

**WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE  
BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**OF THE**

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**MINUTES**

A special joint meeting of the Ways & Means Committee and Budget & Finance Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William R. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on October 22, 2007 to discuss the matter of the Operating Budget.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Ricardo Montano, Chairman of the Budget & Finance Committee, Vice Chair of Ways & Means Committee  
Leg. Lou D'Amaro, Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee  
Leg. Thomas F. Barraga, member of the Ways & Means Committee  
Leg. Steven H. Stern, member of the Budget & Finance Committee  
Leg. Kate M. Browning, member of the Ways & Means Committee  
Leg. Edward P. Romaine, member of the Ways & Means Committee  
Leg. Cameron Alden, member of the Budget & Finance Committee  
Leg. Jon Cooper, Vice Chair of the Budget & Finance Committee

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Leg. William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer  
Leg. John M. Kennedy, Jr., Twelfth District  
Gail Vizzini, Director of Budget Review Office  
Robert Lipp, Deputy Director of Budget Review Office  
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office  
George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Chief of Staff  
Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive  
Allen Kovesdy, Budget Office/County Executive  
Christine Malafi, County Attorney  
Justin Littell, Aide to Chairman D'Amaro  
Bob Martinez, Aide to Chairman Montano  
Angie Carpenter, Suffolk County Treasurer  
Judy Pascale, Suffolk County Clerk  
Loren Houghton, County Treasurer's Office  
Robert Mitchell, Legal Aid Society  
Philip J. O'Reilly, Legal Aid Society  
Louis Mazzola, Legal Aid Society  
George Roach, Legal Aid Society, Senior Citizen Division  
Wallace W. Broege, Suffolk County Historical Society  
Cheryl Felice, President of AME  
Debra Alloncius, Legislative Director for AME  
Thomas B. Williams, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Marguerite A. Smith, Cornell Cooperative Extension

**(THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 9:48 AM)**

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Good morning. We're going to call the joint meeting of the Budget and Finance Committee and the Ways and Means Committee relative to the 2008 Operating Budget. We're going to start with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Alden.

**SALUTATION**

**LEG. ALDEN:**

I would also ask for, as this is the first budget meeting of the joint committees that we have a moment of silence. And that's in recognition of those that are serving right now and in harm's way and those that have given their life for this country.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you, Legislator Alden. All right. We're going to -- we're actually going to get right into it then. The first card that I have is Wallace Broege. Excuse me one second. Could you -- I'm actually at the suggestion of Chairman of Ways and Means, I'm going to ask Gail to give a brief overview of where we're at.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Thank you, Legislator Montano. The Budget Review Office has issued its review of the County Executive's 2008 recommended budget. From the introduction to the report, I'd like to highlight a couple of things that point out basically that this is an extremely restrictive and tight budget. It does very little to enable us to get through 2008 with any wiggle room. And it does nothing to prepare us for 2009.

As you all probably know by this time, the budget does assume that the one penny on sales tax, the 272 per BRO's numbers and 300 million in the County Executive's numbers, will be included. Therefore, that's good news. We agree. That's how the budget should be prepared. However, despite the fact that the 300 million in revenue is in there, it's still a very restrictive budget. The property tax for the General Fund has actually been reduced by a very modest \$362,490. And the police district property tax increase, very modest, about \$10 million. But despite this the costs to operate the County continue to grow. And we have a very ambitious program and things that we need to do.

In order to be able to reduce the General Fund and have such a modest increase in the police district, the budget resorts to several things. Once again we do rely on \$122.8 million projected fund balance. More than likely when the Comptroller announces what the 2007 carry over fund balance will be in April of 2008, we could pick -- we could pick up some more money as we have done in the past several years.

The General Fund is predicated on several one-shot's. They total about \$54.4 million. Our reserve funds are pretty much depleted in order to subsidize the General Fund with the exception of the Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund, which we are very fortunate to have. There was a lot of foresight in previous administrations and the current administration in building that fund. I don't have to remind you that it is available to you, but state law requires an increase in General Fund property taxes of 2.5%.

One of the one-shots is the dismantling of the Suffolk Health Plan, the HMO. In the opinion of Budget Review, rather than show a \$16.1 million one-shot transfer from liquidating this fund, we should proceed with input from the Legislature in terms of what's the best thing to do with this HMO. And then let the fund close itself and let later budgets benefit from the transfer once we liquidate the fund.

Another thing that we're doing in order to accomplish the goals of this budget is contracted services are reduced across the board by \$4.4 million. Three hundred and ninety-four agencies are receiving no funding whatsoever. These agencies had been funded in 2007. We're abolishing once again over a hundred vacancies -- this time 113. What's disconcerting about this is that 26 of these vacancies are in Probation. They are probation officers, senior probation officers and upwards. The question that Budget Review asks repeatedly is why are these positions vacant in the first place? Regrettably we do know the answer. Fifty-four positions in Health Services, eight in Social Services, four in the Sheriff's Office and numerous clerical positions all over the place to total the 113 abolished vacancies.

The Police Department. The Legislature included funding and 25 additional positions for a class of 75 police officers in 2007. The budget narrative indicates there will be a class. There will be a class in 2007 the last week in December of 50, which was originally proposed by the County Executive's recommended budget. There is no class for 2008. Based on our diligence analysis of the expenditure lines, there are several lines that are grossly underfunded and will require transfers from other areas where something else will not get done or some position will not be filled.

The grossly underfunded lines are our energy lines, light power and water, vehicle replacements, office equipment. Most of those have been transferred and consolidated to the department of IT although not everything that was requested arrived in IT so there will be some competition for those funds.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

I'm sorry, Gail. What was that last one?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

The office equipment. And regrettably there is no provision whatsoever for pay-as-you-go funding.

We recognize, of course, how difficult it is to hold the line on taxes due to the public pressure. No one, including the three of us here, want to pay any additional property taxes. But from our perspective I always point out to you that it is an option for you because of the robustness of tax stabilization reserve. The concern is, you know, as we point out in the quote to the report, this budget really does nothing to prepare us for 2009. There is no wiggle room to replenish our reserves. There are many lines that are under funded and we continue a very restrictive hiring policy which is making it more and more difficult for the individual departments to do things in a productive, efficient and correct manner.

If you have any questions, we'll be happy to answer them.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Yeah. Are there any questions?

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Yes.

**LEG. D'AMARO:**

Right here.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator D'Amaro first; Legislator Romaine next.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Good morning, Mrs. Vizzini. Thank you very much for your presentation. You referred to the quote in the opening of your budget, the quote for those of you who might be interested is, "you cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today." And we appreciate that warning. And I think what you're saying is that as tight as the budget may be this year, going into 2009, without these one-shots, as we call them, available, it's going to become even more problematic. It that what you're driving at here?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

It is. You'd have to make up the one-shots some other way. In my overview I forgot to mention the economy, which is a very big factor. We're not replenishing our reserves. The growth and sales tax is a portion of what it once was. I don't know if you had a chance to see today's paper, but Nassau County in their budgeting has been a little bit more overzealous than we have. Fortunately sales tax is projected at a rate of growth of 2.25 percent. We're pretty much on board with that, but yet we have guarded optimism in terms of the impact of the economy, especially on sales tax which balances half our Operating Budget.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

What is the total of the non-recurring revenue sources or the one-shots as we say?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

54.4 million.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

And I had just one other specific question. You also referred to the vacant Probation positions that are being eliminated in the recommended budget. I reviewed your report and I see on page 272, if you have a copy in front of you, it shows the trend of Probation positions as well as those actually hired. And it shows an uptrend over the last several years. And yet in your comments you referred to the -- it's problematic to be eliminating some of those positions which are not filled. Can you just explain that a little further?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Sure. What this graph says to me is that the number of filled positions, regardless of how many authorized positions -- authorized are at the top of the bar graph -- but the line shows that Probation staffing levels are relatively flat. Now, there is a little bump up between '06 and '07, the 422 to the 436. I think that may have to do with the transfer of the DWI Unit and the associated positions to Probation last year. But if it is an indication of an upturn in hiring I'm very pleased.

Our concern is that the County should be embarking on an aggressive alternative to incarceration program because of the magnitude of the cost to build the jail. This was the intent -- this was the intent when the Correctional Facility Oversight Committee was constructed and chaired by Kevin Law and numerous recommendations were made to promote a strong ATI program so as to keep the cost and the number of phases to the jail at a minimum reasonable level. Unfortunately, in our opinion we have not been as zealous in terms of promoting our ATI programs as we should be, and I think Probation is the biggest ATI program we have going.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

So since 2004 we see a trend upward in actually filled positions of about 14 in the last four years, and it's your position and BRO's position that that is not a sufficient number of filled positions, we are at 436 right now, to do everything Probation needs to do as well as the ATI pursuits.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

That's correct. Even at the flat level of standing, filled positions it's insufficient. I'm glad to see the little bump up, but that is also insufficient.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

What would make it sufficient?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Well, I had the privilege of serving on that CFOC -- Oversight Committee, and there was a lot of the shareholders, anybody who had anything to do with either the dollars or the criminal justice system or anything was represented there. And there were pages and pages of recommendations which slowly but surely we were hoping to move forward.

