

**BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES**

A meeting of the Budget and Finance Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on Tuesday, February 2, 2016 at 10:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Lou D'Amaro - Chairman
Legislator Monica Martinez- Vice Chair
Legislator Thomas Barraga
Legislator Kate Browning
Legislator Leslie Kennedy
Legislator Steven Stern

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel/Suffolk County Legislature
Jason Richberg - Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Amy Ellis - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Michael Crowell - Budget Review Office
Laura Halloran - Budget Review Office
August Ruckdeschel - Department of Economic Development & Planning
Justin Littell - Aide to Legislator D'Amaro
Debbie Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Steve Couzzo - Americans with Disabilities Awareness Movement
Linda Jones - Americans with Disabilities Awareness Movement
Rick Brand - Newsday
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Gabrielle Severs - Court Stenographer

Minutes Transcribed By:

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

*(*The meeting was called to order at 10:40 a.m. *)*

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Budget and Finance Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature. Please rise and join the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance led by our Vice-Chair, Legislator Martinez.

*(*Salutation*)*

Turning to the agenda, the committee has not received any correspondence this morning. The third item on the agenda are public comments. We've received two cards this morning. When I call your name, please come on up to the podium. You'll have three minutes to address the committee this morning. The first is Steve Couzzo. Sir, good morning.

MR. CUOZZO:

Good morning. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen of our great Suffolk County Legislature. My name is Steven Cuozzo and I'm a founder, a cofounder, of an advocacy group for the disabled called ADAM, Americans with Disabilities Awareness Movement.

I was at the subcommittee meeting yesterday for transportation where I congratulated our Legislature on changing the lives of thousands of people in our County by eliminating a three-quarter mile rule which gave access to paratransit to the disabled across the County, including on Sundays. People are now able to go to their doctor. They're able to go to therapy, they're able to go to work.

This year there's other challenges that we're going to face. One of them is -- the biggest is going to be the budget cuts to transportation that are written by Steve Bellone's Office, our County Executive, for ten and a half million dollars, which almost takes all of what Suffolk County adds to the transportation and will, without a doubt, have an effect on services for the disabled in our community.

There's an article in today's paper, Newsday, page A24, that states in Nassau County how they cut seven million dollars worth of budget and how it affected over 2,000 people. People that have dialysis, they can't even go to dialysis anymore, workers. Just not what I think we need to have in our County. I believe we need to do what we need to do for the least of ours in our community, the disabled, the aged, the veterans and everybody else that uses fixed and paratransit. These cuts, even if you might be able to fill some of the cuts other ways, we could use that money to make the system even better.

So once again we're going to ask for your help this year and to figure out how to not have this affect our community to the extent that it will. And once again, thank you again for your service and your efforts on behalf of the disabled community on what you were able to accomplish last year. Just amazing. We asked, you heard us and you reacted. It affected many, many, many people. And thank you.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Thank you, sir. Next speaker to address the committee this morning is Linda Jones. Ms. Jones.

MS. JONES:

Good morning, Legislators and attendees.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Good morning.

MS. JONES:

I'm Linda Jones and I'm a cofounder of ADAM, Americans with Disabilities Awareness Movement. You know, this is really much easier when I'm home in the bathroom looking in the mirror. Everything seems to go away when I see you people. You overwhelm me.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Well, you know, take your time. Maybe I can start with a question. I was just curious about Americans with Disabilities Awareness Movement. You're a cofounder of this organization. How long has the organization been in existence and how many members do you have?

MS. JONES:

About a year and a half.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Okay. And how many members do you have?

MS. JONES:

Members? Everybody is ADAM. Anybody that wants to come into the public and help the people and to change things in their community. Everybody is ADAM. Wherever you go in the United States, when you go and you ask for help and then you try to change things for a better life for people with disabilities, then they're ADAM. We have many, many people, and we can produce them. Realize there's over 300,000 handicapped people on Long Island. They may not all be here right now, but we can fix that. But I'm here anywhere today. Do you have any more questions?

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

No, with 300,000 members I'm going to let you do all the talking.

MS. JONES:

Okay. Actually Steve pretty much said the whole thing, but I just want to implore you -- yes, he can talk. I just want to tell you that, you know, it's really, really important not to have these cuts. We really depend on the SCAT buses. We wouldn't be able to go anywhere or do anything if we didn't have the SCAT buses. And to cut them from people, like Nassau, to go to dialysis, that's like -- that's insane. We really need these buses and there's got to be another way that Mr. Bellone can go and take money from other people, or people that don't need it or maybe he can skip around and go there.

