

Joint Ways & Means and Budget & Finance Committees

of the

Suffolk County Legislature

Capital Budget Meeting

Minutes

A special joint meeting of the Ways & Means and Budget & Finance Committees 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 Wednesday, May 19, 2010, at 9:30 a.m., to discuss the matter of the Capital Budget.

Members Present:

Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Chairman of Budget and Finance
Legislator Lou D'Amaro - Chairman of Ways and Means
Legislator Kate Browning
Legislator Lynne Nowick

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Gail Vizzini - Director, Budget Review Office
Robert Lipp - Deputy Director, Budget Review
Lance Reinheimer - Assistant Director, Budget Review
Legislator Jay Schneiderman - 1st Legislative District
Linda Bay - Aide to Minority Leader
George Gatta - Suffolk County Community College
Rob Zielinski - AME

Minutes Taken By:

Donna Catalano - Court Stenographer

(*THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 9:50 A.M.*)

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Welcome to the Capital budget Public hearing. We'll start with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Nowick.

SALUTATION

Okay. We don't have any cards, but we do have a short presentation by the Suffolk Community College. I'll ask George Gatta to come forward and whatever staff you have with you.

MR. GATTA:

Good morning. I will -- for the benefit of the members who viewed the presentation yesterday afternoon, I will try to run through this quickly, but in a way that the members that didn't see it can grasp fully the college's situation as it relates to the Capital Program and Capital Budget.

First, let me thank the members of the Legislature for their continued support of the college. And I'd also like to thank the Budget Review Office for its very thorough and professional review of our budget requests over the next three years. With your support, we've grown to have the largest undergraduate population in all of the SUNY system, of all 64 institutions, our highest enrollment in our 50 year history approaching 25,000 students during the current academic year.

If we look -- if we take a snapshot of where we are right now with respect to interest in the college for next year, we are already seeing that our applications are currently 30% over same time last year. And just by the way, of some additional background, our enrollment this year grew 10% over last year. So we are already looking at a significant enrollment, and beyond that, a significant interest as more and more citizens recognize the quality of our academic offerings and workforce programs and the value associated with what we provide.

There are three projects that we'd like to discuss and bring to your attention this morning. The first is the Learning Resource Center at the Grant Campus, Project 2159. As you know, this body appropriated \$1.6 million earlier this year for the design of that facility, and the programming aspect of the of the design underway. Based on our schedule, we believe this facility, much needed facility, will be ready for construction in 2012. The Executive's recommended or proposed budget delays the construction to 2013.

I ask you to keep in mind that we do have 50% of the total funding in place in the State program, in the SUNY Capital Program. So we are requesting that this project be advanced to 2012.

If we look at the existing facility, and I know that Kevin Peterman and some of his colleagues from the Grant Campus put together a Youtube video, put together by our students, which gave you an actual visit to the campus on a regular weekday when classes are in session to show you the level of use of that facility. There is just insufficient space. It's about half the size of what we need. And it's because the campus has grown so significantly over the past ten years that we find ourselves in this deficit position with respect to appropriate space for that level of student body.

The student head count has grown 47% in the past ten years at the Grant Campus. There are only two group study rooms. There are insufficient individual study corrals. There is just not enough computers for all the students that need to spend time in that facility. It's long overdue. The State funding is in place, and we ask that the Legislature consider advancing the construction money to 2012. It's also been cited by our accrediting body, Middle States, as having insufficient space for the size of the campus. And also, we are -- as I mentioned earlier, about half the size of what we need pursuant to SUNY standards.

The second facility that we're asking your consideration to restore to the Capital Program is Project 2120, the health and sports facility at the Eastern Campus. Again, State funds are in place. It's

approximately \$8.87 million, or a 50% State share. This project has been restored to the Capital Program multiple times, including last year by the Legislature. And there is currently one million in design funding in place for the 2011 budget.

As you know, there is no athletic facility at the Eastern Campus. And while the Grant Campus has grown by 47% over the past ten years, the Eastern Campus population has grown by 75%. So enrollment is skyrocketing at the Eastern Campus. And there is a strong need for that facility, both from an academic standpoint, because we do have Phys Ed requirements for every major and also as a facility for athletics and sports activities.

The last project is 2149, college-wide infrastructure. As we look across all three campuses, the majority of our structures were built in the 1960s and 1970s. Those facilities are aging rapidly and critical systems within them, need to be renovated; HVAC systems, electrical systems, water systems, roofs, siding, facia. Everything associated with these buildings at some point needs to be renovate. Additionally, some of the walkways, lighting also pose safety issues.