One of the best things to do is adequate staffing levels in Probation probably double the day reporting. Day reporting allows people who are high risk but not high risk enough to be incarcerated, they are substance abusers or mentally ill or what have you, to go to day reporting. We only have one site and regrettably vacancies are -- in day reporting they have been abolished as well. Day reporting gives you a -- it's almost like a day program rather than the residential incarceration aspect of things.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Right, but what I'm trying to get to is we can abolish positions and if there is a need we can recreate those positions. What you're saying in the report, however, is that there's not sufficient staffing for the different pursuits of the Probation Department and I'm trying to -- we're at 436 now. What would be the number where you would conclude that it is sufficient, you know, how many more in personnel do we need and what's the cost of that personnel.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

I can get back to you on that. Off the top of my head I would say at least another 20. Where they would be assigned would be to promote the ATI aspect of things. But I can certainly get back to you on that.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

What's the average cost of a new hiree in Probation?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Entry level probation officers we think are about 45 to \$50,000 in salary and then you have the benefits to contend with.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Legislator Romaine.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let's start off with the one-shots. We have \$54.4 million in one-shot, nonrecurring revenues. Is that correct?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Correct.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

What does that mean for the 2009 Operating Budget?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

One-shots by their definition, and we have been very cautious in terms of what we've characterized as one-shots, they're there this year. But the equivalent is not there next year from the same source.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

It's nonrecurring. So we start off, if we're planning and we're thinking in several years, 2009 we start off \$54 million and change in the hole that we'd have to find somewhere. Is that correct?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

All things being equal, yes.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And what is the accepted budget cautionary principle that's applied to one-shot revenues?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

It's just that. When it's a one-shot I have an obligation to let you know it's a one-shot. And, you know, all the budget -- all the budget people try to shy away from one-shots unless you have a plan to make up for it the next year.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And let me ask about one-shot, one of the one-shots, the sale of the Suffolk Health Plan. Are the revenues projected from the sale of that plan actual or real or are they estimated?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

The revenue from the sale of the plan per se is included in the narrative, estimated at about \$4.5 million.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

The 16 million is a couple of factors, but from the dismantling of the fund, the people are being carried over and paid through the General Fund.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Now, we have a Tax Stabilization Reserve Fund and we have several other reserve funds as part of the General Fund. What is the balance after this budget if it is adopted as is? What is the balance in the other reserve funds when this budget, let's say, is adopted as is?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

There's very little in the other reserve funds. I think there is like \$62,000 in interest in the Retirement Reserve Fund. But this budget uses not only the one-shot of the \$21.5 million fund balance from the debt reserve, but it also captures what used to go into tax stabilization reserve, filters it through, which is very legal, the debt reserve, and it comes right out again to subsidize the General Fund.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So in essence we are depleting all of our reserve funds other than the Tax Stabilization Fund, which by law we can't unless we raise taxes.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Other than, of course, the Sewer Assessment Stabilization Reserve, which is -- yeah.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Totally separate. Right. Let me ask you about something else. This budget calls for a reduction in contracted services of \$4.4 million for all the social service agencies that provide services.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

That number is all contracted services, including the buses, etcetera, etcetera.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right. That's correct. Has the Budget Office done an analysis of those contracted services? Are any of those obligatory, required or mandated services that the County must provide that we contract with others to provide? You understand my question?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Yes. Mandated is hard because there's very little that is actually mandated with the exception of Medicaid.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Right.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

There are about \$5.9 million worth of contracted health and social services and youth programs that are receiving no funding. Many of these programs have merit. They intervene in people lives. They save us from more expensive service delivery.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

I'm getting at that point. Besides my concern that some of the reduction in contracted service agencies might force upon the government itself the obligation to pick up these services as a far more expensive cost, my other concern is that by cutting some of these services we could have a short-term gain for a long-term loss in terms of other problems that might arise that these contract agencies deal with.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

To the extent that these are preventative services you're absolutely right on that.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Let's talk a little bit about the police funding. I believe I was here last year, we voted to have a police class of 75 police officers, and that's not going to happen in 2007.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Not to my knowledge and not according to the budget narrative.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. And I have no problem with that if, in fact, the levels of police funding aren't needed. But I haven't heard that and this is what concerns me, and I see our Counsel, he is still sitting here, Mr. Nolan, and that concerns me as well. I have no problem working with the County Executive to help reduce expenses in light of difficult budgetary situation. And I am the first to work with him on this matter. But the County Executive in my personal opinion, and I hope in legal opinions, cannot unilaterally amend or impound budget funds without seeking the approval of the Legislature. He should come back and say look, I know you guys put this money the budget, I know you guys want to spend it on hiring more police officers for this reason or that, but I'm going to ask you to amend the budget because of X, Y, and Z.

I haven't heard that. I just see unilateral actions by the Executive and the Legislature's left out. We are not a partner in the budget process and that disturbs me that I don't know if the Executive has the power to unilaterally impound budget funds, unilaterally, without approval of this Legislature, and make decisions concerning this budget without seeking amendments to the budget. That is a de facto amendment when you do things like this and it's not there for the legislative purposes.

Let me ask you about another thing. Funding for energy costs in this budget. Are energy costs underfunded to the point that we will have to be dealing with -- we will have shortfalls and we will have to turn off the lights in County government because there's not enough money in the budget for it.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

In our opinion the energy lines in the aggregate are about \$4 million short given all, you know, a reasonable forecast in terms of all the things that are happening in terms of electrical rates, oil and natural gas. What will happen is monies will be transferred from the bills that we don't have to pay or services that we will, you know, not render, or something we won't buy.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So it's not a dire situation. It's not a dire situation.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Well, no, it's not dire, but it's regrettable that something that is included in the budget to be spent on a particular purpose cannot be spent because we'll need to move that money over to the energy lines.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And how does the recommended level of turnover savings affect appropriations in filling vacant but fully funded positions in the budget?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Generally speaking turnover savings is higher than it has been in the past in many departments. Although there are vacancies, many departments will -- don't have sufficient funds to fill those vacancies until well into the second or final quarter of the year. Therefore, you'd have to wait for somebody to leave before you could actually, you know, have the monies to fill the position or you need to wait until after -- the second half of the year. There are some exceptions, but that's the general rule of thumb.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Earlier this year, not to point out one example because I'm sure I could be replete with examples, there was something with Gabreski Airport that involved \$4,000 that this County, the administration, came forward for bonding, to bond this out, which just shocked me. How do you bond \$4,000 out? Is there sufficient money in this budget for pay-as-you-go for capital projects?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

There is no money in the 2008 budget for pay-as-you-go.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

So even amounts as small as 500, 1,000, \$4,000, would have to be bonded out for a period of time, incurring interest, expense and debt.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

That's a likelihood unless the Legislature changes the budget.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And one last thing. The District Attorney's Office, the County Clerk's Office, the County Treasurer's Office, I believe the Sheriff's Office, all the major elected Countywide officials had all their office equipment funding zeroed out and that function transferred over to the -- I guess it's Information Technology Department. Are you in favor of that recommendation?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Just to clarify, it wasn't just the elected officials, it was all departments under the justification that the commuter purchases and equipment purchases will be consolidated and equipment will be purchased on an as needed basis. We've already gone from a five year computer replacement cycle to a six year computer replacement cycle. Now we're talking about replacing equipment on an as needed basis.

Our report recommends that for the purposes of a more transparent budget presentation in terms of what does it cost to operate the County Clerk's Office or what does it cost to operate the Probation Department, or what have you, that those monies be transferred back to the respective departments.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

I happen to be in agreement with that having been County Clerk for 16 years because it would mean, quite frankly, that the County Clerk, which mails back all the deeds and mortgages and things of that nature, would have no ability to do that and would have to go through Information Technology to do that. And it would just delay the process and it would give the Executive untold power over independently elected officials which I think is an unwise step and certainly something the Charter did not contemplate when it was drafted. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Legislator Alden.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

I just have two, which might be quick questions. If you don't have the answer to the first one, if you could just look it up and get it to me sometime later day. But what's our total principle and interest re-payment?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Robert's telling me \$90 million.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. And then the second question is what is one percent of our sales tax?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

About ten, eleven million dollars.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

No. One percent?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Yeah.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Twelve. Yeah, sales tax is 1.2 billion, so 1% is 12 million.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Oh, you're --

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

You're talking about the one percent or one percent --

**LEG. ALDEN:**

No, if you -- I'll rephrase it so -- Gail, I'll rephrase. If we're off on our projections of sales tax by 1%, how much does that equal?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

That's the ten to 12 million, yeah.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

And that's it; right? Ten to 12 million?

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Yes. If we'd like --

**LEG. ALDEN:**

So if we say we're going to -- sales tax is going to come in at two-and-a-half percent and it comes in at one-and-a-half percent, we're --

**MS. VIZZINI:**

We're off --

**LEG. ALDEN:**

-- by ten million.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

Right.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Is that it, Cameron?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Yeah, I'm good.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Any other questions? Hearing none, then, we're going to go into -- Gail, I want to thank you for the presentation. We're going to go right into the public portion. I had asked Mr. Wallace Broege representing the Suffolk County Historical Society.

#### **PUBLIC PORTION**

**MR. BROEGE:**

Thank you. My name is Wallace Broege. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Historical Society. I'm here this morning to speak about the 2008 Operating Budget and funding for the Suffolk County Historical Society.

First, the Legislature's Budget Review Office has evaluated our request and the impact of the recommended funding -- recommended level of funding. And the review, I believe, has been thorough and very fair. And you can find it in your Budget Review -- your reports from the Budget Review Office on pages 335 and 336. I refer you to that because I haven't prepared a separate sheet just about the impact of this, but I believe everything that I would be saying you'll find right in -- or giving you in print, you'll find in that report. There is a very brief summary of their recommendation for us on page 21.

