



## THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

### PUBLIC HEARING

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**Tuesday, September 7, 2021 6:00 p.m.**

**Changepoint Theatre**

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Welcome to the scheduled meeting of the Public Hearing in the City of Poughkeepsie. The date is September 7, 2021 and the time is 6:00 pm.

**THIS HEARING IS FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECEIVING COMMENTS ON THE** Public Hearing Regarding the Proposal of the Local Law Local Law establishing a Division of Youth Services

**Councilmember-At-Large Salem** called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT: Five (5) minutes per person public comment.**

1. Norma Vizcarrando, Esperanza
2. Ken Stickle – Catharine St.
3. Tania Hernandez-Martinez, Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet Youth Policy Researcher (submitted written comments, see below)
4. Yamilet Ruiz, Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet Youth Policy Researcher, (submitted written comments, see below)
5. Rob Rolison
6. Dr. Eric Rosser, Superintendent PCSD
7. Brian Robinson, CEO of Equitable Future Inc.
8. Brian Doyle, CEO Family Services, Inc.
9. Dr. Julie Riess, Founder, Day One Early Learning Community
10. Estafany Umbich
11. Stacey Anne
12. Laurie Sandow (submitted written comments)

Do I support the establishment of a City of Poughkeepsie Division of Youth Services?  
Yes, I do. I appreciate the effort and intent behind the proposed Local Law, but the proposed text raises and fails to answer many questions.

—Who is actually in charge? The text of the proposed law states that a full-time Division Head shall report to the Development Director. Elsewhere, the text states, “the Department of Development shall be managed by the Development Director, who

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shall report to the City Administrator.” So who’s really going to be charge of the Youth Division? The Division Head? The Development Director? The City Administrator? Who?

—Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, the City has been without a Development Director since May 2021. At the time, the City stated that it would immediately undertake successor recruitment, with plans to fill the position by September 1st , 2021. Has the position been filled? Are there candidates under consideration? Why is the public kept in the dark on this process?

—Will the public, similarly, be kept in the dark about the process to select the head of the Division of Youth Services, or—in a break from this City’s preference for closed door decision-making—will the public be actively engaged in the process? —In the end, will the Head of the City Division of Youth Services be a visionary, a functionary, or a flunky?

As to specific performance:

—What are the specific children’s services and programs that are *mandated*? Long before Covid took its toll on this city and school district, I am aware of children needing services—children who can’t afford basic school supplies and clothes; children who can’t attend educational and recreational opportunities because their timing conflicts with other family obligations and/or their parents are not in a position, or won’t allow them to attend; children who have no transportation to these programs and events; children who had no idea that the School District provided free lunches during summer; children with medical needs that are not met; children wearing Dollar Store eyeglasses; children who are truant for a variety of reasons; children promoted from one grade to the next despite absences and failing grades; children who can’t obtain library cards because their parents can’t or won’t show up to sign the necessary paperwork; parents who are in the privileged and/or struggling position of abandoning the school district, enrolling their children in private schools and/or schools in adjacent districts.

—Where are the mandates to address safe homes, safe streets, safe passage, safe communities; youth skills and employment training opportunities; music, art, cultural, science, and technology opportunities and training; mentoring programs?

—The proposed text reads: “Create and maintain a centralized directory of all youth services available in the area in such a way that the public may easily access information regarding available programs for eligible City of Poughkeepsie youth.” Is the City aware that the Library District already maintains an extensive list of children’s services and programs? If not, why not? If yes, why is the City not already promoting that database?

—The proposed text reads, [the Division Head will] “act as liaison with the City of Poughkeepsie to the City of Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet, City of Poughkeepsie School District, Dutchess County, and external stakeholders and non-profit organizations including the Youth Empowerment Center.” Where is the mandate that

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the Division Head keep the public informed about their interaction with, and the actual work of all those organizations, stakeholders and non-profits? and act as liaison with the community and not just with the mucky-mucks?

—Where the proposed text mentions (quote) “external stakeholders and non-profit organizations”, who exactly are those stakeholders? are parents and caregivers included, or are “stakeholders” the usual selective group of suspects who always have a seat at the City’s closed door sessions?

Yes, I support the establishment of a City Division of Youth Services, but there’s a whole lot of questions that still need to be answered, and details that still need to be spelled out.