Anyway, I'm just asking you to please, every one of you, just think about it for a long time, because you guys can, and I'm not, you know, you guys can go out and jump in your car and go wherever you want, but we can't, especially if the weather is bad. So for people that want to have jobs or go to dialysis or anywhere, you know, that's what ADAM is and that's what ADAM is trying to do. And I just want to thank you so much for that three-fourths of a mile so now I can go to church on Sunday. Thank you so much. Have a good day.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Thank you, Ms. Jones. Thank you for taking the time to address the committee this morning. Is there anyone else present who would like to address the Budget Committee this morning? For the record, there's no response. We will move on to the next section of

the agenda. There are no presentations this morning so I'll start with Tabled Resolutions. There are none. Moving to Introductory Resolutions.

Introductory Resolutions

I'll call the first. The first is Resolution **1002-2016 - Authorizing the County Comptroller to borrow cash funds from other County funds for 2016 (Pres. Off.)**.

This is a bill that we adopt as a matter of course at the beginning of each year. I'll offer a motion approve. Second by our Vice Chair, Legislator Martinez. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(Vote: 6-0-0-0)**

Next is Resolution **1009-2016 - To readjust, compromise, and grant refunds and charge-backs on real property correction of errors by: County Legislature (Control No. 1016-2016)(Co. Exec.)**.

I'll offer a motion to approve and place on the Consent Calendar. Second by Legislator Martinez. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(Vote: 6-0-0-0)**

Next is Resolution **1015-2016 - To readjust, compromise, and rescind refunds and charge-backs on real property correction of errors by: County Legislature (Control No. 1017-2016)(Co. Exec.)**.

I'll offer the same motion, same second and same vote. **(Vote: 6-0-0-0)**

Next is Resolution **1043-2016 - Approving County funding for a Contract Agency (Southold Historical Society)(Krupski)**.

This involves \$5,000 in funding for this agency. I believe originally they had missed the filing deadline for some paperwork, but that's been corrected and we've confirmed that with the Comptroller's Office. I'll offer a motion to approve. Second by Legislator Barraga.

LEG. STERN:

Just very quickly on the motion.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

On the motion, Legislator Stern.

LEG. STERN:

Mr. Chairman, this is not a situation where there was a question about administrative overhead. This is simply paperwork not being filed by a deadline, and we have the ability to override that as long as the agency is in compliance; correct?

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

That's correct. It was not a question, which we've seen often before this committee, concerning the failure to keep administrative expenses below a certain -- I think it's what, fifteen percent? Twenty percent of all costs. This was just simply missing a deadline.

LEG. STERN:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Thank you, Legislator Stern. There's a motion pending. It's received a second. I'll call

the vote. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(Vote: 6-0-0-0)**

Next on the resolutions is Resolution **1044-2016 - Amending the Adopted 2016 Operating Budget to transfer funds from Budget Line 477-8038-1100 to Budget Line 477-8038-4980-Hsk1 for Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agricultural Stewardship Program (Co. Exec.)**.

My understanding of this bill is that it transfers \$18,829 from the first fund to the second fund. The transfer is needed because of an error during the Operating Budget process where this agency was cut more than the two percent it was targeted to be cut. I will offer a motion to approve. And then I had a question for the Budget Office if it receives a second. Second by Legislator Stern.

To the Budget Office, can you tell me, this funding, does it involve 2015 funds for this bill?

MR. CROWELL:

Can I call a pinch hitter on this one?

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Sure. You can call whoever has the answer.

MS. HALLORAN:

It is to appropriate 2015 funding as was adopted. I'm sorry, give me a second. I might be looking at the wrong --

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

All right. So we're moving funds from one funding line to another, but is that within the 2015 budget or the 2016 budget or from?

MS. HALLORAN:

Okay. Let me clarify. I'm sorry. I was misreading. It's amending the 2016 Adopted Budget, so it's changing what --

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

It's the restoration of a cut, an erroneous cut, and the way it's being restored is by transferring from another fund.

MS. HALLORAN:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

So much question becomes does that leave a deficiency in the other fund? How is that made up?

MS. HALLORAN:

Well, they came up with the offset from -- it's really a permanent salary budget line. So they came up with that offset and they may know if a person's leaving this year, they may have extra funding there, meaning the Executive Budget Office. But it is coming from another line.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

So the Hsk1 line is the permanent salaries line?