The Suffolk County Historical Society requested \$275,000 in 2008. This represented an increase of \$20,000 above the 2007 adopted budget. The County Executive's recommended level of funding is \$181,030 or 29% less than what we received in 2007 and \$93,970 less than our requested level of

funding.

This makes quite an impact on the operation of the Historical Society if this goes in place. We'll be facing a staggering deficit of \$73,970. And we'll have two options, really, to meet this. One would be to reduce our modest endowment in order to avoid the devastating -- in order to avoid devastating our programs and our staff. Or we could cut our budget and lose at least five part-time staff members, which include a gift shop manager, two receptionists, the librarian, a museum educator and a program coordinator and reduce the time available for a part-time custodian.

The first option places the Historical Society behind the proverbial eight ball by endangering its financial base of support and depriving it of future growth and financial stability.

The second option means an immediate cut in staff and programs which will mean reducing our public hours for the museum and library, closing the Weather Vane Gift Shop, which actually earns money to support our programs, to cancel an ambitious new schedule of public programs and exhibitions and eliminate a new public relations campaign put in place in 2007.

In 2007 the Legislature increased our funding. That enabled many positive things for us. An overall increase of programs and exhibitions coupled with renewed public relations efforts designed to increase public awareness about the treasures that we hold in trust for the public; and also to increase our attendance to the institution.

The increased funding demonstrated a real commitment by the Legislature to stabilize the organization and help it develop its full potential. The package of material that I've distributed to you this morning contains some of the new materials we have developed that illustrate the tangible benefits that we've been able to put in place as a result of the increased funding.

By providing an additional \$93,970 in funding to the County Executive's recommended level of funding for us in 2008 you will keep the Historical Society on a steady course, financially stabilize it and maintain all of our current programs and staff levels. You'll allow the Historical Society to advance its programs and strengthen the institution. There is no funding in this request to add additional positions. We're going to maintain our current staff.

I also want to say that I appreciate the interest and support that the Legislature has demonstrated in the past and we respectfully request that you continue to support us by adding that \$93,970 to the County Executive's recommended level in 2008. Coming to these meetings -- I have to add that coming to these meetings always has a sobering effect on me because it's really an opportunity for me to see some of the very difficult decisions that you have to make. So at this point I don't envy you that position with any budget. All I can do is ask that you consider our request. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Quick question. You said the Legislature added money to your budget last year in 2007?

**MR. BROEGE:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Could you tell me how much that amount was?

**MR. BROEGE:**

Previous to the -- let's see. We were -- 190,100 -- it was 191,140. And we went from 191 to 255.

**MS. VIZZINI:**

72,520.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you.

**MR. BROEGE:**

And, by the way, we had kind of stayed at that level for about four or five years. Each year the Suffolk Executive had taken money out and the Legislature added to bring us up to the same level. So that was the first increase we had had in a number of years.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you.

**MR. BROEGE:**

And a good one, I might add. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Okay. We have Suffolk County Treasurer Angie Carpenter.

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak again about what's happening in our department as pertains to the budget. My Executive Director, Loren Houghton, just stepped out. We had gotten a call this morning from the Budget Office requesting an exact figure of what the tax delinquencies are so he's back there checking on that now.

As far as the positions go in our department, the request that we had has -- they have not reduced any positions. And I do thank the County Executive for that. However, when we prepared our budget, we had four vacancies; now we have eight. And it really is important to maintain the level of staffing that we have. We have 56 authorized positions in the department because we are a revenue generating department. We collect the taxes. We, you know, earn the interest earnings. We collect the hotel/motel tax. And if we don't have the bodies there to do the functions, that is all going to suffer.

Speaking earlier this morning with Allen Kovesdy about interest earnings, the feds have lowered the rates. And needless to say the banks have responded likewise and are starting to cut interest rates. We have been very aggressive and not sitting back and accepting that. I've looked to try to move money wherever possible to the banks that are still giving us a decent rate and threatening to move monies. So now they're like, okay, well, let me look at it again. And I find it quite amusing that when the feds raise the rates, they didn't rush to raise our interest rates. It was only when they were pressed to did they increase our rates.

However, conversely when the feds lower the rates, they immediately cut the interest rates. So we're working very aggressively with that. And I wanted to let you know about that because I do understand the position that you're in trying to, you know, get a handle on every possible nickle that you can to put this budget together to deliver the services to the residents of this great County.

The other thing that I wanted to speak to, and Judy will reiterate it, too, and we have met and discussed it amongst all the County-wide elected officials, and that was the moving of the IT money, zeroing out our request. And in my department it was \$52,000; zeroing that out and moving it to the IT Department.

Now on face value it sounds like it might make sense centralizing the functions and so forth. However, we already -- we're not purchasing equipment in a vacuum right now. Any major purchases have to go to the Information Processing Steering Committee prior to our purchasing them. So there is a system in place to make sure that we're all in sync when we're doing these major purchases.

However, when it comes to something like a fax machine or, you know, an adding machine or what have you, this would create another step, another hurdle for us to have to jump through to get permissions to purchase. And I think the fact that -- especially for the elected officials, the only departments that were exempted were the Legislature, the Health Department and Social Services or Parks -- were exempted from this particular initiative. But we answer to the voters and we, you know, answer to the Legislature. And I think that, you know, you agree on an amount that is right for our department to function and we should be working, you know, within those constraints.

The one other thing before I turn it over to Judy, I wanted to ask Loren to bring you up to speed on. We received your request from the County Executive to include anything that we might have in the state legislative agenda. And there are two things that we've requested. And one particularly impacts our ability to maximize revenues and that's with the hotel/motel tax. And I'd ask Loren to explain it briefly so that hopefully when you get the resolution, you'll be supportive of it also.

**MR. HOUGHTON:**

Good morning. The first thing we're asking the County Executive to include in his Legislative agenda for the new State Legislative session is just changing the New York State Tax Law and adding a clearer definition of what a hotel is. Right now we have a certain number of hotels who do not want to register with us and they're using the overnight exemption to do that. And we feel rather than sending out an investigator and spending the night to prove that they do rent overnight, we would just change the definition in the State law for hotels to include "capable of providing overnight lodging".

The second initiative that we're asking the County Executive to support is changing the Real Property Tax Law. I don't recall what the section number is, but every year the County Legislature grants the County Treasurer the authority to process correction of error refunds to taxpayers under \$2,500. And that's founded in New York State Property Tax Law. We're not asking the County Executive to change that process. You would have the ability to approve or disapprove that legislation each January. But what we're asking the State to do eventually is to increase that exemption to \$5,000 per year.

What we found that -- is that a lot of these refunds go to lower income taxpayers. All it takes is for an error to be made at the town level for a Star enhanced -- to miss a Star enhanced exemption and now you have someone, an elderly taxpayer who could really use the money, who's paid their taxes and who have -- have been over-assessed by that error. So what this legislation that we're proposing would do would be to refund the taxes administratively without going to this body where the amount of the refund is \$5,000 or less. That way some of these lower income taxpayers will get their refunds quicker.

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Thank you, Loren. You know, in light of the fact that taxes are ever increasing and certainly not from the Legislature's perspective but with school taxes, it's not unusual that the refund would be more than the \$2,500 so it just helps us expedite the process.

As far as the one other item with the IT, I did mention the other County-wide elected's, the District Attorney, the Sheriff, were all in in sync with the Comptroller with the initiative to leave the money where it is in our respective departments. And now I'll turn it over to the County Clerk.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Before, that, Judy, Legislator D'Amaro has some questions of the Treasurer.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Good morning.

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Good morning.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Thank you for coming down today. We appreciate it. The IT request, this \$52,342.47, and I see in our Budget Review report, which I'm sure you're familiar with, it actually line items the equipment you intend to purchase. Underneath that it informs us in the Legislature that the basis for determining whether we need new equipment from the County Executive's perspective has gone from -- it's based upon need as opposed to the age of the equipment. Which criteria are you using when requesting the new equipment?

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Well, when they talk about age, meaning six years, it was computers; it used to be five years, now it's six years. But we replace on need. We certainly don't say, oh, this fax machine is six years old, let's, you know, get a new one. When it breaks down is when we replace it.

We've got, you know, mailing machines, you know, postage machines, folders and so forth to distribute the payroll checks, everything that we need, the tools that we need to do the job that we're charged with doing. If you could see what we -- we actually have a stick that moves the shredded pieces of matter away to keep this equipment going. It's probably upwards of 30 years old.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

So just to follow up on that, to be a little specific, you have listed here the largest line item, I see, is a folder sealer at a cost of \$11,283. How many do you normally have? And is one down right now as we speak?

**MS. CARPENTER:**

We have just one. It's the one that we use the stick to move the debris aside. We would hold it as a backup if we could but it really has outlived it's usefulness. But we're keeping it together with spit and glue and a lot of prayers.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Okay. Thank you.

**MS. PASCALE:**

Can I just add to that as well? In the County Clerk's Office, we do the same thing. We base our replacements on need. The only variation from that, and I just had a conversation with Allen Kovesdy, is obviously you know that we have the title examiners that are attached to our office. The title examiners will be leaving. They're being displaced at the end of this year so that we are in the process of doing a major renovation in terms of a big public access room. Those pieces of equipment and typically computers are used a lot more frequently. And I don't want to use the term abused, but they get a lot more hammering on them so -- but I understand from the County Exec's Office that they have made an allotment for that as well.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Okay.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Is there anything --

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Any there any other questions for me?