**13. Jeanne Wagner (submitted written comments)**

Thank you to the Common Council members for allowing me to submit written testimony in support of the creation of the Division of Youth Services in the City of Poughkeepsie.

My name is Jeanne Wagner and I am a member of the Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet Early Childhood Working Group. I am also currently the Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. and have held that position for twenty-three (23) years.

The Early Childhood Working Group has identified key early childhood issues that must be addressed in order to establish and maintain quality services for the children, youth and families in the City of Poughkeepsie. However, there is one major barrier to implementing change, and that is the absence of dedicated staffing for City-wide coordination of an early childhood system.

The Division of Youth Services would provide staffing that could bring together existing youth programs, as well as establish new programs in underserved areas, to comprehensively meet the needs of City of Poughkeepsie children and youth.

Key issues that the Division of Youth Services staff would address, include, but are not limited to:

- Develop and coordinate a City of Poughkeepsie early childhood system.
- Explore and implement innovative partnerships, e.g. pediatric care with a child development specialist.
- Engage the business community to advocate for high quality early childhood education to promote economic development.
- Coordinate communication between agencies and the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. and the Poughkeepsie City School District, particularly around issues such as Kindergarten readiness, parent education, and general data sharing.

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- Establish a single point of entry that comprehensively exhibits available early childhood opportunities and wrap around services for children and families.
- Collaborate with the Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. to expand outreach and educational opportunities for early childhood professionals.

Thank you for your consideration in establishing a Division of Youth Services to benefit and support City of Poughkeepsie residents and their families.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Wagner  
Executive Director  
Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.

**The City of Poughkeepsie Common Council**  
**Public Hearing: Establishing the Division of Youth Services**  
**Delivered by: Tania Hernandez-Martinez (She/Her)**  
**The Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet Youth Policy Researcher**  
**Tuesday, September 7, 2021**

Good Evening, Chair Salem, Majority Leader Jonson, Vice Chair Brennan, Minority Leader Flowers, and fellow Council members Petsas, Menist, Cherry, Johnson, and McClinton. Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening in support of the creation of the Division of Youth Services.

My name is Tania Hernandez-Martinez and I am a graduate of Poughkeepsie High School, a Marist College student, and a Youth Policy Researcher with the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet. The Children's Cabinet envisions a community where all children and youth thrive in Poughkeepsie regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, poverty or circumstance. Youth Policy Researchers have worked over the past year to engage in conversations with our peers across the City of Poughkeepsie to understand how our lived experiences are connected to larger decision-making systems and to ensure that recommendations from young people are included in the final recommendations of the Children's Cabinet.

Growing up in the City of Poughkeepsie, the daughter of a single mom, I found that there were times when we struggled not only financially, but also because of the lack of support for people who did not speak English. As a student, I noticed that funds in schools were not being allocated properly which led to sports teams having coach busses while teachers were struggling to find paper for lessons. And as a community member, I realized that help, whether it's for education, basic necessities, or extracurricular programs, is not easily accessible for everyone. Growing up, I recognized that the opportunities given to me were done so either because of the academic path I had taken or by sheer coincidence. This, along with everything else I have mentioned is why I became a Policy Youth Researcher. I hope that through my work, the city as a whole can distinguish what isn't working and fix it so that the younger generations and generations to come don't struggle like I did.

Although we all live in Poughkeepsie, there is a clear and drastic difference between the conditions of the Poughkeepsie city school district and other schools in Poughkeepsie as well as the City of Poughkeepsie itself and the town of Poughkeepsie. For as long as I have lived here, there has always been a stigma that only people whose future is in a jail cell live in Poughkeepsie. Not only this, but instead of the community in the City of Poughkeepsie coming together to prove everyone wrong, we often separate ourselves into those two categories. In school, if you aren't in an honors class or beyond, most have the opinion that you aren't worth giving respect or encouragement to. As I have said before,

there were opportunities and help I was given because of my academic path. This doesn't mean that students who weren't in honors or AP courses don't deserve to go to college, don't deserve the guidance to graduate, or don't deserve the guidance to stay off of the streets. Unfortunately, this is the case more often than not and most times this problem arises due to either poverty, race, or country of origin. This is a problem starting in schools that eventually feeds citywide problems like increased population under the poverty line and increased population in jails. If everyone was given the resources they need in order to compete at the same level as someone with less necessities, they would do so.

