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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, May 9, 2017, at 10:30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Chairperson
Legislator Monica Martinez, Vice Chair
Legislator Kate M. Browning
Legislator Thomas F. Barraga
Legislator Leslie Kennedy
Legislator Steve Stern (Excused Absence)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory, 15th Legislative District
Legislator Robert Trotta, 13th Legislative District
George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Amy Ellis, Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature
Theresa Ward, Deputy County Executive and Commissioner
Dr. Robert Lipp, Director/Budget Review Office
Ali Nazir, Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Deborah Harris, Aide to Legislator Stern
Justin Littell, Aide to Legislator D'Amaro
Lisbeth English, Long Island Board of Realtors
Timothy Lachapelle, Long Island Board of Realtors
Janet Grossman, President/Youth Resource Center of Sag Harbor
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Kevin Gruebel, Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 10:34 A.M.)

CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Committee on Budget & Finance, Suffolk County Legislature. Please rise and join the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Kennedy.

(Salutation)

CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:

Please note for the record that Legislator Stern has an excused absence this morning. Also note for the record that we have received -- the Committee has received correspondence, a letter dated April 20, 2017, from the Department of Economic Development and Planning Commissioner Theresa Ward regarding the status of the 2017 contracts for cultural arts agencies, and a copy of that letter has been distributed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:

Next, we'll go to the public comments section of the agenda. And I have two cards, and I'll call the first person. When you come up, you'll have three minutes to address the Committee. So, first is Liz English. Ms. English, good morning and welcome.

MS. ENGLISH:

Thank you and good morning to you. I've been a realtor in southwest Suffolk County since 1985. I was 2011 president of the Long Island Board of Realtors and was president when -- and was president when Governor Cuomo signed the two percent property tax cap bill right here on Long Island. I am currently a director of LIBOR, the New York State Association of Realtors and the National Association of Realtors.

LIBOR and I are in support of Resolution 1107, to limit County fee increases to two percent. It would limit the County's ability to levy massive revenue-generating fee hikes, like the 300-dollar mortgage recording fee implemented in 2016, which while filling a 33-million-dollar budget gap was roughly one percent of a 2.9-billion-dollar budget. And also, the 125-dollar hike to the tax map verification fee in 2015, which was an increase of 233 percent.

The statewide tax cap of two percent was an effort to enforce fiscal responsibility for local governments; however, increasing fees in Nassau and Suffolk -- pardon me, at Suffolk and Nassau Counties has become the preferred way of raising extra revenue without piercing the tax cap. The mortgage recording and tax map fee hikes are just as destructive, if not more so, as the tax

1 increase, which, at least under current tax laws, can be deducted
2 from federal taxes.

3
4 Neither the mortgage recording fee nor the tax map verification fee
5 is adjusted to consider the size or the value of a property, which
6 is discriminatory against lower and middle-income home buyers. In
7 the case of the tax map fee, the owner of a single-family home on
8 two small lots could end up paying a higher fee than the owner of a
9 shopping mall on one large lot.

10
11 In the case of the mortgage recording fee, it affects all home
12 buyers except for those who can afford to purchase a home without a
13 mortgage. These fees paid after every -- after every home transfer
14 add \$500 to the closing costs, which are already among the highest
15 in the country. They are a deterrent to home buyers. Like a
16 transfer fee, these fees hurt buyers and sellers of real estate by
17 having them bear the burden for all residents.

18
19 The National Association of Realtors' chief economist, Lawrence
20 Yun, respected as one of the country's top ten economists, has
21 stated that nationally the average stimulus for each home sold is
22 \$75,000. Based on that national average, one can only imagine what
23 the impact is to Long Island's economy.

24
25 In closing, on behalf of the Long Island Board of Realtors and its
26 23,000 members, I urge the Budget and Finance Committee to pass
27 this resolution and send it to the entire Legislature for a vote.
28 Please stop the County from using regressive fee hikes as the
29 primary vehicle to raise revenue. Thank you.

30
31
32 (APPLAUSE)

33
34
35 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

36 Thank you, Ms. English. If you could stay up here at the podium
37 for a moment. Legislator Trotta, who's joined us this morning, for
38 the record, has a question.

39
40 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

41 Yeah. In your business, are you -- have you -- has it come to your
42 attention that even a current homeowner who takes out a home equity
43 loan, let's say, for \$10,000 to redo their kitchen has to pay \$550
44 going in and \$550 going out? Have you run into that instance at
45 all?