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Judy, would -- I have no questions. Any questions from the panel? Judy, the --

**MS. PASCALE:**

Can I just speak a little bit --

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Sure, absolutely. Just put -- you have the information, okay.

**MS. PASCALE:**

-- about my vacancies. The only change that -- we had 17 vacancies. Three of the vacancies that we've had on the books for a long time, three of them were 80 percent reimbursed and three of them were 60 percent reimbursed because we collect New York State mortgage tax. I am happy to say that since the last time we spoke, I have had -- I think I mentioned last week that we did receive the signed SCINs for the three 80 percent. And subsequent to our meeting they have released the three 60 percent SCINs for reimbursement from New York State so we are in the process right now of canvassing and interviewing.

However, that notwithstanding, a systems programmer position was removed from the budget. I think everybody agreed that it was removed, I'm not going to say in error, but it was -- I'm looking at the County Exec's, they intend -- they said that we should fill it. And if we fill this position it will save on consulting fees. So we have somebody in mind for this job. So I would ask that the systems programmer be restored. The other position that was eliminated was an administrative aid. I did not ask for any new positions for next year.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

All right.

**MS. PASCALE:**

And I just want to echo Angie's -- I mean, I just want to -- just maybe impress a little further to have all of our purchasing for computer equipment. I have -- as County Legislator Romaine can attest, we have an extremely aggressive very, very busy mail room. If I have to get permission to go, you know, replace a mail machine, and again, that's done on need. We are very cognizant of the fact that the County's, you know, fiscal concerns right now; and like you we are, you know, we are elected by the people of this County and we take that responsibility very, very seriously. So I would ask that -- actually I had \$86,000 removed from my budget.

As you know, the County Clerk's Office has a very, very, very state of the start computer department. My Director of Optical Imaging spends a great deal of time in Hauppauge. He has to jump through several hoops before any purchase can be made. So there are already, you know, safety measures and checks and balances in place. We have to answer for every purchase that we make that's computer-related. So I would just ask for your consideration. And I agree with Angie and I believe as Angie said, the District Attorney and the Comptroller and the Sheriff agrees with us as well. So I ask your indulgence in that. Thank you.

**MS. CARPENTER:**

Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Thank you very much. Judy, Angie, have a good day.

**MS. PASCALE:**

Thank you.

**MS. CARPENTER:**

You, too.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Christine Malafi, the Suffolk County Attorney representing the Law Department.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Good morning. I am here to request that the budget as recommended by the Executive's Office be passed by this Legislature adding four new positions in my office. And I was going to address the needs why I need each of them and then answer any questions that you may have.

With respect to the need for an additional attorney in my Real Estate Condemnation Unit, it was not until we saw the Department of Public Works' budget, which included approximately 160 condemnation proceedings they intend to bring next year as part of road widening projects that we realized that one attorney cannot do 168 road condemnation proceedings. Right now I think we average about 30 a year. They take anywhere between one to four to five, depending on how complicated each of the condemnations are. And although each of the parcels appear to be small, the same amount of work has to go into each condemnation proceeding. So I do need another attorney in order to assist the Department of Public Works in the condemnations. And that's why that was added to the budget afterwards.

With respect to the request for the two additional people in my Municipal Bureau, one an attorney and one a contracts examiner, that is an effort by myself to assist all departments and the Legislature in speeding up the contract process. We have sped it up from what I'm told prior to 2004 could take about six months to get a contract out. Most contracts are in and out of my office within three weeks at this point in time. However -- and all of the attorneys in my Municipal Law Bureau, which are currently ten, are working one hundred percent and I can't fault any of them. They go as fast as they possibly can.

In order to expedite the process further and to help departments and not-for-profits get their contracts through faster, I would request another attorney. A contracts examiner who is not an attorney is hired at a much lower salary than a starting attorney, would also help speed the process up because some of the problems come from the vendors and the agencies that we're contracting with not getting either my office or the department that they are contracting with the necessary information. So this would speed it up to have a person, not a lawyer, in my office to be able to make phone calls and follow-up even more than we do now. And there are right now I think pending at least one, if not two, IR's to speed up the contract process. This would help not only my department, but it would help all the departments.

And also, part of the BRO's report indicates that I have a lot of vacancies in my office, which is true at the moment, but it's only because of the one percent. We haven't been able to hire in about two-and-a-half months. Some of the vacancies occurred since the halting of the SCIN forms until the one percent passes. And some people have left the office. I have had a couple of attorneys leave the office in the past six weeks so I haven't been able to even interview until the one percent passes. I think it's today up in Albany.

With respect to the secretarial positions in my office, they were all -- we were in the process of filling all of them at the time the 1% failure to pass in Albany stopped everything. It's very important that my office be fully staffed and the County Executive's Office has been very gracious in always letting me fill -- I very rarely have vacancies in my office. Because my office not only assists all the other departments, but we help all the other departments collect money that's owed to them. We help DSS collect on it's liens, we help the Treasurer's Office with the hotel/motel tax and collecting that and bringing lawsuits to enforce it.

My office just two weeks ago, in the last two weeks has gotten three defendants verdicts on cases that well over a million dollars was asked for both on trial and on paper, and if I don't have the staff that can focus on paperwork as well as going out, it's going to cost the County money. We're going to get hit for verdicts, we're not going to be able to avoid costly trials and we're not going to be able to assist all the other departments in everything that we do. So it's very important that I do fill all my positions and the County Executive's Office understands that and I have been able do that. So right now although there are a lot of vacancies, it's attributable to the fact that there has been a halt

on SCINs for over two months now.

I have to be honest with you. I have two attorneys who have been gracious enough to be waiting for the one percent to pass to come on board and they haven't accepted other job offers, waiting so that I can hire them. So the vacancies are not -- this is abnormal for my office and we are suffering for it. I need all of my vacancies filled and I do need the extra positions that they've asked for, that the County Executive has asked for for me.

One more thing. The assistant to myself that is requested by the County Executive's Office pertains to the fact that my secretary right now is working out of title because we give her -- myself and my Deputy and my Chief Deputy, we give her work to do that is outside secretarial work. She helps us look things up, she helps us with some research -- she helps us. In order for me to have her work in her title I would like to create this position, the assistant to me, put her in that, and then I'll abolish the position she's in now.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Any questions?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Just one.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Alden.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Hi, Christine. You just saved me a phone call. The contract compliance and contract negotiation, and I'll give you a specific, the Scully Estate, who's handling that?

**MS. MALAFI:**

My Municipal Law Bureau. There's about three attorneys. We all have been working on that. We pretty much are on top of that one. That one is a little complicated on legal issues.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay, but the Deputy or Chief Deputy County Attorney had been working on it. So it is now it's fully transferred to your department?

**MS. MALAFI:**

The Chief Deputy County Attorney is my department.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

No, I'm sorry. Chief Deputy County Executive had been working on it.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes. Well, I don't act on my own. I always am working with a department. So for some contracts I work with, directly with -- let's say the Parks Department and the Scully Estate, and the County Executive's Office gets involved in matters in negotiation at times also. So I don't know if the County Executive's Office is still involved in that one directly or if it's just Parks Department and my office. I don't know off the top of my head.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

To make it simple for me can I just call you then?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Absolutely. Anyone sitting here can always call me direct.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

And you have always done all the condemnations for DPW on property?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

There's no separate unit over in DPW that does --

**MS. MALAFI:**

Oh, no. They have a separate unit that starts. There's a lot of paperwork to do with condemnations, so they start it and my office does all the legal end of it. Once there's -- if somebody does not -- if DPW offers somebody a dollar amount for their property and they do not take it, then my office gets involved.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

So that's just a negotiation. They can't start a condemnation because that's, I mean, that's all statutory.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Correct. They start with the initial paperwork, yes, and then it comes to my office. My office looks at every condemnation, yes. I could not do it without --

**LEG. ALDEN:**

All right. I'll call you because --

**MS. MALAFI:**

I'm sorry. The Condemnation Unit in DPW is necessary. They assist my office. I could not do without them. I need them to be doing what they are doing in DPW in order for the attorney in my office to be able to handle all of the condemnations for the County.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. And again, I'll call you on that because I used to do condemnation and I don't understand how a layperson could even, you know, be involved in even the initial part of it. But I'll call you. Thanks.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Well, they get all the background for us. It's all of the initial paperwork so that when it comes to my office the attorney sitting in my office doesn't have to go out and look at the property, look at the appraisals. We don't have to get involved in that because it comes to us as a packet.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Oh, okay. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Christine, how long does it take for the contracts to, once we appropriate for the contracts, to leave your office?

**MS. MALAFI:**

That's -- I can't answer that question because once you appropriate it doesn't start with my office. My office doesn't emanate anything.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Once it gets to your office how long does it take?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Once it gets to my office I would say roughly about 90 percent of those contracts are out within two to three weeks of coming into my office.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Once it gets to your office are the contracts -- once you prepare them they are basically ready for signature from the other side.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Is that what you're saying?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Basically, but not always. We have to sometimes make sure that the schedule of what's going to be done under the contract is legal. There is some back and forth with that. There's usually some back and forth on technical aspects of the contract, but it's not that it comes in, it's not rubber stamped by my office, no.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Right. No, I understand that. But it's -- there's not an extended delay in your office in terms of getting the contracts out once you get them from the departments.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Not usually.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Is that accurate?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes. I'm not saying that there's never a blame that can be attributed to my office, but for the most part we have sped up the contract process immensely. We get well over 200 contracts in per month and well over 180 get out of my office every month.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

And the contracts examiner, what exactly is this person going to do?