It takes both the School District, the City, and the broader community to address some of our most pressing challenges. This is why it is important for there to be a Division of Youth Services in the City of Poughkeepsie. Having a City government division whose sole purpose is to provide support and resources to youth means that more young people will be prepared to face challenges in school and in their community. As I have seen it, young people often give up because they don't feel that they have people in their corner. Knowing that the City has taken the time to create a specific division designed to help them will show them that you each truly care about them and want them to succeed.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening and for your continued efforts to ensure that children, youth, and families can thrive in the City of Poughkeepsie.



**The City of Poughkeepsie Common Council  
Public Hearing: Establishing the Division of Youth Services  
Delivered by: Yamilet Ruiz, She/Her  
The Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet Youth Policy Researcher  
September 7, 2021**

Good evening Chair Salem, Vice-Chair Brennan, Minority Leader Flowers, and fellow Council Members. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of the creation of the Division of Youth Services.

My name is Yamilet Ruiz and I am a graduate of Poughkeepsie High School, a Marist College student, and a Youth Policy Researcher with the Poughkeepsie Children's Cabinet. My interest in this work comes from growing up in Poughkeepsie. While growing up here, I experienced hardships that have had an impact on my current life today. The hardships I experienced were based in the community itself along with the Poughkeepsie City School District. Some of these challenges dealt with the overall violence in the community and the lack of up-to-date resources in learning environments. These hardships motivated me to become a Policy Youth Researcher to learn and become an advocate, create positive change in Poughkeepsie, and take action towards a better community experience for the benefit of the youth and the community as a whole.

As mentioned earlier, I grew up in Poughkeepsie and had the opportunity to attend the school district for the entirety of my academic career. Although I was able to graduate from Poughkeepsie High School and attend Marist College, I faced many challenges as I was completing my academic career. These challenges include violence in the community and the lack of appropriate resources that were required for academic learning. While attending the school district, some of the issues that I faced were related to an uncomfortable learning environment, such as building damages and having a limited amount of resources. These issues created challenging learning experiences and were barriers I had to overcome to succeed with my academics. These experiences motivated me to help address these issues and help make a better learning environment and an overall community for the youth in Poughkeepsie. There is a need for city-wide change to ensure that youth can have a better community to grow up in. Having a safe and supportive community would most likely lead youth into having a better academic experience. I am advocating for a change in my community as a whole to ensure that youth and others in the community have a safe place where they can succeed.

The creation of the Division of the Youth Services is critical to have in Poughkeepsie. There is a need for full-time staff who can focus on children to provide a supportive and safe community that works to ensure that the needs of young people are met. Young people spend two-thirds of their time outside of school, this means that youth need to have access to the appropriate resources that could help them



succeed in *and* outside of school. They are in need of appropriate social events, activities, and resources that could help them become successful and keep them away from violence. Currently, there aren't enough events and activities to match the need, youth are exposed to violence which causes damage to themselves along with their academics. They are more likely to experience negative consequences if they are around violence. Currently, youth are limited to what they can do due to the lack of support and advocate for city-wide change.

While working with the Children's Cabinet, I had the opportunity to interview a few young people from our community. They ranged from ages 10 to 14 years old. During the interview, participants were able to share about their life in Poughkeepsie. For the most part, participants touched upon the violence that happens here in Poughkeepsie. This violence creates a negative impact on the lives of youth as they share their fears of going out during the afternoon or evening hours. Children do not feel safe to go outdoors after a certain time of the day. This is a serious issue because youth should be living in a community where they feel safe and comfortable. With the creation of the Division of the Youth Services, there would be a chance to lead youth to success. Full-time staff is required to help ensure youth are given the best opportunities and that their needs are met. To lead to a better community starts with focusing on our youth and making sure that they are given the proper needs for success. The Division of the Youth Services is a step in making our community a better and safer place.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening and for your continued efforts to ensure that children, youth, and families can thrive in the City of Poughkeepsie.



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At 7:03pm the Public Hearing was adjourned.

**Dated: September 22, 2021**

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Public Hearing held on September 7, 2021.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Jasmin N. Davis**  
**City Chamberlain**