46
47 **MS. ENGLISH:**

48 No.

49
50 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

51 Okay. So, you -- I'm now making you aware that in fact -- so, if
52 you take a home equity loan for \$20,000 to redo your kitchen,
53 you're giving a vig to the County of \$1,100.

54
55 **MS. ENGLISH:**

56 Wow.

1
2 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

3 Okay.

4
5 **MS. ENGLISH:**

6 Thank you for pointing that out to me.

7
8 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

9 Okay. Thank you.

10
11 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

12 Okay. Thank you very much.

13
14 **MS. ENGLISH:**

15 Thank you.

16
17 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

18 Appreciate you coming down.

19
20 **MS. ENGLISH:**

21 That's good added ammunition.

22
23 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

24 Okay. The next speaker this morning is Timothy Lachapelle.

25
26 **MR. LACHAPELLE:**

27 Thank you.

28
29 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

30 Yes.

31
32 **MR. LACHAPELLE:**

33 My name is Timothy Lachapelle. I'm here today to speak on behalf
34 of the Long Island Board of Realtors in support of Resolution 1107,
35 a local law to cap County increases at two percent. Real estate
36 professionals in Suffolk County support this bill because
37 exorbitant fee hikes in the past two budgets have negatively
38 affected our industry.

39
40 In 2015, Suffolk County raised the tax map verification fee 233
41 percent from \$60 to \$200. In 2016, Suffolk County created a new
42 mortgage recording fee, which is \$300 applied to traditional
43 mortgages, refinances, home equity lines of credit and satisfaction
44 of mortgage. Just to reiterate, when you finish paying off your
45 mortgage, there's a 300-dollar fee waiting for you from the County.

46
47 The new fee filled a 33-million-dollar budget gap, roughly one
48 percent of the 2.9-billion-dollar budget. The nature of this fee
49 is similar to that of a transfer tax. LIBOR is opposed to all
50 transfer taxes on the basis that it hurts buyers and sellers of
51 real estate. The tax map fee and the recording fee is paid after
52 every home transfer, adding a total of \$500 to the closing costs of
53 every transaction. Even though the buyer pays these fees, you
54 might as well be knocking \$500 off the resale value of every home
55 in the County. High closing costs are a deterrent to home buyers
56 and can contribute to lower demand for homes in the County.

1 LIBOR publically opposed the past two budgets that included fee
2 hikes. Unfortunately, it didn't change much because once the
3 revenue from a fee hike is included in the budget it's very hard to
4 get it removed or lowered; therefore, with about six months left
5 before the next budget is negotiated, we're asking the Legislature
6 to be proactive in limiting the fee hikes. We're not pushing for
7 an immediate repeal of the fees, but we do support a statutory
8 requirement to avoid future increases.

9
10 We believe Resolution 1107 represents a good-faith effort to
11 enforce fiscal responsibility and stay within a true two-percent
12 cap. We urge the Budget and Finance Committee to pass this
13 resolution and advance it to a full vote.

14
15 And I just want to say that, you know, I can see one of the, you
16 know, one of the downsides of this bill is, you know -- or somebody
17 on this panel saying, you know, closing costs, you want to talk
18 about closing costs, talk about, you know, the lawyers, the real
19 estate agents and the title companies that charge excessive fees.
20 But, you know, real estate attorneys, title agents, real estate
21 agents, they all provide an extensive knowledge and training that
22 guide the home buyer through the home-buying process from beginning
23 to end. Placing a house on a tax map or recording the mortgage
24 requires no such expertise. The excessive fee hikes are simply a
25 revenue generator and they should be recognized as such. Thank
26 you.

27
28 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

29 Sir, thank you. I don't have any further cards. Is there anyone
30 else who would like to address the Committee this morning? Okay.
31 For the record, there's no response. Moving on, there are no
32 presentations this morning. We'll go to Tabled Resolutions.

33
34
35 **TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

36
37
38 And the first is Resolution 1107 of 2017, Adopting a Local Law (No.
39 -2017, A Charter Law) to limit County fee increases. (Trotta)

40
41 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

42 Motion to approve.

43
44 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

45 Motion to approve by Legislator Kennedy.

46
47 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

48 Motion to table.

49
50 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

51 Motion to table by the Presiding Officer. Second by Legislator
52 Browning on the motion to approve. For discussion purposes, I'll
53 make a -- I'll second the motion to table if there's any
54 discussion.