**MS. MALAFI:**

If we had somebody in the office, not a lawyer, who could go back when we log a contract out -- for example, if we get a contract in and it needs more information, it either goes back to the department or we contact the vendor to give us more information. Once it's logged out if I had another body in my office they could follow-up to say okay, we logged this out, we gave this contract back to you, how come you haven't given it back to us. That way there's not a department thinking that we have it when we don't have the contract or a vendor thinking that we have it if we don't have it. It can be followed more in one central place since they all do come to my office at some point. It would be better to have a centralized person following everything.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Any questions? Legislator Kennedy.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Thank you, Chair. Good morning. How are you?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Fine. How are you?

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Doing all right, doing all right. One of the questions that I have for you with the contract stuff, or the contracts, is that I'm still a little uncertain as to the disagree of review, scrutiny or compilation that has to go on with a contract from your end when you get something from us. I think if I decide to go ahead and provide \$500 for the Nesconset Athletic Association, or I was a part of a contract that was a \$900,000, let's say, with {Zol} Medical Services, from your end a contract is a contract is a contract and it requires basically all of the appendixes, all the representations, and all of the material that has to go into it to make it binding upon the parties. Is that true?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Okay.

**MS. MALAFI:**

But, a \$500 contract for an athletic society as opposed to a \$900,000 contract for a medical something would definitely take different amounts of time because I would hope that the exhibit for which services would be provided with the \$900,000 contract would be a heck of a lot more than a \$500 contract. So there may be more work in that.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Agreed, and that's usually, in the limited experience that I had with working with contracts at a municipal law, the devil is always in the details as far as trying to get specificity, as far as what the requirements are from whomever the vendor is. And good measurables, a good work schedule associated with what the deliverables are and something where we can hold the vendor -- hold their feet to the fire in other words, if they're not performing. Use the contract for what its purpose is.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Correct.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

But my point in asking the question is sometimes I get the sense that from your perspective you do have to put in a lot of time on some things that may be de minimus or incidental. I'm wondering if there would be more -- if we could achieve what it is we're looking to achieve by having some kind of a threshold in there of level of review.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Attorney review you mean?

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Yeah.

**MS. MALAFI:**

The problem is that the New York State Comptroller, if they ever audited the County, they audit a \$900,000 contract the same way they would audit a \$900 contract with respect to purpose. So the devil in the detail, the differences might be -- there may not be -- we may not require the Nesconset Athletic League to indemnify us if anything happens with a baseball bat because once we give them the money and they buy the bat there is no responsibility to the County if something happens with that bat. But on the \$900,000 contract there might be something in there that could cause potential liability to the County so we may negotiate a different indemnification clause in a contract. That might take a month because if the contractor doesn't want to indemnify us if they do something wrong, then we're going to be a standstill because I'm not going to legally approve a contract with no indemnification flowing in favor of the County. My job is not only to get a contract done that can

be signed but get a contract done and signed that protects the County in every way it possibly can.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

I agree. In essence, you know, as a client I want you to do that. I want you to go ahead and make certain that you have that same level of protection. I guess I throw out to you a question, then, only that I continue to hear that we have thousands and thousands of contracts going through your office on an annual basis based on what it is that we do for groups in our community and what we do collectively as a County, and that that tends to increase the workload and thereby perhaps maybe that's why you are talking to us about somebody who's a non-attorney but nevertheless skilled in doing some of the ministerial stuff associated with a contract.

My question back to you is, is could we effectuate the same thing we choose to do by doing a break as we do sometimes, say up to 10,000 or up to 20,000. Legally do we have the ability to double tier it, the amount of material that's got to be submitted by a vendor with the contract in order to make it legal, binding, protective, but maybe not to the level and magnitude on a small appropriation as compared to the large.

**MS. MALAFI:**

We do that already.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

We do.

**MS. MALAFI:**

For example, a vendor on, you know, your \$500 athletic scholarship or even \$1,000 athletic something, we would not require that person to make sure they give us their insurance information. We use commonsense and I think that we already do -- I don't want to say as little as possible, we make it as simple as possible on the smaller contracts.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

And that's something that basically all of those vendors are aware of?

**MS. MALAFI:**

I don't know if they have a quote notice of it, but if any of them call and say listen, I can't sign the contract because I don't have a million dollar insurance policy, we look at it and say oh, you don't need it, don't worry about it. We mark it that insurance is waived for this contract.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Then maybe what I need to do is maybe I need to familiarize myself with the contract protocol a little bit more. Is there -- in other words, how do you have it? Do you have it on like an operating procedure in the office or something? Or is it that the contract attorneys kind of intuitively know it.

**MS. MALAFI:**

It's more just -- it's practice. There is nothing in writing. There's no quote procedure because it varies, depends on who the vendor is, what the purpose of the contract is. There is so many variables that it really wouldn't do any good to -- if I gave you a list it would be contract comes in, contract is reviewed, contract gets signed, contract goes out.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Okay. All right. All right. Thank you. I appreciate it. I'll yield.

**MS. MALAFI:**

You're welcome.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Barraga.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

I know you have been speaking for quite a while. From a monetary, budgetary, fiscal perspective, as opposed to other speakers, you're here indicating you're getting what you wanted from the County Executive, right? He is giving you what you wanted from a fiscal perspective, right?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Oh, yes.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

And you are asking us basically to sign off on that.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Two quick questions. How many contracts does your agency handle a year?

**MS. MALAFI:**

The Law Department handles well over 4,000 contracts a year.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Has that been going up or going down or is that constant over the last four years?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Absolutely going up.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Going up?

**MS. MALAFI:**

We found -- in the past three and a half years we found lots of instances where money was being spent without contracts and we fixed that. And now everything has a contract, everything is scrutinized.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

And with respect to the vacancies, I didn't really look at the report, I apologize. But you say -- are you saying that once the 1% tax is passed you are going to be able to fill all the vacancies in your office?

**MS. MALAFI:**

Yes. There's a couple of positions I don't have people in mind for yet, the attorney positions, but yes, the search is continuing. I need them. We are in need of attorneys.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

So you have approval to fill all the slots in your department.

**MS. MALAFI:**

As of right now the SCIN forms for the Civil Service positions, I think the attorney positions too, that I have been waiting for are signed. They are just being held by the County Executive's Office until the 1% tax passes.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Okay. Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you very much.

**MS. MALAFI:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Cheryl Felice, the President of the Association of Municipal Employees.  
Good morning, Cheryl.

**MS. FELICE:**

Good morning. Good morning and thank you Chairman Montano and D'Amaro for allowing AME to speak with you today. My name is Cheryl Felice. I'm President of AME and the over 7,000 members who help your constituency day in and day out. I am joined with Lydia Sabasto, my First Vice President and Debbie Alloncius, who serves as the serves legislative liaison here. She sits through all the committee meetings and for the General Legislature meetings to monitor just what's going on in the County because we do have the most amount of members in each of the offices to assist in delivery and services. So it's important that we work as partners with not only the County Executive but with the Legislature in getting that job done. So AME takes great pride in looking over the budget and offering our opinion and suggestions because we do believe that we are all searching for the same goal in making this the greatest County that we all live and work in.

So before I get started with my prepared statement that I hope all of you have, I just wanted to make a few comments because this is the 5th year, 5th consecutive year that we are providing this analysis by the same analysis team and there is a lot to be said for consistency. Having the members from our auditing firm, Abram, Herde and Merkel, Fred {New} -- Frank (New) and Fred {Palm} are with us in the audience today along with the chief operative from the auditing firm, David Fitzsimmons. So they'll be taking notes on the various comments that were made earlier and then certainly the questions that we have here today.

But the consistency that I point to is the fact that they have -- they have seen this budget and they have seen this process early on and as new to the process, and now in the 5th consecutive year have seen where some of the deficiencies that we've pointed out have not only not improved upon, but have gotten quite worse in this report. And we'll point to that, but we're proud of the fact that we are able to bring this report to you each and every year.

Also in my prepared statement I don't talk about EMHP and the successful negotiations that did occur with the County Executive's Office and all ten unions, of which we're very proud. We have a resolution before you that will be in committee in November and then to the full Legislative body which we will talk more about then. But I don't want to minimize just how tough those negotiations were. Both sides had issues to deal with and issues to be met and I think in the true spirit of labor management cooperation we met those needs together and the unions are very pleased with the agreement that we came up to with the County Executive. So, we'll talk about that more later.

So if I may, I will get started on the prepared statement and again say, you know, for the past five years I have taken advance of this forum to offer the Legislative body my observations, thoughts, ideas and various recommendations on nearly -- on behalf of the nearly 7,000 AME members who are Suffolk's finest employees. I am pleased that our thoughts were met with favorable amount of agreement and support by this esteemed body in the past.

This year I am going to forgo the enumeration of where we would like to see expansion on this budget. I am going to concentrate on just two issues, staffing and workload. These issues affect our membership and the residents of our County directly and deeply. At the same time they are

creating a situation that is becoming more and more intolerable each day. Suffolk employees can no longer do more with less. Despite their best efforts and willingness to shoulder these burdens that have been placed upon them, our County needs your help and we need your help now.

Today I'm here as a supplicant on behalf of the AME membership and on our citizenry sincere and from the heart. To that end, AME has cause for concern. There are intolerable conditions in many of our departments. Without an increase in staffing my members can no longer provide the services that the 1.5 million residents deserve. Our County needs your help and they can no longer do more with less.