Rather than just give you some anecdotal information, last year, we participated, our central facility staff working with our campus staff, facility staff, worked with an independent third-party professional engineering firm that was retained by SUNY. And we participated in the SUNY-wide community college capital facilities assessment and investment study. We looked at every component of all 48 structures that are situated on our three campuses. We also did a separate study looking at all 4.4 million square feet of parking and roadways, interior roadways at all three campuses.

Based on that analysis, both the SUNY college-wide assessment and the paving study, the college needs about \$10 million a year for each of the next ten years to maintain the integrity of our infrastructure. We have the analysis, it's readily available. We'd be pleased to share this, you know, 100 plus page report with the Legislature. But that's just to maintain where we are at the current time. We estimate currently we have a backlog of about \$33 million of capital reinvestment that's needed in our structures and in our hard scape on all three campuses.

I have a few pictures just to illustrate some of the challenges we face. Yesterday, one of the Legislators recognized these small ponds which become larger every day. These are at the Grant Campus. I'm pleased to report that they have been repaired within the past few days. But this is just an indication of the condition of some of the parking and pavement and roadways at the three campuses. On the left is a 45 year old boiler which desperately needs to be replaced; highly energy inefficient. And a component like this could fail at any time, and if it does, you not only have the inconvenience and the disruption to our academic offerings, but you have the added expense of having someone come in and do a repair on an emergency basis.

On the right is an exterior wall that's crumbling. On the left on the next page, you've got staircases, these are at the Ammerman Campus, where we're continually patching, but we're beyond the point of being able to just patch. They need to be replaced. The small roof on the left -- I was talking to Legislator Nowick earlier -- is a roof on one of the original buildings that the college inherited when the property was purchased from the Suffolk Sanitarium back in the late 1950s, early 1960s.

This is the Administration Building. The roof on the left clearly should have been replaced 15 years ago. That's just an indication of some of the other repairs that are needed. On the right, this is a raised walkway that connects our Veterans Plaza at the Ammerman Campus with the Riverhead Building. You can see the erosion of the underbelly of that walkway where you've got the rebar exposed and exposed -- exposed to the elements. On the left is just some soffit. This is on all three campuses. We've got some issues related to roofing. And we've got retaining walls -- again, I believe this is at the Ammerman Campus -- retaining walls that are just deteriorated to the point of collapse.

We're not just here today to ask the Legislature's support of our programs, we're also here to talk

about all of the other activities, the aggressive activities that the college has undertaken over the past few years. And recently, President McKay has also taken a very aggressive stand in pursuing other funding so that we can utilize and leverage outside sources of funding to make some of these repairs outside of the County Capital Program and the SUNY Capital Program.

The first two are NYPA, New York Power Authority, projects. In the first instance, in 2004, NYPA issued bonds and funded \$5 million of energy retrofits, energy improvements, energy system upgrades. That work has been complete and has been very beneficial to the college, not just in terms of replacing existing infrastructure, but also in terms of energy savings. Those bonds are paid off. We make payments to NYPA with the energy savings that result from those improvements. So there is no net cost to the college. And the improvements are made. We're also getting the energy efficiency. President McKay just signed an agreement, and we had a press conference about three weeks ago with the New York Power Authority on the second phase, an additional 5.5 million in energy retrofits. That will move forward as we go through this year and into next year.

The last are two Federal stimulus fund projects. The first in the amount of \$675,000 is to improve water efficiency college-wide. And there is also a component in there to improve the electrical use and the electrical systems at our sewage treatment plant at the Ammerman Campus in Selden. The second is a grant that we recently received. Again, a Federal stimulus grant through NYSEDA for \$430,000. What's interesting about this relatively small grant is that it generates almost an equal amount of savings each year in energy savings because of the boilers, the antiquated boilers, that are being replaced at the Ammerman Campus. This funds the replacement of five boilers.

When you look at the request for this infrastructure, Capital Program, that we are talking about, it respects about one percent per year of the cost of the replacement value of infrastructure college-wide. That is about \$830 million. So we are requesting \$10.3 million per year in 2011 through 13.

So to recap, in three areas, we're asking the Legislature to advance construction of the Learning Resource Center at the Grant Campus to 2012, to restore the Health Facility at the Eastern Campus, to safeguard the State funds that are in place and to advance and fund infrastructure as I just discussed. That concludes my formal presentation. I'd be glad to respond to questions.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Thank you. I have one question in regards Capital Project 2159, and maybe you answered yesterday, but I don't recall, with the big increase at the campus, is there a requirement as far as the study rooms? You said you have two now. Is there a requirement to have so many per student population, or was that just a preference? I know you're probably not an expert in design and layout, but I would think that two is not sufficient, but how many is too much and how much is too little?