1 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

2 If I -- if I may, Mr. Chair.

3
4 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

5 Yes, sir.

6
7 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

8 My reason for -- I think the 1107 -- sorry, my phone is ringing.
9 1107 is well intended. I think from a standpoint in the
10 environment where we're talking about tax caps, everyone is very
11 conscious of increased spending and wanting to keep spending below
12 a certain level, but I think that thought process escapes the
13 realities of which we have to deal with. You know, there are costs
14 that increase beyond our control, one being healthcare, employee
15 costs, all those types of things. And to a certain extent, we're
16 almost a victim of our own success.

17
18 There were many years that we didn't increase funding to the point
19 where we said, you know, we're not -- the service is not paying for
20 -- we're not getting the revenue to pay for the service, we have to
21 increase fees, the fees were in excess of two percent, but they
22 were in line with other services; for instance, some of the park
23 fees. They were in line with Town fees, State fees to provide a
24 similar if not the same service in the region. And to have a
25 tax -- have a cap like this would limit us in our ability to do
26 that when we were at the time trying to keep costs as low as
27 possible, but there will be a time when you do that, as we have
28 faced, that you have to adjust the fees to meet the costs for
29 providing the service, and this bill will strictly limit our
30 ability to do that, and I think we'll - in the long run - provide
31 more of a disservice to County operations than actually, you know,
32 doing well particularly as it relates to our budget and impact on
33 County taxpayers. I think the taxpayers and the residents like the
34 services that we provide. We have beautiful beaches and parks, and
35 we provide some critical services, but we have to pay for those
36 services. If we can't levy the fees to provide that service, then
37 we won't be able to provide that service, and the residents are
38 going to be hurt.

39
40 So, you know, I know you can pick out individual circumstances, but
41 just to make a broad swath that you can't raise any fees above two
42 percent, I think, is going to be more harmful for the County in the
43 long run.

44
45 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

46 Okay. Thank you. Legislator Trotta.

47
48 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

49 Yeah. Through the Chair, there is a mechanism to increase it past
50 the two percent. So, your argument, while it's somewhat -- well, I
51 don't think it's somewhat valid, but there is a mechanism of
52 two-thirds vote of the Legislature to increase it more than two
53 percent just as there is with the tax cap. So, this is nothing
54 more than we're following along with the tax cap.

55
56 And, you know, this sends a message to the taxpayers of this County

1 that, you know, we're not going to fee them to death, we're not
2 going to have an outrageous fee increase equivalent of a hundred
3 percent tax increase. This is to control the spending. And if it
4 need be that we do need a fee to be increased more than that two
5 percent, there's a mechanism. So, I think this covers all the
6 bases and it's pretty clear.

7
8 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

9 And if I may just as a retort, I think there's another mechanism to
10 control spending: Come up with a plan to cut costs. You know, to
11 put forward a plan where you need two-thirds vote where you know it
12 would, I think, dramatically politicize the process would do no
13 service to what's actually trying to be done, I think, is not
14 beneficial for this body and the way it operates, it's not
15 beneficial for the County. If people control -- if you're
16 concerned about the costs of, you know, increased fees for the
17 County, then come up with a plan. Work with me, come up with a
18 plan, show me where we're gonna -- we can provide the cuts so that
19 we don't -- you know, because we can cut our costs so that when the
20 people come to the parks they can get reduced --

21
22 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

23 The people want this fee increase -- this cap.

24
25 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

26 Oh, yeah. They all -- you talk tax cap, absolutely. I'm talking
27 even more. Let's come up with a plan, reduce the expenditures,
28 reduce our budget so we don't have to --

29
30 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

31 Well, this is going to force us. We couldn't do it with the tax
32 cap.

33
34 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

35 Only to politicize the process.

36
37 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

38 It's not politicizing. It's actually de-politicizing the process.

39
40 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

41 No. It --

42
43 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

44 No, it's not. It's de-politicizing the process because we are
45 feeing our children and our grandparents and our senior citizens
46 out of this county. We are making it unbearable to live here. So,
47 this is what we should be doing to make it bearable to live here.
48 We have to live within our means, plain and simple.