As the County Executive has told us on more than one occasion, budget surpluses often receive high grades from bond agencies. Last year I complimented this body to say it is honorable to be fiscally conservative as long as it does not result in a reduction of services to those in the population that so desperately need those services. A budget is more than just a set of numbers. We must not lose sight of the fact that it is a function of government to provide services to its citizens and in doing that we may not turn a profit. Suffolk County cannot become more concerned with ratings and surpluses than when we -- than they are with the welfare of its residents.

It is commendable for the Legislature to peer deep into this budget and examine each department. For the last three years every ounce has been squeezed out of the turnover savings from all agencies. In a March memorandum to the Chairman of the Budget and Finance, your Director of Budget Review Office said staffing is a major expenditure component of the County's Operating Budget, but permanent salary surpluses alone should not be interpreted as the sole source of determining budget surpluses. Not filling vacancies results in greater budget surpluses which will result in higher bond ratings. However, this is being achieved at the expense of providing needed and in some cases life threatening services to your constituencies.

And I may just turn away from my prepared statement now and some of the earlier comments that were made by the County Treasurer, Angie Carpenter, and the County Clerk, Judy Pascale. Revenue producing positions are also unfilled and need to be filled as well, which may contribute to some of the budget crunch that is being experienced right now.

Again, I'm here today to convince you that employees in all agencies are suffering from staffing shortages of major proportions. In a March memorandum from the Budget Review Office, Ms. Vizzini pointed out that the County has 1,297 vacant positions and we know that already this report needs to be amended because in the BRO report that figure jumped to an alarmingly high rate of 1,497 positions, a 200 position increase since March of this year. The vacancy rate we reported in March is at 10% and now we know it's crossing 12% and 16% in the Department of Health. Once again, throughout all County agencies our members can no longer do more with less.

As we stated, the Health Services has an astounding vacancy of 13.6%. The high percent of unfilled positions still exists even after the administration in the last three years had pared down and eliminated hundreds of vacancies from all departments. In this year's budget narrative, the County Executive acknowledges cumulatively eliminating 567 vacant positions. This mass elimination has been unilaterally imposed on all of us. It's unreasonable to think and seek analysis and discussion on the potential impact of these reductions on our workforce and residents without a comprehensive look and analysis being done.

In March of this year during a Health and Human Services Committee hearing, Chairman Elie Mystal opined that in an over 12 year period, from 1995 to January of 2007, the Department of Social Services is only about ten workers higher than in January of 1995 in spite of how the demands have increased in DSS. Personnel increased just more than ten people in 12 years.

AME cannot stand idly by without attempting to resolve these outstanding issues. In February of this year we testified before this Legislature that caseloads for Child Protection Services workers in Suffolk County is currently at about 25 cases per investigator. Lydia Sabasto is sitting with me

today as a caseworker. We have made it our mission over the last five years to report the increasingly high rate of caseloads for those caseworkers.

It is recommended that caseload for CPS investigators is only at 12 while our members are doing 25 and more. This disclosure prompted Presiding Officer Lindsay to remark, and I'll quote, "I'll repeat what I said before. What scares the hell out of me is picking up the paper one day and seeing some kid that was killed because he was being abused and then the finger pointing starts." Unquote. If it makes you feel any better, Presiding Officer Lindsay, it scares AME as well.

Legislator Lynne Nowick added during that same session and I quote, "It occurred to me I was on the committee three or four years ago and we are still having the same problem. I can't believe that. And like Legislator Lindsay said, just one more child needs to get hurt drastically, just one, and that's too many." AME asks what are we going to do to help prevent such a tragedy.

The Department of Social Services had an average vacancy rate of almost 9% for the last five years. At the same time Medicaid caseloads have increased over 50% and the Child Support Enforcement Bureau has had to review over 40,000 cases that resulted in a 75% increase in the child support cases. Yet, it received an award for recently achieving high success in closing those cases. I can go on and on. Few increases in staffing but the caseloads and workloads and the stress level just keep increasing as well. Members of the Legislature, our County and the workers who deliver the services need your help.

Nothing has changed much in the Department of Public Works either when we reported to you last year that private contractors were taking up residence at desks side by side with County employees and right within the County offices. County engineers are becoming a thing of the past, and long wait lines are commonplace in the vehicle repair shops because the number of workers is outpaced by the level of demand.

The Health Services Department is another case in point as we keep stressing the high vacancy rates that exist. The John J. Foley Nursing Facility has close to a 20% vacancy rate. How are AME members expected to deliver high quality services when one out of five positions are not being filled? Patient care remains high, so too does the stress. Our workers can no longer do more with less.

In September I wrote to Presiding Officer Lindsay concerning a serious shortage of personnel in the 911 Dispatch Communications Center at Police Headquarters. In 2000, Suffolk County 911 handled 1,241,052 calls for service. I wrote in the letter in the County's own efficiency report as referenced above, recommendations clearly stated that when should we -- that we should be staffed with 84 operators, not the 57 we currently have. The Police Commissioner has responded by saying that no department is fully staffed, there are always vacant positions. Yet he has and he will be immediately filling four vacancies. It's a start. And as one of our members said, waiting two or three minutes for a 911 operator call doesn't seem like much unless it is your child who is choking. This is a matter of life and death. It is our belief that even a sitting Legislator most recently was placed on hold when calling 911. Our County needs your help.

Today I would also like to share some information with you that surprised my board members and me. We recently completed an AME outreach project directed to our members. What I wanted to share with you is that our members think the most important issues facing them at work no longer include wages or pensions. The top three issues that were raised in our outreach project -- 89% of the work unit staffed by AME members who participated in the project said staff vacancies were their most urgent problem. Eighty nine percent said staff vacancies were the most urgent problem. The next most reported concern was excess workload/caseloads that continued to worsen. And two out of three said they want more training to perform their jobs efficiently.

Once again, I say the top three issues from our workforce, the backbone of this government and the dedicated workers, is no longer about wages and pensions and other benefits. They want the tools

to do their job better and deliver the services more efficiently. These are the folks on the frontline. They know what is going on and they know what needs to be done in order to improve the delivery of services. We need to address these issues immediately and our County needs your help. Our workers can no longer do more with less.

On behalf of the members of AME please accept the suggestion that I hope will ultimately be beneficial to the members of the Legislature and all other interested parties in the operation of Suffolk County government. And if I might say, my compliments to all the members who prepare the budget, who analyze the best, and who ultimately present the budget and approve the budget. We realize it is a very dubious task and many, many hands go into properly preparing and approving a budget and we don't minimize any of it.

But our recommendation would say that the Suffolk County Legislature should pass legislation for the establishment of an agency oversight report to be prepared by the County Executive's Budget Office for the purpose of monitoring departmental workloads and caseloads. Accountability and transparency regarding department level performance is critical to making sound, rational and enlightened budget decisions. This data would prove to the Executive, the Legislature, our citizens and all interested parties with one set of statistics for which to consistently report on an ongoing basis accomplishments, workloads, caseloads and staffing. With this report, all participants in the budget process would have access to information that is critical to their decision making.

In closing, I would like to stress that AME is no more an alarmist then Legislators Lynne Nowick, Lindsay, or yourselves when they made remarks during the previous committee hearings and in committees you have throughout the year. I fear every day for the welfare of AME members and the clients they serve. I fear that when tragedy strikes all of us in some way will be responsible. Suffolk County needs to fill our critical positions. We need to act before disaster occurs. Failure to act will result in being nothing more than penny wise and pound foolish. We can no longer favorably quantify budget surpluses and bond ratings when lives are being jeopardized. And in a quote I like to use from the former US Secretary of Labor, Robert Reisch, "Employees are assets to be developed, not costs to be cut". I would also add they can no longer do more with less.

On behalf of AME and the unit presidents and executive board members who are here today, thank you for this opportunity to testify before this committee.

***Applause***

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you very much, Cheryl. We have some questions. Legislator D'Amaro.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Good morning.

**MS. FELICE:**

Good morning.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Thank you for coming down and sharing your thoughts with us. I appreciate it.

**MS. FELICE:**

You're welcome.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Reading your opening statement, one of the things that AME was kind enough to call my attention to during the year last year, this year, was the CPS caseload. And what I thought was interesting

about that was there was actually a State reporter standard that was set on workload and the County was deficient in meeting the State standard. Is that pretty much how it went down?

**MS. FELICE:**

That has been our interpretation, not only this year, but in years past.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

So, using that as an example, when I look at the rest of your comments, we talk about the Health Department, we are talking about DSS and other departments, the 911 certainly is extremely important. How do we measure the need or is that what your recommendation about this oversight -- agency oversight report is about?

**MS. FELICE:**

What we have reported on over the years is there is no legal benchmark. There is no recommended -- well, there is no mandated caseload, but there are recommendations from various agencies outside -- outside the Department of DSS looking in. And it is those, what is the name of the one agency? The Caseworkers Association of New York State provides the recommendations. As I said, there is no legislative mandate for caseloads. It is something that we have looked to to seek getting accomplished in the past and I do believe New York City has the mandates. We have reported that in the past. We have reported that New York City does establish a Legislative mandate of the maximum amount of caseloads that a worker can handle. We don't have that in Suffolk County. It's not a State mandate either. But these various agencies that look at the local municipalities have offered recommendations and our caseloads are always exceedingly higher than those recommendations and they take into account cities that are similar to our County, like the City of Buffalo, the City of Syracuse, so on and so forth, but other counties in New York State that are similar to our demographics.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

And just to follow-up on that. You cite the number of vacant positions and then the percentage of vacant positions per department as one means of pointing out the workforce deficiencies within the various departments. But are you advocating for filling all the vacant positions and that's the only way we can be delivering the services properly or is that just merely a tool you are using to show that there are too many positions, some of them need to be filled.

