Sybil's Crossing
Kent Lakes, NY 10512

Hon. Kenneth Schmitt
Town of Carmel Supervisor
60 McAlpin Avenue
Mahopac, NY 10541

Hon. James J. Schoenig
Village of Brewster Mayor
50 Main Street
Brewster, NY 10509

Hon. Dave Merandy
Village of Cold Spring Mayor
85 Main St.
Cold Spring, NY 10516

Dear All,

We are writing on behalf of Putnam Pride, Putnam Progressives, and Putnam County Patriots for Immigration Reform to each of you, as the chief executives of your respective municipalities, in regard to New York State Executive Order No. 203 – New York State Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative, dated June 12, 2020, (“Executive Order”), to request that representatives of the LGBTQ+; Latino; Black; Asian; Native American; and Jewish communities, as well as people living with mental illness and physical disabilities, in addition to other underrepresented groups in Putnam, be included in each of the respective groups of stakeholders established in each of your communities as you proceed to comply with the Executive Order.

The Executive Order noted correctly that “government has a responsibility to ensure all of its citizens are treated equally, fairly and justly before the law,” and continued, “the foregoing compels me to conclude that urgent and immediate action is needed to eliminate racial inequities in policing, to modify and modernize policing strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, and to develop practices to better address the particular needs of the communities of color to promote public safety, improve community engagement, and foster trust.”

As you are aware, the Executive Order, the proceeds to mandate that:

“Each local government entity which has a police agency operating with police officers as defined under 1.20 of the criminal procedure law must.... consult with stakeholders, including but not limited to membership and leadership of the local police force; members

of the community, with emphasis in areas with high numbers of police and community interactions; interested non-profit and faith-based community groups; the local office of the district attorney; the local public defender; and local elected officials, and create a plan to adopt and implement the recommendations resulting from its review and consultation, including any modifications, modernizations, and innovations to its policing deployments, strategies, policies, procedures, and practices, tailored to the specific needs of the community and general promotion of improved police agency and community relationships based on trust, fairness, accountability, and transparency, and which seek to reduce any racial disparities in policing.”

The Executive Order then includes a directive that the stakeholder review is to be followed by the preparation of a comprehensive report to be filed with the Director of the Division of Budget and submitted for ratification by the legislature of each respective municipality. This directive is followed by a notation that, “the Director of the Division of the Budget shall be authorized to condition receipt of future appropriated state or federal funds upon filing of such certification for which such local government would otherwise be eligible,” providing a clear message that each municipality should proceed with the directives set forth in the Executive Order or risk future funding sources.

As you are hopefully aware, Putnam Pride, Hudson Valley Patriots for Immigration Reform and Putnam Progressives are all active organizations in the community, and the populations they represent must be part of this conversation. Statistics show that LGBTQ+ people—particularly LGBTQ+ people of color—Native Americans, and the Latinx population are disproportionately affected by police brutality and discriminatory policing practices, while police responding to calls involving people with mental and physical disabilities often misinterpret behaviors, leading to sometimes deadly consequences. Likewise, there has been a sharp rise in hate crimes against the Jewish community in the Hudson Valley in recent years. Any plan to improve police-community relationships must involve these marginalized stakeholders, as well as other relevant groups that may be identified.

Accordingly, we again respectfully request that each of your municipalities, being the municipalities within Putnam County which have a policy agency which appear to be subject to the Executive Order, include at least one member of the relevant communities in the group of stakeholders that you form in compliance with the Executive Order. We further urge each of you to consider the need for the inclusion of representatives from other historically underrepresented groups when compiling a list of stakeholders for each of your stakeholder groups. We respectfully believe that the failure to do so will not permit the process intended by the Governor to be fulfilled or compliance with the Executive Order to be achieved without representation from all of the diverse groups which make up our community and will call into question the legitimacy of the review to be conducted and any reports produced.

We look forward to hearing from you about your plan to comply with Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order, and Putnam Pride, Putnam Progressives, and Putnam County Patriots for Immigration Reform stand ready to help in any way we can.

Sincerely,

Eileen McDermott
Putnam Pride
Brewster

Baila Lemonik
Putnam Progressives
Mahopac

Norma Pereira
Putnam County Patriots for Immigration
Reform
Carmel

cc: Journal News
Putnam County News and Recorder
Mahopac News
Highlands Current
Putnam Daily Voice
Putnam County Courier