

Official Minutes of the Joint Public Hearing with Dutchess County Legislators representing the City of Poughkeepsie - Monday, April 17, 2023 for the purpose of receiving comments from the public concerning homelessness in the City of Poughkeepsie.



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

PUBLIC HEARING

Monday, May 1, 2023 5:30 pm

Common Council Chambers

Welcome to the scheduled meeting of the Public Hearing in the City of Poughkeepsie. The date is May 1 and the time is 6:00 pm.

THIS HEARING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING COMMENTS ON homelessness in the City of Poughkeepsie.

Councilwoman-at-Large Brown called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

I. WELCOME

II. ROLL CALL: 6 present, 3 absent (Arrival after Roll Call: Councilmembers Deichler, Johnson & Menist)

Also present:

Craig Brendli, Dutchess County Legislater, District 8

Randy Johnson, Dutchess County Legislater, District 9

Barrington Atkins, Dutchess County Legislater, District 10

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION: Five (5) minutes per person public comment.

1. Ondie James – 104 Hudson Ave.
2. Marta Knapp – 10 S. Clinton
3. Jeff Aman – 5 Barnard
4. Krista Hines, Executive Director of Hudson River Housing
5. Jamar Cummings – Maple St.
6. Laurie Sandow* – S. Grand Ave.
7. Da’Ron Wilson – 46 S. Grand Ave.

***submitted written comments**

**Laurie Sandow comments, City of Poughkeepsie Common Council
public hearing – homelessness, May 1, 2023**

At the Common Council's April 17th meeting, there was sudden flurry of activity about the need for a public hearing on homelessness due to upcoming County Legislature resolutions and votes. Yet tonight's posted agenda provided no background information, nor made any reference to the Legislature resolutions, or the times, dates and attendance details for those upcoming meetings.

Many people tonight will target the County as a bad player, and they won't be wrong. But I do not intend to let this City's Common Councilmembers and local County Legislators off so easily. Which of them—whether legislator or councilmember—reached out to constituents, informing and encouraging them to attend and comment tonight, never mind keeping constituents informed on a regular basis? As usual, none or next to none. How many urgent, hand-wringing meetings on homelessness has this Council already had in the past, with zero forward progress? How many current Councilmembers were silent, absent, or even actually supported such rezoning as the Innovation District, which did not obligate affordable housing, and whose creation has resulted in the market rate developments that have driven up rents and housing costs citywide? How many Councilmembers have been entirely silent and remain silent and ignorant about rezoning to this day, except the few who suddenly fell all over themselves to reject accessory dwelling units (ADUs) after reliably prime voters made their massive opposition clear at a different public hearing?

Other than last week's meeting at Beulah Baptist Church, how many city residents continue to be unaware of Dutchess County's abandonment of the 26 Oakley site, and their shift to creating a shelter in the circa 1995 jail? This City and County are both plagued by willful and neglectful absences of Institutional Memory, Institutional Action, Institutional Honesty and Institutional Transparency and Accountability.

Where in this conversation is there inclusion and acknowledgement of the cost of homeless services being provided at our public libraries, in our parks, and on public transportation?

In March 2022, the City received a letter from the County, formally advising them that the County would be purchasing the property at 26 Oakley and that the County considered itself immune from City planning and zoning rules and regulations, or ANY City regulatory authority. At a Criminal Justice Council meeting as far back as 2014, Marcus Molinaro declared that the County was (quote) “committed to ensuring that our investment is as much about a transition center as it is to the revitalization of a neighborhood.” What revitalization has the County delivered in those eight+ years? Furthermore, current Dutchess County Executive Bill O’Neil’s recent State of the County address slammed on the brakes and reversed direction, by declaring that (quote): “Several ongoing challenges, including ongoing opposition to the location, costs to meet zoning codes and City Council community benefit payment requests, have curtailed [26 Oakley] plans.”

The County previously insisted that it had to move full-speed ahead at Oakley due to the necessity to close the PODs in September 2023. When, if ever, can we take the County at their word? Now the County’s suddenly, magically able to extend POD use as they shift attention to locating a so-called “Temporary Emergency Housing Facility” at the 1995 jail. The following resolution is posted to the May 4, 2023, Dutchess County Legislature Committee meetings agenda: “Resolution 2023099: Amending the 2023 Adopted County Budget as It Pertains to the Design, Engineering, and Construction Management Services for Temporary Emergency Homeless Shelter to be Located at 150 Hamilton Street in the City Of Poughkeepsie: <https://www.dutchessny.gov//ConCalAtt/2/2023099.pdf> Within that Resolution, there’s mention that in January 2023, the Dutchess County Department of Public Works commissioned a feasibility study to determine if the 1995 jail building located at 150 Hamilton St. in Poughkeepsie could be converted into a temporary emergency housing shelter.

The County’s default to the old jail relies on both conscious and unconscious stereotype to rationalize this location as a proper facility for the very wide spectrum of the unhoused population, while skirting the question of whether such use would ever be recommended or embraced as proper for any other demographic or population. A 2017 article quotes then-Deputy County Executive O’Neil as saying (quote), “Our current facility is a failure in many ways—failing the inmates housed there, the staff who work there, the community that inmates will return to, and the taxpayers who must pay for its operation.”

Where are assurances and provisions that this Emergency Housing Facility will not also fail? Or that the new and “temporary” facility will not amplify the problems the PODS have already created up and down N. Hamilton Street and other streets throughout the City of Poughkeepsie?

The County insists that they need to open a facility close to existing services. Why has the County made the City of Poughkeepsie into Ground Zero for all facilities and services? Are there no people in need of services and housing anywhere else in the County? What will be the effect on the City of Poughkeepsie as a result of an increased concentration and number of homeless, while not necessarily providing adequate services that will meet the increase, and simultaneously resisting or opposing community benefits for the City of Poughkeepsie?

Who will be the sainted providers at this facility? The same non-profits who rake in grant money for homeless and mental health services while, at the PODs, completely destroying the quality of life for current homeowners and residents on North Hamilton?

When and who will change this County’s shameful policymaking, and this City’s shameful dynamic of behind-closed-door meetings that never produce public knowledge of the purchases and approved or in-the-pipeline developments, the parties behind these development LLCs, the Councilmembers who don’t attend Board and Commission meetings, and the Boards and Commissions that approve market rate housing to the detriment of households that have fallen behind or can barely afford their monthly expenses?

Official Minutes of the Joint Public Hearing with Dutchess County Legislators representing the City of Poughkeepsie - Monday, April 17, 2023 for the purpose of receiving comments from the public concerning homelessness in the City of Poughkeepsie.

IV. ADJOURNMENT:

The Public Hearing ended at 6:48pm.

Dated: May 8, 2023.

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on May 1, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

**Jasmin Nicole Davis
City Chamberlain**