**MS. FELICE:**

We have distinguished between all and critical and in our report we are saying critical positions. We realize that budgets usually have a turnover savings in the amount of 5 or 6%, but not in the amount of 10, 12, 16 and 20% that we are seeing. So we're not advocating for full vacancies, although I'm sure that would be a Godsend to the employees delivering the services out there. We realize built into budgets that there's usually about a five --

*Applause*

Yes, they would like all the positions filled obviously. But we do realize that the -- for budget purposes there usually is about a 5 or 6% turnover savings built in.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Right. I guess it's our job to find the balance.

**MS. FELICE:**

Right. And critical. I think the term that we're trying to highlight here is critical. There are critical positions. Certainly no one would argue that caseworkers should be left unfilled in the event a child's life is in danger. I think it would be safe to say that 911 operators and public safety dispatcher also should not be left unfilled, and there's a whole host of others.

I will also just make one comment. I wasn't specific about the HMO sale in the budget and, you know, we realize administratively the County has to look at what it has to do, but we are appreciative of the fact that no jobs are being lost as a result of that resolution. And I think it's similar to what happened several years ago with the Labor Department when federal funding was cut from the local level and jobs were going to have to be lost. The County Executive quickly went into a mode to replace those positions and put -- and I see Legislator Alden is sitting up in his chair because it was a very touchy issue at the time in moving those workers and using the 477 account that was for the drinking water and for water safety.

But nonetheless, as I've said before, it's the responsibility, the budget is the responsibility of many, many people, and there is no one correct answer, but there is lot of compromise. And certainly when the dialogue exists and the input is taken from all the various sources who have connection to the budget in one way or the other, whether they are making the budget, approving the budget, or delivering the services as a result of the budget. We are all affected by that budget in some way, shape or form. And the sale of the HMO in this particular process, whether it -- you make the decision to do it or not, in the budget proposal suggests not displacing the workers and redeploying them elsewhere and I would say that that should happen as well.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

One more question. Just while you are here I want to ask Budget Review, historically what is our vacancy rate and where are we at today as a percentage?

**MR. REINHEIMER:**

The vacancy rate is currently trending up. As noted before, we have about 1,400 vacancies. I think that's around 13%. Part of that is the result of retirements. Retirements are up this year over last year. Last year there were 195 retirements. As of the last payroll there's about 245 retirements this year. So it's coupled with our aging workforce and the policy of taking time to fill vacancies, so it's dynamic.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

But what about historically? What do we carry on the books as far as vacant positions as an average?

**MR. REINHEIMER:**

We'd have to look that up, but I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of 10% is not unusual Countywide.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

I'm not saying that goes to needs of departments or anything like that. I just want to get a general trend. But it's been historically approximately 10% but that is trending upward.

**MR. REINHEIMER:**

That's correct.

**CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:**

Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Alden.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Cheryl, in your suggestion that we pass legislation establishing an agency oversight report, is that similar to like efficiency reports in private industry, almost like with time and motion and that kind of concept?

**MS. FELICE:**

The details of the suggestion will be laid out in our full analysis by the analysis team.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

So that's to follow.

**MS. FELICE:**

Yeah. There will be a very comprehensive follow-up to this report which we have also given you in the last five years and will go into the details of that report. But I would say that the contract agency oversight committee that we had suggested last time around, Presiding Officer Lindsay was kind enough to actually put that into a Legislative committee and we do think that was the first step towards taking a look at contract agencies. And those agencies that are being hired where County budget -- County workers could better fill those positions. It finally gave, like in one distinct forum, a chance to take a look at it and say there are some jobs and there are some functions that are better served by contract agencies because AME members don't provide those services and those contracts should be awarded. But in the case where the contract agencies go -- start stepping into the roles of the County employee, for example, the engineers, then we need to take a look at that and take a step back and say we are really better doing in-house.

You know, the other issue that this Legislature has been very complimentary for -- with our membership is an awarding years of service and it's been commonplace for this agency to award proclamations to those employees who have served 30 and 40 years. That's the norm. It's very rare that people come into these jobs and stay for a year or two and get out. The institutional knowledge of AME members, as well as all County workers, is priceless in what you -- in the services you get from them when they stay on the job for an extended amount of time. And it's what you're losing because the new people are not coming in as well as they were in the past because these vacancy rates are being kept so high. It's something that really needs to turn around because the whole County is losing when you are not cultivating that institutional knowledge.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

I'm glad you went into that a little bit because we don't really have a plan to replace our aging workforce and that can lead up to major problems in the future. So I'm glad that you included that in your off the cuff comments.

**MS. FELICE:**

And your Budget Review Office has also pointed out the aging workforce over the last several years.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Thank you.

**MS. FELICE:**

Nearly a third are of retirement age if I recall the statistic correctly.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Kennedy and then Legislator Stern.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Cheryl, thank you again. As always you bring the issues that are at the heart of the membership to us on a consistent basis and you do a good job of it.

I have a question on the vacancies that maybe I need to go between yourself and with BRO. First, in your writing I see 1,297 and then you alluded to an additional 200 for 1,497 current vacancies. And then I see 567 as being proposed to be eliminated in this '08 budget. Are they duplicative or do I look at one and add it to the other?

**MS. FELICE:**

I think our 567 was over the last four years. That was the total number over the last four years.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

So we are looking at those positions as just being struck from the budget all together because of the fact that I guess we have had this policy of latency and filling the positions, they are just going to go by the wayside. Does your group, when they looked at it, did they look at these 567 that are being eliminated all together and assess them as far as matter of need or viability or?

**MS. FELICE:**

We have assessed those over the last years. And if you'd like us to go into a little more detail in our final report we can do so.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

I would appreciate that. And what I would also ask you to focus on, one of the things that consistently troubles me is that we have vacant positions that are being held vacant that in many cases may be 40, 50, 60 and 70% offset by State or Federal revenues. Do you have a sense of that 1,497 that are currently vacant, how many of them may be offset by other revenue sources and what we may be losing in the way of revenue by not filling those positions.

**MS. FELICE:**

That's a great question. I don't have that right now but we could also include that in our final analysis. But the -- I believe the County Clerk indicated even 80% reimbursement rate, and in DSS many of those positions are 85 and 100% reimbursable.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

And we had that experience in the Clerk's Office and we constantly looked to go ahead and keep them filled because we were a revenue generator as some of our departments are. And the only way to go ahead and process those revenues is with hands on board as we have spoken about.

The other thing that you spoke about was and, you know, the Presiding Officer is to be commended for creating the contract oversight committee. But in some of our conversations we also talked about some of those roles or functions that seem to be migrating out of the workforce out into the private sector. Do you have an overall sense of where that's going as far as jobs that were traditionally done by members and now have been contracted out?

**MS. FELICE:**

Well, I would have to say that most notably what I would point to is the Engineering Department in DPW where traditionally you had a team of County engineers which seems to be going more and more to the private sector.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Okay. All right. I guess we'll look for that. I'll be happy to see the detailed report to look at some of those other items. Thank you.

**MS. FELICE:**

Thank you, Legislator Kennedy. You were also very complimentary of our full report in months past to say that it showed that AME did it's homework and that if Legislator's didn't read it they were missing something. So, I hope they take you up on your advise.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

I'm sure they will. Thank you.

**MS. FELICE:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Stern.

**LEG. STERN:**

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair. We all share the concerns about vacancies and turnovers, but what I find just as disconcerting is, Cheryl, I'm reading your analysis here, and that two-thirds of County employees also suggest that they need, that they want and probably need more training to do their jobs. So if we are going to have vacancies, if we are in this position where we rely on our people to do the best job they possibly can, you would think that we would do everything that we possibly could to insure that we have the best trained people that are on the job. So I'm wondering when employees suggest that they want more training to be able to perform their jobs more efficiently, what's in place now and what do you suggest we look at to insure that we have the best trained workers in Suffolk County?

**MS. FELICE:**

Well, first I would say is you have a willingness that people want to be trained more. We would have to do more analysis to actually dive into where they think the training is deficient. Because I do know that the various departments do have personnel training and there is internal orientation. But somewhere, somehow, it's fallen short. And like I said, this analysis that we did was in preparation of our overall budget analysis where we asked all of our unit presidents -- we have 30 -- AME is an independent union. We're set up like AME -- the representatives you see right here act as the parent organization or in the private sector the equivalent of an international. And then we have 34 unit presidents, so they would act as the locals. They are the ones who have their own executive boards and interact with the members, the fieldworkers, day to day, and then bring that information to the executive board in what's known as our Board of Directors meeting monthly. We go over the various issues throughout our union.

So our unit presidents were asked to go out into the field and ask a series of questions with our budget analysis and we will give you the sample form of what they were asked for. But the response that came back, like we are pointing out in our report here, is significant because it's the first time, it's the first time that workers didn't put wages, pension and health benefits up at the top of the list and they are really talking about what's needed in the workplace. And the fact that they are pointing to training needs I would say we have to look into it further to now do another survey to say okay, what are the training needs that you do think you need and we'll be willing to do that now that we were able to raise these issues. But this process happened just over the last several months.

**LEG. STERN:**

So perhaps further analysis can be done and we can discuss the results.

**MS. FELICE:**

Absolutely.

