

BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
of the
Suffolk County Legislature
Minutes

A regular meeting of the Budget and Finance Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Thursday, **September 23, 2004.**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Allan Binder, Chairman
Legislator William J. Lindsay, Vice•Chairman
Legislator Daniel P. Losquadro
Legislator Lynne C. Nowick
Legislator David Bishop (excused absence)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Legislator Cameron Alden, Tenth District
Mea Knapp, Counsel to the Legislature
Ilona Julius, Deputy Clerk
Jim Spero, Director of Budget Review
Ellen Martin, Aide to Leg. Binder
Allen Kovesdy, County Executive Budget Office
Joan Sikorsky, Municipal Finances Administrator, Audit & Control
Jacqueline Caputi, County Attorney's Office
Marie O'Donnell

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING WAS CONVENED AT 1:18 PM)

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

All rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bill Lindsay.

(SALUTATION)**CHAIRMAN BINDER:**

Okay. The meeting of the Budget and Finance Committee will come to order. No, I'm not Andrew Crecca. And •• but I've been assigned by the Presiding Officer to, in his absence or after his resignation from the Legislature, to fill his shoes here as Chairman of the Budget and Finance Committee. And I appreciate the Presiding Officer's confidence in me to do that. I don't think you'll find any differences. I don't know if we have a change in the membership. Is it the same •• generally the same membership, I think. Okay.

We don't have cards, I was just about to say. We don't have any cards. But we do. I was mistaken. The only card I have before me for •• to speak for the public is Marie O'Donnell. And that's on the Suffolk Community Council on the Brentwood Health Clinic. Do we have •• here we go. Please come up. Pull up a microphone. Right there. That's good. And if we can just make sure •• I just want to make sure it's on.

MS. O'DONNELL:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

There we go. It sounded good. Just get close enough otherwise we won't be able to hear you.

MS. O'DONNELL:

All right. Good afternoon. My name is Marie O'Donnell. I'm Program Director for Suffolk Community Council. And I'm here today speaking about IR 1555. This resolution is calling for a four million cut to the Islip health clinics. A four million cut roughly represents a 30% cut. That's a 30% •• 30% in loss of services, 30% in loss of staff, 30% in loss of hours and 30% in loss of access.

So, what does this mean in terms of numbers? There are roughly 67,000 visits to the Brentwood Health Clinic and 1600 visits to the CI one. A loss of 30% of those visits roughly translates to a loss of 25,000 visits. If you average that each patient comes approximately

three times a year, then, you are now talking about a loss of 8,000 patients.

And what does that translate into terms of care? Perinatal, possibly 200 woman would lose access to prenatal care, which would cause low birth weight and other problems and an increase in risk for babies. Public health testing for TB, HIB, HIV and counseling and sexually transmitted diseases would be cut by 30%. Breast cancer, the clinics have a very busy breast cancer monitoring programming with on-site mammographies, which is now in the process of expanding to cover cervical cancer. This would be cut.

And finally, higher cost to the County. If a patient cannot get health care at the clinics, he or she would be forced to go to the emergency room, which costs the County a great deal more. If they have a disease such as diabetes and they cannot get the regular care that they were getting at the clinic •• if the clinic is being cut by 30%. The Suffolk Community Council thinks that it is just plain wrong. If any more funds are needed •• certainly more funds are needed; not less. I urge you to vote this resolution down and guaranty that this does not come up for a vote again. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Thank you. Hold on a second. I have a member of the Legislature who is not a member of the Committee, but has asked to speak. And I think he's not going to wait until we deal with it in the regular order of business. I think this is a good opportunity and good time before •• just before you do, let me make one small correction. We actually don't call them health clinics. And the reason we don't call them health clinics •• so I would •• I would just •• the correction would be we call them health centers. And the reason we don't, health clinic really denotes, at least in people's minds, the clinics that you find in New York City. And I would venture to say after 15 years in being Suffolk County government that our health centers have no resemblance in any way, shape or form with the health clinics in New York City. We are so far and away above the type of service, the amount of service, quality, the care, even literally the look inside of them. In anyone of ours. I would •• I venture to say that if you went into a health clinic and then went into our health center, you would think wow, this can't be government funded the way that is. I mean there's a disconnect. So, just •• and I understand what you're saying and •• those concerns. That's why I'm going to turn it over to Legislator Alden. But I just want to make that correction in the sense that we really should be calling it health centers and think of them a little differently because we do a really decent job of here of making it different and

treating our clients and our patients like patients. Not like, you know, like recipients. Thanks.
 Legislator Alden

LEG. ALDEN:

In one way this is your lucky day because Legislator Binder was here when they formed the whole concept of providing the health care through the health centers to the people of Suffolk County. And today, although I'm not a member of the Committee, I'm the one that wrote that resolution. And unfortunately, I don't know if you've read the resolution or didn't read the resolution, or if you got second-hand information, but that's not what that resolution does.