49
50 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

51 We run a bus transportation system that's \$10 million --
52 ten-million-dollar deficit. So, we -- you know, so in order to fix
53 that deficit we wouldn't be able to do that with this tax cap.
54 Excuse me, this spending --

1 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

2 This has nothing to do with the buses. This has to do with
3 controlling fees, plain and simple. If we need to raise it above
4 the two percent, there's a mechanism.

5
6 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

7 Does the public agree to cut our buses?
8

9 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

10 This is -- the constitution of the United States has the same
11 two-thirds majority. So, what you're saying is, you know, you're
12 against the constitution of the United States of America? This is
13 what we should be doing.

14
15 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

16 No. What I'm saying --
17

18 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

19 You're going to sit here and badmouth this country (laughter).
20

21 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

22 As a veteran, I'm very offended by that. What I'm saying is let's
23 do our jobs as Legislators and come up with a bipartisan plan to
24 fix the budget, not, you know, politicizing this process so, oh, we
25 gotcha, you know, you voted against a common-sense bill to fix --
26

27 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

28 This is a common-sense bill. I was quoting Hamilton by the way.
29

30 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

31 I see what you're saying. But you and I know how the process
32 really works.
33

34 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

35 And this is how the process works. This is how the tax cap work
36 [sic], and this is how the fee cap's going to work, plain and
37 simple.
38

39 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

40 Okay.
41

42 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

43 It's proven that it works.
44

45 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

46 All right. I understand the appeal of this type of legislation. I
47 really do, and I think that given the frustration of the general
48 population and all of our constituents, I can understand how any
49 bill that limits government's ability to impose added fees or taxes
50 is extremely popular, and I understand it. I'm not quite sure that
51 this solves anything frankly. The two percent tax cap that we've
52 had in place we've never needed in Suffolk County. We haven't
53 raised -- at least the General Fund -- just let me finish, please.
54 We haven't raised the General Fund property tax. So, with respect
55 to that at least, we've never gone up even a quarter of a percent.
56

1 So, you don't need legislation to limit fees or taxes. What you
2 need is representatives that people want to put in office that are
3 willing to self-impose that time of -- that kind of restriction,
4 but what's been interesting is that the majority of the Legislature
5 has not done that recently. So, I'm not sure that this would solve
6 anything frankly.

7
8 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

9 The fact that you say that we haven't gone above the tax cap is
10 ridiculous because we've raised the fees the equivalent of a
11 hundred percent tax increase each year for the past three years.
12 So, we didn't do -- you're right. We didn't go over the back-tax
13 cap. But guess what we did, we pushed fees through the roof. So,
14 just a backdoor tax. Fee is another three-letter word for the word
15 tax.

16
17 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

18 Again --

19
20 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

21 And this is what I want to control.

22
23 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

24 I understand the use of those, you know, pushbutton kind of phrases
25 and words, and I understand that it's popular to do that. I really
26 do, but --

27
28 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

29 It works. So let's do it.

30
31 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

32 What I'm saying is that if we want to limit fees to two percent or
33 one percent or five percent we have the ability now to do that. We
34 don't need a bill to do that.

35
36 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

37 But we haven't been doing it. This will force us to live within
38 our means. You're \$2 billion in debt, you have a
39 150-million-dollar budget shortfall. We need real solutions, and
40 this is a real solution.

41
42 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

43 Well, I don't think it's any solution because we already have the
44 ability to limit fees without this bill. I think what the
45 Presiding Officer said is correct. If you want a solution to
46 raising fees, I mean, obviously what you're saying is you want to
47 cut costs, and I'm not adverse to that either, and I think the
48 County has done that over the last several years. But if there's
49 more to cut, then let's see a plan.

50
51 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

52 Well, a heroin addict doesn't need to do heroin, but he does
53 because he has to. So, we need to control it because this money
54 and this fee is like heroin to this County Legislature, and we
55 gotta cut the source right now.