**LEG. STERN:**

Thank you.

**MS. FELICE:**

You're welcome.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Okay. Cheryl, I want to thank you, AME, all of you for coming forward and bringing us this information.

**MS. FELICE:**

Thank you very much. And thank you to all the Legislators. You have always been very supportive. Thank you. Thank you, Presiding Officer Lindsay.

## *Applause*

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Okay. We are running late. I have three more cards. Actually, Tom Williams from Cornell and Marguerite Smith also from Cornell Cooperative Extension. Do you want to make one presentation? I'm going to have to hold you to the three minutes, Tom.

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

No problem. Thank you very much for the opportunity. I did make a presentation before the Legislature last week so I will repeat a lot of that. But I just wanted to speak about appreciating the work of the Office of Budget Review and request that you support their recommendations for restoring or including that two percent increase in our budget. And also the Diabetes Program. It's very hard for us to maintain staff, to maintain the skilled staff that we have if we are not able to give a small increase to staff. The cost of living, the cost of expenses has gone up and so it is very important for us to try to keep up.

As I had said before, the visible increase in our program was the transfer, the \$60,000 this year and the \$70,000 for next year for meat production to provide funding for the jail inmate food program and so that masks the fact that we didn't get the across the board increase. So we appreciate your support.

One piece in Budget Review that I did speak to our budget analyst about that wasn't included, in the meat production we also asked for 17,191 increase, which was our request, and that would reflect salary increases in that section under pseudo code HSI1. And so we would ask for that to be included in the budget. Thank you very, very much.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Any questions? Thank you, Tom.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Quick question.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Quick question? Sure.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Tell me a little bit about the Diabetes Program that Cornell operates.

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

Okay. Well, it's in cooperation with the Department of Health. We have spoken with them. They are fully in support. It is a -- we teach self management and self help, we do a lot of nutrition education. The funding that we would be losing out of this year's budget if it's not put back would include services to about 1,200 individuals.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

How long have you run the Diabetes Program?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

It's at least six or seven years we have been doing that.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

And how much funding was provided in the 2008 budget in the County Exec's recommended budget?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

In his recommended budget it was 277,000. We had requested an additional 127,000.

**LEG. ROMAINE:**

Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

I just have one question.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Go ahead.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

When you refer to 17,000 in -- no, I got the numbers wrong. How much is the increase for salaries?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

Across the board in our agency?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Yes.

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

It's about \$63,000.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

And what does that represent as far as an increase per person, two percent, one percent?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

I would be just about 2%.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

So it's within keeping of the COLA?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

Yes.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Marguerite, do you want to add anything to that?

**MS. SMITH:**

Good morning and indulging your time, thank you. Only that these programs are essential to all of us. As residents of Suffolk County we each benefit. The Diabetes Program we'll be speaking to again this afternoon to the Health Committee, so details there will follow. But Cornell Cooperative Extension, I'm very proud to have served. This is the end of my second year and will soon cease to be President of Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. But I've known Suffolk County Cooperative Extension since I was a child. The more we know about the diversity of Suffolk County the more we see how important these programs are to the health and the -- the environmental health and the personal health of all of us across the County. And I urge you and thank you again for your support in the support, urge you to give that support again at this time. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you. Robert Mitchell from the Legal Aid Society.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

This won't take the full minutes.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Just identify everyone, Bob, for the record.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Right. My name is Bob Mitchell, Suffolk County Legal Aid. To my right is Philip J. O'Reilly and Louis Mazzola. In the back we have our poster boy, George Roach, head of the Senior Citizen Division.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Bob, was someone twisting your arm?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

I had a rotorcuff operation, yeah. She was bigger than I thought. Anyway, it's the same story as last year. We're not looking for -- I know we can't get parity with the DA or the County Attorney. By the way, the County Attorney was kind enough to wait as long as she could to testify in our favor going along with the budget that we put in. But she had to leave, she got a call from Albany or something on the 1%, so she just left. But she said she's on board with us. I spoke to the DA the other day he kind of said yeah, he's on board. He can't hire people out east either. We are having a tremendous problem with retaining people and keeping -- yeah, and keeping them. That's the big problem.

Now, we had requested, and we have a handout here, if we could just hand it out to the members around the horseshoe. There's two handouts. One is for the general budget and the other is for the senior citizens budget. And generally what it is, when we requested our budget we requested \$762,000. The County gave us, the County Exec gave us 397,000. Your Legislative Budget Review gave us 397 plus 240,000, which brought us up to 637. Which leaves us 125,000, roughly \$125,000 short from our requested budget for the general.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Is this in both or is this in the general?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

In the general. This is the general budget, right. So we're requesting that -- we appreciate the Legislative Budget Review and we, you know, we go along with that budget. We are asking if you could increase it another \$125,000. And that write up pretty much explains everything in detail as to what's going on.

We have -- you have the exempt positions and you have the AME contract. They get the three percent, etcetera, etcetera. I've been through this a number of times with everybody individually on the panel. And we're just trying to keep some type of parity with the DA and the County Attorney. I know we are not going to go parity. And, you know, the AME contract is going to be coming up next year and they are just going to just outstrip us all together. Now, we had a 13% increase in our caseload but we haven't asked for more people. Our people are doing the job with the increases. So that's basically it for the general budget.

So far as the senior citizens budget is concerned, again, the County Exec, we had requested 576,000. The County Exec gave us 218. The Budget Review was kind enough to give us the 218 back plus another 314, which brings us to 532. That leaves us \$43,000 shy from -- for giving raises to the Senior Citizens Division. We have Mr. Roach here to testify if you want any additional information and the handout, you know, has it all there. Everything is in black and white.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

I will leave it up to you. Would you like to make a statement, Mr. Roach?

**MR. ROACH:**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. As you know, I have been at this, this is my 29th year. I start -- October 29th I'll start my 29th year here with the Legal

Aid Society Senior Citizen Division. As you know, funding is always a problem, but because of the generosity of this body I'm able to continue in that position and I would just ask you to -- I think we deliver a pretty good job to the senior citizens of this County, give them their dollars worth. And I would hope to continue in that position. I would ask you to consider the facts and the figures that we have here in putting that -- we're really only asking for another \$43,000 for the senior citizen budget. That is really what it boils down to. I think that kind of sounds like a drop in the bucket with some of the numbers I hear tossed around this morning. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Legislator Alden.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

George, you mean 43,000 over the adopted budget for '07.

**MR. ROACH:**

Correct, correct.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. So plus 43,000 would be good for you for next year.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

That would bring us to 576, I believe.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Five seventy-six total.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

That would be the total, yeah. The County recommended 218, and Legislative Review, your Legislative Review, request -- said 314, that was 532. So we need an additional 43.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. That's for seniors.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

That's for seniors, right.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Okay. Now, on your '08 -- you got 10,704,233 in '07. What would be the total you are looking for for '08?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

You're talking about for the general budget?

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Yes.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

The total for the general budget we would be requesting 762,000. That's the total.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

No, what's the total of, because --

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

The increase, Bob.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

That's the increase. So add that -- so 10,704,233 was '07. You want to bring that up to what?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

I don't have those numbers. Our request -- the County's was roughly 11 million one. Ours is eleven four.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

So you'd like to see this go to eleven four. And then you could provide some steps towards parity with that?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yeah, we'd get a little closer. I mean, I think they'll pull ahead next year with the AME contract, etcetera, but I would get closer, yeah.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

But you're looking for about what, two, three, four percent increase in salary?

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yeah, about four percent.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

Four percent to the people that are currently --

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yeah, right.

**LEG. ALDEN:**

All right. Thanks.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

All right. Any other questions?

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Quick question. Mr. Roach, the senior citizen budget request, an increase of 43,000, almost \$44,000, that's an eight percent increase. That's about three times the rate of inflation.

**MR. ROACH:**

Well, considering the fact that we have over 250,000 senior citizens here in Suffolk County, and we really only have two-and-a-half lawyers to cover it, all right, and --

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

It's still an eight percent increase, though. I mean, that's a bit out of whack with reference to the CPI.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

It's for the secretaries, too.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

I mean, two and a half, three, four percent. Eight percent, that's high.

**MR. ROACH:**

But I think for the eight percent, I think the County more than gets it's monies worth, all right, as far as the delivery of services to the senior citizens, the constituents of your district.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

You know, I understand where you are coming from, but the reality is it's three or four times the rate of inflation. That's hard for my people to justify. My taxpayers.

**MR. O'REILLY:**

If I may. Only about half of the 43,000 goes to salary.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yeah, it's only 20.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

I got an eight percent increase in the bottom of the sheet here. If it's 532 and you want a 43 increase, that's an eight percent increase roughly.

**MR. O'REILLY:**

For the total budget, sir, not for the salary increases.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Well, that's what you are looking for. You are looking for a total budget increase of eight percent.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yes.

**MR. O'REILLY:**

The salary increase is four percent, approximately.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

You're right, salary about four percent because it's 20,000. Total increase of eight percent.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Eight percent.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Yes.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Whether it's salaries and benefits, but it's eight percent.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

All included, for the entire budget.

**LEG. BARRAGA:**

Okay.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

Thank you.

**MR. MITCHELL:**

Thank you.

**MR. O'REILLY:**

Thank you, gentlemen, ladies.

**CHAIRMAN MONTANO:**

All right. I have no further cards. Would anyone like to address the joint committee? Hearing none, I'm going to thank Legislator D'Amaro, the members and all of you. Meeting adjourned.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 11:40 AM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY