

**BUDGET & FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

MINUTES

A meeting of the Budget & Finance Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on Tuesday, November 10, 2009.

Members Present:

Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Chairman
Legislator John Kennedy
Legislator Brian Beedenbender
Legislator Daniel Losquadro

Member Not Present:

Legislator Lou D'Amaro - Vice-Chair

Also In Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Maxvel Rose - Aide to Legislator Gregory
Barbara LoMoriello - Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Gail Vizzini - Director/Budget Review Office
Linda Bay - Aide to Minority Caucus
Patrick Heaney - Commissioner Economic Development
Allen Kovesdy - Deputy Director/County Executive's Budget Office
Eric Naughton - County Executive's Budget Office
Lynne Bizzarro - County Attorney's Office
Debra Alloncius - AME
All Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Donna Catalano - Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Denise Weaver - Legislative Aide

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 10:10 AM*)

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

We're going to start the Budget and Finance Committee meeting. Good morning everyone. We're going to start off with the Pledge led by Legislator Kennedy.

SALUTATION

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. We don't have any cards. But if there's anyone that would like to speak please come forward. And at this moment I'm not seeing anyone. We'll ask that Allen -- okay.

MR. KOVESDY:

Good morning. As this is a brief agenda, I just really have a -- one comment.

The Budget Office takes pleasure in working with both the Legislature and the Budget Review Office in trying to present the Legislator and all elected officials with the best information on a timely basis.

Last week, you voted on the omnibus or the adoption of the budget. And due to some time constraints we only received the budget a quarter to ten on the day that you voted on it. As you are aware, the omnibus had thousands upon thousands of lines in it. We asked many times if we could get copies of this in advance, electronic, so we could check to make sure that you voted on the most accurate information. We took it back and reviewed and I'm not sure if you know it now, but the document that you voted was unbalanced and had more expenses than it had revenues so in all actuality you voted on a document that had a slight increase in General Fund taxes rather than a decrease.

The point here is that if both offices can work together and get the information on a timely basis, you wouldn't have -- you wouldn't be in a position to get a document with thousands upon thousands of lines in it where some lines may be accidentally put in and duplicated.

So we just wanted to point out that the budget document that you voted on had an error in it, there was a duplication in a line, it was out of balance and that this could have been avoided if the information was shared. Not to critique something that you're voting for that you have the power to vote on and we do not, but if you had given the information out in a timely basis, it could have been corrected. And I don't know if you're hearing it for the first now that the document you voted on wasn't balanced and things like that, but there was a duplication expenses.

In addition, the revenues in the budget were out of balance with the expenses. But we want to try to avoid that in the future and we would hope that the Legislature finds some way so that we can work cooperatively, get the information in advance and just proof the information that everybody who's voting on something has an accurate document to vote on.

That's all I wanted to bring forward. I'll bring it forward to the whole Legislature next week. But we would like everybody to vote on something and know what they're voting on. And there wasn't enough time for you as Legislators and for us and for our office to check the thing out. That's what I just wanted to bring forward.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you. No, this is the first time I've heard of that, but I think it was a part of the process that with the negotiations that were going on that held us up in -- and what we can -- decisions that we can make and that was pretty much that last minute. I know BRO has been working diligently throughout the entire process to get the information that we need and I know that there was some information that they were looking to get from you guys and that wasn't exactly

forthcoming either. But I'll cut my comments there. I know Lance would like to make a statement.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Yeah, we'd like to respond to that. First of all the omnibus resolution was not done until late Tuesday, Election Day, which was a day off, in the afternoon. We double checked to make sure all the interfunds were balanced. As Allen says, there's a duplication a line, it was clearly a scrivener's error in {DO} 23, an interfund transfer expense was in there twice, which shows it was clearly a duplication of the same line. It was in the same area. And it's a scrivener's error.

To respond we always provide our information to the Budget Office as soon as available, as soon as we have it. And the omnibus clearly was not done until late Tuesday afternoon, early Tuesday night.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

You know, I -- Mr. Chair, I just want to thank Allen for sharing that perspective from the administration.

But I would also ask that you bring back that our working group worked tirelessly, as a matter of fact, I entered the group formally midway through the process, I had made almost every meeting. And there were a number of things that the Executive elected to submit to us that were not included in the original submission that we as a body felt more accurately reflected the needs of our constituents.

And so up until 4:30 in the afternoon on Monday afternoon as I had an opportunity to continue to knock doors in my Legislative district, I was on my cell phone with the Presiding Officer about how to cobble together some funds to make -- to make sergeants because of the complete dearth.

So I think there was any woeful lag on this body's part to try to address what we feel are the policy perspectives and desires to keep our constituents safe and bring forward what's necessary. That notwithstanding, as they said, that's why God put erasers on pencils, Allen. There's transposition sometimes. But there was no woeful effort to keep anybody from viewing the specifics.

MR. KOVESDY:

Nor did I -- if I could just answer you briefly. We're not saying that you didn't have a very difficult task in this year. We're just saying that if this information could be shared on a more timely basis we could be able to look at it and avoid these things from happening in the future. That's the whole point. Whether the error was a one dollar, a hundred and fifty thousand dollar or a million dollar line, the people who vote on something should have an accurate document to vote on. That's the only comment I'm making. We have to work with Budget Review and respect the work that they're doing, they have the same time pressures that we have in our office with things changing. It's just a fact that if you get a document an hour or 45 minutes before someone's voting on it, nobody can look at a document with thousands upon thousands of lines and know or verify the accuracy of that document. And we would hope that in the future there's some mechanism that we have that time to review it so everybody looks at a document and the document's correct. You are the policymakers, you vote on what you deem fit to vote on. We're not criticizing. I'm not critiquing that. That's another issue. We in the Budget Office who has to review that would appreciate working with Budget Review, having the time, so that the document, the ultimate document is as accurate as possible. That's all I'm trying to say.

You know, I respect Lance. It's obviously a scrivener's error or something like that. But it's just for our point, we'd just like you to know that the document you had had a duplication in it inadvertently and that if there was enough time to review it we could have prevented that. That's simple comment. It's nothing to say on anything else. I know they work very hard, but it's a fact.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Legislator Losquadro.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I'd just like to respond that provide information as soon as we have it. We have never held information from the Budget Office. We have never purposely held documents back from them. We make our documents available for them as quickly as possible. We provided to them the electronic version of the omnibus as soon as it was voted on. It was a scrivener's error, these happen. Probably every omnibus has some minor scrivener's error. These are usually handled administratively. The budget was balanced. The omnibus was balanced. It's clearly a scrivener's error. The budget was balanced and the omnibus was balanced.

And we do work cooperatively with the Budget Office and they know that we were working late that day. We gave it to them as soon we could. In a perfect world if the County Executive released his budget earlier than the deadline, maybe we'd of had more time to work on it we would of had the omnibus done sooner.

MR. KOVESDY:

Forty-five days is forty-five days.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

If I may, since you felt compelled to bring it up, I feel compelled to have a little prop today; just ripped it up. Can you see that? It's a one-way street sign. That's generally what we get from the Executives Office, a one-way flow of information on his time schedule, on your time schedule. We -- this office, the Budget Review Office did the best they could given the circumstances and quite frankly given the timetable that we gave them. We worked very late on this process because it was such a difficult process.

And I know you'd tried to make it very clear, it wasn't anything against these individuals and the work that they did, but two letters; CN. We constantly get information at the very last minute and are asked to review extremely complicated requests, budget documents, with almost no advanced warning. So please, you said you felt compelled to bring it up, well we feel compelled to bring up the fact that we are asked to do this on a regular basis. So sounds like a little bit of complaining, quite frankly I don't want to hear it.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Anybody else? Gail, you're good?

MR. KOVESDY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you. When's your last day, Allen? Can't be soon enough.

MS. VIZZINI:

Is there a party Allen? Let's go party.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

All right. Going to the agenda, we have a light agenda today. We have tabled resolutions.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

IR 1458, Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Charter Law to amend the Drinking Water Protection Program to increase the allocation for property tax relief. (Alden) I make a motion to table.

LEG. BEEDENBENDER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Second by Legislator Beedenbender. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **TABLED (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

IR 1722, Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Charter Law to amend the Drinking Water Protection Program to increase funding for property tax relief. (PO Lindsay) I make a motion to table.

LEG. BEEDENBENDER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Second by Legislator Beedenbender. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **TABLED (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

IR 1844, Requiring disclosure of specific information regarding closed capital projects. (Romaine) I make a motion to table, second by Legislator Beedenbender. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **TABLED (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

IR 1874, Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Charter Law modifying the process for legislative budget amendments. (Gregory) This legislation has to be tabled for a public hearing.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Second.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **TABLED (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

IR 1877, To readjust, compromise, and grant refunds and charge-backs on real property correction of errors by; County Legislature (Control No. 814-2009). (Co. Exec. Levy) I make a motion to approve and place on the consent calendar, seconded by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **APPROVED (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

IR 1878, To readjust, compromise, and grant refunds and chargebacks on correction of errors/County Treasurer by: County Legislature No. 324 (Co. Exec. Levy) Same motion, same second, same vote. **APPROVED. (VOTE: 4-0-0-1 Not Present Legislator D'Amaro)**

Okay. We are adjourned. Thank you.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:23 AM*)

{ } DENOTES BEING SPELLED PHONETICALLY