Just to give you a little history, I'm the Legislator that represents the area that up until January one of this year that Bay Shore Health Center was located in. We re-districted it. And now I've moved a couple of blocks away. But that is only at the most maybe one block out of my district right now. So, I have a lot of clients •• not clients •• I have a lot of constituents that actually are clients at that health center. Southside Hospital is still in my Legislative district. It affects Legislator Montano, it affects Legislator Carpenter and myself. Most of the people that went to the Bay Shore Health Center were from those three districts.

Now, a little bit more as far as a historical perspective. In 2001 that health •• health facility was closed. Not due to anybody's fault, but there was some kind of problem with the air. So, that health facility was closed. We knew at that time that December of 2004 our lease ran out. So, that health facility had to be relocated before December of 2004. Unfortunately, even though prior administration and now this administration has put great emphasis on providing health services to the poor and the needy, those in our districts need it probably the most, the elderly and people that don't make a real lot of money, that health facility was never reopened. And even though as one Legislator, I brought at least eight perspective sites forward, none of those sites was proper. As a matter of fact, there's •• more than 17 sites were proposed in that very vicinity. None of them were ever right. And now recently I got a little memorandum that they're selling off the remainder of the equipment. So, that put a little thing in my mind that we have no intention of government to reopen the Bay Shore Health Facility. I took it upon myself to put a resolution in, that would take money from the budget that was being used at the time for the Bay Shore Health Clinic or Health Facility; and it would isolate it. So, that when we do open it up again, we would have money in the budget.

And here's another little perspective historical. In 2001, roughly 11 point something million

dollars for three Islip health facilities. That •• that one closed in 2001. And the next year the budget amount went up over •• to 12 point something million dollars. Facility Health Center, right. Thank you. So, we spent more money and closed down one of the centers. I did a little bit of math •• just quick math, because when I asked the question, how much money the Bay Shore Health Center was costing in that budget, no one could give me a true dollar. And I asked that of this administration. I asked it of a previous administration. They're all kind of like, you know, lumped together. So, I took twelve million dollars, divided it by three: Bay Shore, Brentwood, CI and came up with \$4 million. And, hence, in my resolution, it says \$4 million shall be isolated into an account to be used for the Bay Shore Health Center.

So, we're not trying to cut •• I'm not trying to cut health services. I'm not trying to cut band aids, bandages, no such thing. I want to make sure that the Bay Shore Health Center is reopened and that there's money there. And I want an explanation what happened to the money since it's been closed. And since the budget line hasn't been reduced, since we were operating three health centers and now we operate two, I'd like an explanation. I think I'm due that. And at a previous committee meeting, our new Commissioner has stated that he's going to work with me to try to reopen the Bay Shore Health Center. And he's going to give me an accounting of where the money went and where the money is being spent right now. So, then we can make intelligent choices in the future how to get this health center reopened as quickly as possible. Because right now it's also •• it also came out of the previous health •• not •• it was the Health Committee; that there's probably about five to eight thousand people that were receiving health care from Suffolk County that are just gone. So, whether they're going to emergency rooms to receive that care, that's not real good; because it costs us a ton of money. And it's not the best type of preventative medicine; and not the best way to deliver health services to the people; or whether they don't go anywhere and receive anything. So, now we've got this whole group of people, thousands of people out there that just don't go to any of our health centers anymore. And we owe a duty to those people to get this health center back up and operating as quickly as possible. And, hence, that's why that resolution was put forward by me. To ensure that there's going to be money there, and a full accounting and to make sure that we proceed as quickly as possible to reopen that health center.

I thank the Chairman for that opportunity.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Let me just add to what Legislator Alden had said. First let me vouch for him. And that is the

reason he put it in there. And what he wants to do is engender debate and discussion about an unserved or now unserved population. And to add what he said, he said that he's •• he deserves an answer; that he should know what's going on. And he should be getting feedback from the administration and from the Health Department. I would add that we should all be because he may be the one who represents that particular population, but we all represent Suffolk County. And we have an interest •• a very great interest to see that there isn't a population unserved. And so here you are, you came today. And that's good. Now, you've had the opportunity to come here to speak on something that you're concerned about. And the funny thing is no one's come here to speak about what Legislator Alden just spoke about, to my knowledge, unless they've come before the Health Committee and I don't know about it because •• or any committee. All of our social services organizations particularly our umbrella organizations and Community Council •• I haven't heard anyone come to us and say we got to do something about this. We've got a major population unserved. And I actually •• frankly I'm surprised that we haven't gotten that response. So, what Legislator Alden's doing is he's creating the response by making you come in and fight for something that •• frankly I don't think he wants to see more people not served. It would really defeat •• and for us to go forward and take all the money away would in a sense defeat the very thing that he's trying to promote here is actually get a population served.

So, it's good that you were brought down and I would hope you'd spread the word that you've heard from Legislator Alden. There are a lot of people out there that are hurting that don't have access to health care. And we've had assurances including by the Commissioner of Health, the new Commissioner of Health, along the way becoming •• you know, we have to vote for that Commissioner. We did. But we also question that Commissioner. And I know the Commissioner was very clear how he was going to help us get that restarted and get that population served. And to date there's been, as far as I know, no movement at all. There's been nothing, right? Is that ••

LEG. ALDEN:

We have gone back a little bit.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

We've gone backwards. So, movement, in fact, in the wrong way. And so that's •• that has to

concern all of us; that there are people out there that can't access health care. That's why we created these things. That's why we've created health centers. And where there is unserved populations, we try to create new ones. Huntington was created, and I'm very happy that they did, almost on its own because there was a whole unserved population in Huntington. And the community actually saw to it that that was created. And then Suffolk then came in afterwards and said well •• wow, you did a great job. We're going to create a funding stream to make sure that population is served. If we want to make sure populations are served, we have to come in here and advocate that way, too. So, maybe you can take it back that they need to come in and advocate for that whole population that doesn't have health care.

MS. O'DONNELL:

Thank you. I will bring it back to my Director.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Great. Thank you very much. Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

If you would please get a copy of the bill, it's only a paragraph long. And it states that \$4 million gets transferred to an account that could only be used for the Bay Shore Health Center. So, you know, it's just an identifying •• really we're identifying funds that were spent for the Bay Shore Health Center. And now we want them spent again for the health center.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

For that population. Not only the center, but what he wants to do is identify a population and make sure the money goes to the very people that it was supposed to serve in the first place.

MS. O'DONNELL:

All I can say is I will bring it back to my Director.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Great.

MS. O'DONNELL:

I was given a written statement.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

No, no, no. But ••

MS. O'DONNELL:

I don't want to ••

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

No. You should ••

MS. O'DONNELL:

I mean, I •• I will bring black all the information.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

And you •• you shouldn't respond. That's fine. There's no expectation of response. Only that you take the education that you got and bring that back. And then start the discussion at the Community Council as to the problem of an unserved population and how we're looking to have it served.

MS. O'DONNELL:

All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Thank you. Okay. Are there any other •• I have no other cards. Does any •• anyone else wishes to speak? If not, I'm going to go to the agenda.

We have Tabled Resolution **1784, amending the 2004 Operating Budget and appropriating funds in connection with bonding settlements for medical malpractice cases.** I would assume this was a Davis? I can't remember.

MS. KNAPP:

It's County Executive.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Oh, it's County Executive. Okay. That's fine. So, it doesn't need a three quarter vote. Okay. Let me ask why this was tabled. I'm trying to remember why.

LEG. LINDSAY:

I think it went •• had to go to be approved by Ways and Means, the settlements first. We did that yesterday.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

That was done.

LEG. LINDSAY:

But that was tabled before, I think. Am I right about that?

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

And it's been approved by Ways and Means?

LEG. LINDSAY:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Motion by Legislator Nowick, second by Legislator Losquadro. Is there any comments? Hope there are nothing huge in here. I didn't look at the numbers that you approved. Although I'm looking at some faces. It doesn't look good. One's a little big. Okay. We have a motion and a second. We said Legislator Nowick. Legislator Losquadro seconds. All those in favor?

