



July 13, 2020

To: The Courier

Re: Response to "The Putnam County Economy After COVID; What Next?"  
By Neal Zuckerman

I would like to thank Mr. Zuckerman for his insightful "Perspective" article published in *The Courier* on June 30, 2020.

The Age of COVID-19 has taken a devastating toll on our national and our local economy. In particular, small Main Street businesses which were forced to close for months may take years to recover, if they are able to do so at all. Furthermore, restricting the capacity of reopening businesses to allow for social distancing is dramatically affecting the bottom line for restaurants and catering.

However, with every challenge there comes opportunities. Many of Putnam's resourceful and innovative entrepreneurs have adapted to the new normal by shifting their strategy to online and curbside mediums.

During the early months of the pandemic, the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation (PCEDC) pivoted its focus from attracting new businesses to supporting existing ones. Our priority became that of leading people through the labyrinth of NY Forward Guidelines and Executive Orders. The PCEDC posted on its website, [putnamedc.org](http://putnamedc.org), ongoing COVID-19 Related Business Resources to assist businesses to stay on top of programs available from the State and Federal government.

In the beginning of May, a Small Business Advisory Committee was formed with approximately a dozen respected representatives from different industries throughout the county. This team helped to get the word out through their networks to help businesses to reopen in compliance with NYS regulations. Our mantras remain "Stay Loyal and Shop Local" and "Make A Plan and Be Prepared."

Working closely with County Executive MaryEllen Odell, Deputy County Executive/EDC Liaison Tom Feighery (who is also local business owner with over 35 years of experience), our County Legislators, the Town Supervisors and Board Members and Village Mayors and Trustees, the Health Department, Putnam Business Council, the IDA and the Putnam County Department of Tourism facilitated waiving fees, expediting approval processes and removing barricades to businesses struggling to survive. We are confident that this trend will continue as will our economic recovery. At a state level, daily conference calls with the Mid-Hudson Region Control Room continue to allow the County to advocate for business classifications crippled or left in limbo by the PAUSE.



The pandemic will forever change how we think, live, work, learn, shop, travel and entertain. As people and businesses flee metropolitan conditions for safer, less populated and more pastoral settings, Putnam County is uniquely positioned to welcome small and midsized businesses to come here and grow. We boast a highly skilled and educated talent pool and a location strategically situated with two Interstate highways, two commuter rail lines and proximity to airports to move people and goods quickly and safely.

The pandemic has taught us how to take advantage of technology to effectively work remotely. Eliminating commute time and reducing the need to go to an office allows workers to increase both their efficiency and the distance that they can live from their places of employment. Putnam County is currently experiencing a sellers' market. The prospect of spacious, less expensive auxiliary offices in Putnam County will be very appealing to NYC employers as well as to jobholders who may be disinclined to use mass transit to get to cramped workspaces requiring elevator access.

The folly of having one behemoth employer dominating a geographical area has long been apparent. So has the value of diversity in industry classifications. In the last few months, the PCEDC has worked to assist a successful design business to relocate from Peekskill to Putnam County, has been scouting for a location to accommodate a NYC government agency looking to consolidate its employees within a five mile radius of Carmel, has been working with a young entrepreneur trying to launch a low volume/high value business to repurpose modules for secure intelligence and military operations, and has been assisting in a search for a nationally recognized entertainment company that is seeking a large venue for a new performing arts center.

Putnam County's diminutive size allows it to be nimble. We grapple with new things quickly. I am convinced that Putnam County will rise to meet the demands of our changing world and will prosper in the future.

Kathleen Abels  
President, Putnam County Economic Development Corporation