MS. HALLORAN:

No, no. It's taking the money from 477 Economic Development and Planning Water Quality Improvement Unit permanent salaries, and putting it into Hsk1, which is Cornell Cooperative Extension's Agricultural Stewardship Program.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Okay. So 477-8038-1100 is the permanent salaries line.

MS. HALLORAN:

Yes. Correct.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Right. So the offset is from the 2016 budget itself?

MS. HALLORAN:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

And that offset was recommended by the County Executive's Office?

MS. HALLORAN:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

All right. Are there questions? Legislator Stern.

LEG. STERN:

So I see then that it is being moved to Cornell Cooperative Extension. My notes indicate here that the line is to be used for the purchase of necessary field equipment. Is that your understanding?

MS. HALLORAN:

I believe that's what the resolution said, but that's all I know, is what the resolution says.

LEG. STERN:

Is there anybody that can answer the question as to what the field equipment is and what it's going to be used for?

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Hi. Can you state your name?

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

Absolutely. My name is August Ruckdeschel. I'm in the Department of Economic Development and Planning, and I work with Cornell Cooperative Extension on the Agricultural Stewardship Program. The restoration of these funds, part of the cuts that would be entailed by this \$23,000 cut that they originally sustained would come out of a lot of the materials they provide for two farmers for nitrogen mitigation, for pesticide reduction. That would be things like pheromone traps for insects in orchards, it would be stuff like controlled release fertilizer, it would be equipment that they use on on field demonstrations to show farmers best management practices and so on. So that that would be part of where they would need to cut the budget if the funds were not restored.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

So as long as you're up there, how did you come to the realization that the funds were too little or that there was an erroneous cut?

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

So all of the Cornell Cooperative Extension programs that are funded out of the Operating Budget and administered by Economic Development and Planning were cut by ten percent, and those cuts remain. Within the 477 appropriations, all the other programs were only cut two percent. For example, alternative pest management took a two percent cut; that's \$2,000. Pest management on County properties took a two percent cut; 3200. Peconic Bay Scallops; 5700. Stormwater Phase II was 7300; and then Ag Stewardship, which is funded out of the same pool of money, was cut \$23,500.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Right. So the fact that all the other programs coming from this particular funding source were cut two percent leads you to believe that this should have been two percent.

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

I do believe that. I would also say personally the Ag Stewardship is really one of the gold standard programs of Cornell Cooperative Extension, as really doing some of the best work related to kind of reclaiming our water quality and working with farmers one on one in reducing their nitrogen usage and their pesticide usage.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

And the funding is coming from a salary line. Is the department comfortable with that offset?

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

We are. We have an employee returning from maternity leave that will only be returning on a part-time basis and so that is where we are funding the offset.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

All right. Are there any other questions?

LEG. STERN:

Yeah, just a quick question. So this is a -- I guess to Budget Review. This is a -- in effect a restoration of the ten percent cut that the agency sustained?

MS. HALLORAN:

Basically they're using the term error, but really what they want to do is return the funding back to what the Executive had recommended it at when he recommended the Operating Budget as opposed to what the Legislature adopted it at. It wasn't technically an error.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Well, I believe it was an error in -- not an error in the sense that someone wrote down the wrong number, but an error in the sense that it's not consistent with what the intention was when the Working Group put the budget together. I think that's the sense of the error here, that the intention was to cut all of the programs for Cornell by two percent out of this particular fund and then ten percent out of the other, and this one, this particular funding was cut ten percent instead of two based upon what our intention was when putting the budget together. Is that your understanding?

MS. HALLORAN:

That is correct.

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

That is my -- that is my understanding. That, again, there was such a larger cut of this one program in 477 that I believe the intent was to sustain a two percent cut, which is what we want to restore it to, the two percent cut.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Okay, but you weren't in the room.

MR. RUCKDESCHEL:

No, I was not.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

So any other questions? All right. To the Clerk, is there a motion pending? I believe so, right?

MS. ELLIS:

Yes, a motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

And a second; correct?

MS. ELLIS:

The second was Stern.

CHAIRMAN D'AMARO:

Okay. I'll call the vote. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. The resolution is passed. **(Vote: 6-0-0-0).**

There is no further business before the committee this morning. Thank you for attending. We are adjourned.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.*)