MR. GATTA:

Let me give you the general answer to the question. Then we're joined by David Quinn who is the head librarian at the Grant Campus. He could probably give you the specifics. Currently, much of our academic programs require group activities, group learning, group assignments as part of any number of curriculums. And so students naturally tend to look for a space on campus where they can work on projects together, where they can study together. And so with a student body 9000 students, two study rooms that hold, you know, six to eight students, is clearly inadequate. But in terms of the number that would be built into the new facility, I'd ask David to come up and give you a clear response to that.

MR. QUINN:

Good morning. For the enrollment we have, certainly ten to 12 would be what the standard recommendation is at this point. More and more students are being taught in a way that collaborate education is very important. So I would right now say about ten to 12.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

And how many are in the project?

MR. QUINN:

At the first rough outline, we've come up with ten to 12.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Gotcha. And that's based on your future projects of increases in student enrollment? You've done all that?

MR. QUINN:

Yes. We're building flexibility into those rooms. So some of them would be able to fit six, but then some would have a wall that you could remove for even larger groups.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. All right. Anybody else have any questions. Okay. All right. Thank you.

MR. GATTA:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Quickly, BRO, your recommendations as far as these projects, you want to shed insight?

MS. VIZZINI:

Our recommendations were -- the Legislature has consistently restored the gymnasium for the Eastern Campus, so we have recommended that. We think that the infrastructure assessment quantitative value to what the infrastructure is worth and an estimate in terms of what is needed to preserve that infrastructure was very interesting, and we would be supportive of \$10.3 million, which is about the number needed to maintain it and preserve it so it doesn't cost more in the long run. While making that recommendation, it would be good if the County undertake something like that for its own infrastructure. We didn't make any specific recommendations in regards to the Learning and Resource Center, library, at the Grant Campus. We actually concurred with the money in 2013, although, we understand the college's perspective.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Typical infrastructure maintenance usually is not a capital item, it's usually a regular budget item, is it not?

MS. VIZZINI:

No. I think you're thinking of the small things that they might, you know --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

So like the fixing basically of your pot holes, you know, the regular routine maintenance items.

MS. VIZZINI:

Potholes are more resurfacing through the Capital Program. Yeah, anything major. You know, if --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

You know, painting things. You know.

MS. VIZZINI:

Well, painting of bridges certainly is a capital item. You know, there's maybe \$350,000 for building repairs in --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

If you're adding, in this case, \$10 million every year to your Capital Budget for maintenance, are you

retiring a similar amount of debt?

MS. VIZZINI:

Well, in the case of the college, it's really shared, it's a 50% -- you know, assuming we wouldn't we go forward unless there was a commitment from the State to share the cost. And since SUNY did the study, there's reason to believe that they would be receptive to a County sponsor who would include something of that nature. So we're talking --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Not the cost share, though. My question is are we retiring -- are we staying level in terms of debt service?

MS. VIZZINI:

No. I was going to address that. You know, on \$5 million, the debt service over the 20 years would be half again as much. It would be another two and a half million

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Again, it really depends -- I'm assuming we've been doing this for many years, and these are probably 30 years bonds or 20 year. We must be retiring a certain amount now as well. Are we staying level?

MS. VIZZINI:

I'm going to defer to Robert on what we retire.

MR. LIPP:

The debt service on college projects is about 6.2 million. And even without this, that's likely to go up in the next few years.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

We don't have a chart of the rate of increase of the level of debt service to indicate --

MR. LIPP:

We do have a chart actually.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

-- that it's not running out of control here.

MR. LIPP:

The report doesn't have a chart of the college, but we internally have some information on that that we can provide you.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'd be curious to see if we're trying to keep somewhat of an even keel or are we seeing that debt going up.

MR. LIPP:

If you're talking about overall like General Fund debt service as opposed to just the college, overall, that's going up. Gail is going -- I don't want to steal her thunder, she is going to speak to that stuff. I won't steal her thunder unless you have a specific question.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'll wait on that.

MS. VIZZINI:

The other recommendation we had, we think it's prudent to advance the planning money from subsequent years to 2013 for the Sagtikos Building, which is also at the Grant Campus. The

Sagtikos Building currently houses the library. So once we do the library, then we need to renovate Sagtikos.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. Is that it? Okay. Thank you. Jay? Anybody else? Okay. Anybody else hear to speak on Budget and Finances issues? If not, I will turn over to the Chair of Ways and Means, Lou D'Amaro, Legislator D'Amaro.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Thank you, Legislator Gregory. Good morning. Is there anyone here who would like to address any issues falling within the jurisdiction of the Ways and Means Committee? Okay. For the record, no respond. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN GREGORY:

Okay. We stand adjourned.

(*THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:13 A.M.*)

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