Opposed? **1784 is approved. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

1441, amending the 2004 Capital Budget and Program and appropriating funds in connection with the purchase of a catamaran patrol vessel•police, did we find •• right, we're going to ask the exact same question that we've asked for week and weeks. Have you found •• has the administration •• does anyone in the administration want to come up and tell us whether we found a new offset. We'd like to do this. Legislators would like to pass this bill. We're concerned just about the offset. There must be something else somewhere.

MR. ZWIRN:

First let me congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and wish you a happy new year. I came in a little bit late.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

To you, too. You should have a happy, healthy •• good things should happen.

MR. ZWIRN:

With respect to this bill, we picked an offset where we knew there was still money in the budget that we could use. And our office was satisfied with the offset with this one. We'd like to see it passed as well. Maybe Jim could speak to the fact that there's money available in this •• in this ••

MR. SPERO:

Just to bring Legislators up to date, I drafted a resolution for Legislator Carpenter yesterday to appropriate 900,000 additional dollars for the construction of the alternative DWI facility. And with that resolution now on the table, that would overdraw the account if this resolution was adopted. So, if you want to purchase the patrol boat and do the alternative •• additional funding for the alternative facility, we're going to have to find another offset.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Well, the offset in this is the legislative account; is that ••

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes, that's correct.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Okay. So, it's 90,000. Let me ask you, is there anything in the executive account anywhere? Is there money in the County Executive's budget somewhere that we could take \$90,000 •• Jim, would you know?

MR. SPERO:

Well, we could take a look and see if we can come up with something.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

There must be something. They have a much bigger budget than we do.

MR. SPERO:

We have 57,000 left in the •• there'll be ••

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

No, no. And I don't mean this as a tit for tat. As we get towards the end of the year, there might be 110 money, turnover savings, stuff like that that we're not using anyway. That •• this way it doesn't have to go into the •• the pool and then a •• a precedent. There must be something somewhere. How about •• look. This is•• we're going to do •• we want to do this. I mean badly. I know every Legislator here wants to pass this and we're tired of tabling this every •• every meeting. Why don't we do this? Jim, if you can come up with an offset, and just •• any other offset. Look, I know it's hard because we've asked you for other things and you cry, almost, almost; near tears. If you can find something and call over to the County Exec's Budget Office and see if we can just get an agreement on another 90,000 somewhere, if we do •• total hypothetical •• if we do, and it's agreed to, you think it's good, we found it, I'd love to discharge this and •• right. I would discharge it today without recommendation, get it to the floor. And then we might need a CN because we won't have enough time. But if •• an agreement thing. We need agreements around here, I think. I'm even really getting tired myself here. I am.

MR. ZWIRN:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Okay? So why don't •• why don't we see if we can put something together here? Okay. So, 90,000 in a two billion dollar budget, I know we can ••

MR. SPERO:

I'll call Carla in the Budget Office to see if we can come up with something.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

I know •• I know ••

MR. ZWIRN:

We would like to have this for •• I know the Police Department would like to have it.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Right.

MR. ZWIRN:

It allows •• we've made presentations on several occasions. It would allow a police officer by himself or herself to operate a boat ••

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Right.

MR. ZWIRN:

•• as supposed to having a two•person team.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Right. I know. We want to do this. And you look very sad, I'm sorry to be •• we will •• we're going to •• let's just make sure we find this. Between the two offices, let's find •• if I make it a priority by Tuesday, have another offset, work out a CN, get this thing done, and let's do it on the floor. I'm going to make a motion to discharge without recommendation in the hopes •• in the belief that both sides are going to find a way to find another 90,000 in a two billion dollar budget.

LEG. LINDSAY:

If we did that, we wouldn't need a CN; right?

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

No, but •• either way, look the truth is ••

LEG. LINDSAY:

An amendment.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Right. I could do it •• the truth is you could do a CN even if I kept it in here. But the reason I'm saying let's do it as a •• right, it's to show good faith; to discharge it without recommendation. So even though •• it doesn't have to be. You could still do a CN, but let's do it so •• we want to go forward. That's what it's saying. All right? So, I'm going to make a motion to discharge without recommendation. Second by Legislator Lindsay. All those in favor? Opposed? **1441 is discharged. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**
Let's make this happen.

1476 adopting Local Law No •2004, A Charter Law amending C4•13 to allow amendment of the Capital Budget for mandated projects, I'm going to table this for one more round. And I think we're going to have some more discussion at least on our end, on the Republican side. I just talked about that. We should •• we haven't had a discussion. Funny. We've had meetings and stuff, but we haven't discussed this. And we do need to do that; so one more time. I'll make a motion to table, second by Legislator Nowick. All those in favor? Opposed? **1476 is tabled. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

1555, amending the adopted 2004 Operating Budget to reduce funding for Health Clinics. Motion to table by Legislator Losquadro, second by Legislator Nowick with the concurrence, of course, of Legislator Alden. All those in favor? Opposed? **1555 is tabled. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

Introductory resolutions, shouldn't be too difficult. **1812, to readjust, compromise and grant refunds and chargebacks on correction or errors (County Treasurer by: County Legislature #195)**, I just want to make sure what it is. And what's the •• what are we ••

LEG. LINDSAY:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

We have a motion by Legislator Lindsay, second by Legislator Nowick. They could just pick this real up; make sure it's not a slider.

MS. KNAPP:

This is in the Town of Brookhaven. It looks like it's a big one. It's a \$134,972 in erroneous assessment. Am I right, Jim?

MR. SPERO:

I have to get there.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

What did we ever do before we had these computers? I'm trying to remember back. I was actually here pre•computer. Yeah, that's scary, isn't it? I must be •• get him out of here, right.

LEG. ALDEN:

They hadn't invented electricity when you were here, did they, Legislator Binder?

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

They had just put the plugs in, yes. But they were copper wire •• no, it was aluminum wire. And we had to re•do the whole place. We got rid of the gas lamps. 1812. It was an interesting war but I don't know about it being a resolution. I'm stalling as long as I can, Jim.

MR. SPERO:

I'm just looking at the resolution here. And the corrected tax and the chargeback refunds, 134,972.46.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Okay. So, corrected, that's from Brookhaven. And that's •• you concur with it.

MR. SPERO:

We don't review these. These are prepared by the Treasurer's Office and are actually paid after court proceedings.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

All right. I make a motion •• I have the motion and second. And that motion is not only to approve but it's also to put on the consent calendar. Okay? All those in favor? Opposed?

1812 is approved. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)

1813 (to readjust, compromise and grant refunds and chargebacks on correction or errors/County Treasurer by: County Legislature #196), it's similar.

MS. KNAPP:

This one is also Brookhaven. It's \$13,000 for three parcels.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Same motion, same second, same vote. **(Approved. Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

1814 (to readjust, compromise and grant refunds and chargebacks on correction or errors/County Treasurer by: County Legislature #197.)

MS. KNAPP:

Brookhaven again. \$6,353.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Same motion, same second, same vote. **(Approved. Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

1815 (to readjust, compromise and grant refunds and chargebacks on real property correction or errors/County Treasurer by: County Legislature)

Same motion, same second, same vote. It's for a number of them; right?

MS. KNAPP:

It is.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

Babylon, Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton.

MS. KNAPP:

Babylon, Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton chargebacks.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

They're all chargebacks. So all of these have been chargebacks and not corrections. Okay. That is the whole agenda. If there's anything •• what did I miss? Oh, wow, can't forget that one. And it's in big, black letters. How did I miss that? I don't know. That was bad.

1874 •• I'm getting old and term•limited. **1874, Tax anticipation note resolution no • 2004, resolution delegating to the County Comptroller the powers to authorize the issuance of not to exceed \$65,000,000 tax anticipation notes of the County of Suffolk, New York, in anticipation of the collection of taxes levied for county purposes (or returned to the county for collection for the fiscal years commencing January 1, 2001, 2002,2003 and 2004 and to prescribe the terms, form and contents and provided for the sale and credit enhancement of such notes)** I don't want to go on but it's a TAN and it's something that's pretty boiler plate. We need it all the time. I just want to make sure that Jim's in agreement that the number is what it should be and we're comfortable with that as a TAN.

MR. SPERO:

Yes. The \$65 million will be a ceiling. I don't think the Comptroller's actually determined the exact amount we're going to need in cash; but it will be no more than 65 million and probably will be less.

CHAIRMAN BINDER:

We're hoping it will be less. Always hope it will be less you have to borrow. Right. Okay. We have a motion by Legislator Losquadro, second by Legislator Nowick on 1874. All those in favor? Opposed? **1874 is approved. (Vote: 4•0•0•1. Leg. Bishop absent)**

Is there anyone else or anything else coming before the Committee? If not, motion by Legislator Lindsay, second by myself to adjourn. All those in favor? Opposed? We are adjourned.

(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 1:45 PM)