1 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

2 I don't -- you know, again, the characterizations sound good, but
3 the fact of the matter is we're talking dollars and cents, and if
4 you feel that the revenue side is excessive then let's see the
5 cuts. What cuts do you want to make?
6

7 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

8 We're going to see the cuts when this gets put into effect because
9 people are going to live within their means. And if we need a fee
10 increase and it's legitimate, I'm sure this body will put
11 politics aside and raise it --
12

13 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

14 Are you not willing to propose cuts now?
15

16 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

17 -- the appropriate -- I'm willing to propose cuts -- everything.
18 I'll put a pay freeze in right now. I'll bring a board in to
19 freeze every salary in Suffolk County today.
20

21 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

22 No. I mean you as a Legislator. What cuts would you like to see?
23

24 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

25 We would have -- we're in desperate dire straits. We have no
26 money. We're \$2 billion in debt. We're facing a huge budget
27 shortfall.
28

29 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

30 That's not answering.
31

32 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

33 I would freeze everyone's salary today making more than a hundred
34 thousand dollars, and we would save some type of money because you
35 don't want to hurt the people making -- who are struggling to get
36 by.
37

38 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

39 So, for the County to live within its means, we should freeze
40 everyone's salary?
41

42 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

43 We should -- we should stop building a pool at Suffolk Community
44 College at the cost of the taxpayers of \$25 million. I can go
45 through a litany of things if you want to say -- but most of them
46 you voted for.
47

48 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

49 Right.
50

51 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

52 Now, I didn't.
53

54 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

55 Right.
56

1 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

2 So, I'm trying to control this body from spending out of control.

3
4 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

5 Really.

6
7 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

8 And that's what they've been doing. And if there's a fee that
9 needs to be raised and there's a legitimate concern, there is a
10 mechanism for it to be increased.

11
12 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

13 Well, I really don't agree with your characterizations at all. I
14 think that in fact --

15
16 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

17 I didn't expect you to.

18
19 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

20 I think that we've done a pretty good job in probably the, you
21 know, worst economic times - at least in my lifetime - of managing
22 the County's finances as best we can and --

23
24 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

25 We have done a horrible job at it.

26
27 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

28 Okay. But --

29
30 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

31 Horrible job.

32
33 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

34 Just stop for a minute. All right, I get it. We've made some very
35 tough decisions. We've laid off 1,100 employees. We've done a lot
36 of different things to try and balance the interest of delivering
37 our services while at the same time having to protect taxpayers.
38 It's a very difficult thing to do when the overall economy is
39 simply not producing revenue for us in sales tax. So --

40
41 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

42 The reason --

43
44 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

45 -- when things like that --

46
47 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

48 The reason the overall economy's not preventing [sic] sales tax is
49 people have no money. They have no money to spend because there's
50 no companies here because all the high-paying jobs are leaving. We
51 are trying to put a stop to that.

52
53 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

54 I think it's a bigger picture than that. I know that's very
55 popular to say if you want to bash Suffolk County, but the fact of
56 the matter is we didn't create the global meltdown prices in the

1 economy.

2
3 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

4 But we did create unreasonable taxes and an unreasonable cost of
5 living here, when a company could go to North Carolina and pay a
6 third of the taxes they're paying and live in a bigger house for a
7 third of the price.

8
9 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

10 Well, I don't -- I don't really agree with you there because the
11 cost of living in Suffolk County - although it may be high - I
12 don't think that Suffolk County created that necessarily. I mean,
13 the average homeowner's property tax bill is a hundred dollars, and
14 the police district's about a thousand dollars. So, there are many
15 other reasons -- and I'm not looking to play a blame game, but for
16 what I'm responsible for, which is the Suffolk County budget and
17 the Suffolk County taxpayer, I don't agree with you that we've
18 created this situation. I don't think we have. I think we're
19 reacting to it. And it's very interesting because at this level of
20 government, although we have no authority and no power to control
21 the economy, we have to deal with the fallout of other people's
22 mistakes and other people's decisions. So, you know, again, this
23 is a popular thing to do, the two percent cap, but again, I think,
24 even without the bill we could limit two percent. I don't think we
25 need it.

26
27 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

28 Well, I think we do. I think it's clear we do because we just
29 raised 233 percent in 2005, and we raised a new fee that never
30 occurred anywhere before, which I videotaped, which essentially the
31 woman writing \$300 above the 220 -- \$50 below it. So, there's
32 absolutely nothing to do other than writing \$300.

33
34 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

35 Right. But I'm not questioning each decision. What I'm saying is
36 that those fee increases that you're talking about, we could do
37 them or we could not do them whether your bill's in place or not.

38
39 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

40 Well, we did them. And this would prevent it from happening. We
41 would not have a thousand percent increase in a fee. It's
42 ridiculous. It's not a fee, it's a tax. This is -- this is like a
43 heroin addict using, you know, fentanyl because --

44
45 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

46 I don't agree.

47
48 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

49 -- Lucy wants to do -- get higher, and I'm trying to put the guy on
50 some type of medication that brings him down slowly. It still has
51 the ability to pick it up if we need to.

52
53 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

54 Right.

1 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

2 But if we don't --

3

4 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

5 No, I understand that you disagree with some of the decisions that
6 have been made, but I'm not talking about that. What I'm talking
7 about is if we want to limit increases, tax increases, fee
8 increases or cut spending we have the authority to do that
9 without --

10

11 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

12 But we haven't been doing it. Clearly we have not been doing it.

13

14 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

15 Well, that's not really true.

16

17 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

18 It's a hundred percent true.

19

20 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

21 It's not a hundred percent.

22

23 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

24 We can go back and forth for hours, but the reality is we're \$2
25 billion in debt --

26

27 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

28 Right, I know. You're going freeze the whole of Suffolk County.

29

30 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

31 -- and a hundred-fifty-million-dollar shortfall.

32

33 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

34 But here's the thing --

35

36 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

37 And I'm trying to control it, and clearly you're not.

38

39 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

40 Many, many times -- okay. Clearly I'm not -- whatever you say.
41 You haven't been here long enough to know clearly what I've done,
42 all right. So, let me just tell you something.

43

44 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

45 I've been here long enough to realize that this is a sinking ship
46 and we need to do something to get it stopping.

47

48 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

49 Well, why haven't you done anything?

50

51 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

52 Who do you think this bill was introduced by? Me.

53

54 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

55 Just this bill --

56

1 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

2 Was it introduced by me, or was it introduced by you?

3
4 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

5 Giving us the authority --

6
7 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

8 It was introduced by me.

9
10 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

11 -- for something we already have the authority to do? How is that
12 solving anything?

13
14 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

15 You're not doing it.

16
17 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

18 All right. In any event, we have a list. Legislator Barraga.

19
20 **LEGISLATOR BARRAGA:**

21 I don't think anyone wants to increase any fee on any issue. None
22 of us are here to do that, but nothing is black and white. So, for
23 example, with reference to the mortgage fee of \$300, I supported
24 that fee for one simple reason, because the spending of 33 million,
25 which is what this mortgage fee would hopefully generate, was
26 already spent in the budget. It was already spent in the budget,
27 the 2017 budget. It was there.

28
29 It's like a guy going out and running up a credit card for three or
30 \$4,000, and he makes everybody happy. It's great to have -- buy
31 this for this person and this for -- you're a real hero. And then
32 the bill comes in and the same person takes the position *I'm not*
33 *going to pay it*. Reality doesn't work that way. If you put \$33
34 million in a budget for 2017, you have to generate the revenues to
35 pay for the 33 million. It's just the way it is. The trouble is
36 we had some people who put the money in who didn't want to vote for
37 the revenue generation because politically it doesn't really work.

38
39 The same holds true with the fee increase for traffic fines for
40 \$50. The five-and-a-half-million dollars that it will generate has
41 already been spent. It's in the 2017 budget. That's what we face.
42 So, unless you -- if you control the spending, if the 33 million in
43 spending wasn't there and the five and a half million wasn't there,
44 you wouldn't have to do the fee increase in those particular areas.
45 But you do.

46
47 There are so many different elements of an overall county budget
48 that we don't control. I'll give you an example, Medicaid. We
49 have 19 million people in the State of New York. Over six million,
50 one in three, participate in the Medicaid Program, and it's one of
51 the unique programs as it pertains to counties in New York State
52 where counties have to come up with a certain percentage to pay for
53 Medicaid. In most other states, you do not do that. The State
54 takes care of it at the State level.

55
56 So, about five or six years ago, the Legislature, the State

1 Legislature put a cap on the growth in Medicaid for the counties of
2 three percent, but even with that three-percent cap our commitment
3 on an annual basis went from 210 million to what it is now, \$241
4 million a year we have to pay. That program is unsustainable.
5 Something has to be done especially when you take a look at Suffolk
6 County giving \$5 billion more to Albany than we get back.

7
8 But just taking a look at the Medicaid, we don't control that. So,
9 with a two percent cap in place, we have to have some sort of
10 flexibility to generate revenues. Now, when you take a look at
11 this particular bill in microcosm, I can see where people can
12 support it. I have to sit back and take a look at the whole
13 picture. So many things that we don't control that we inevitably
14 have to come up with the revenues somewhere someway to pay for
15 them.

16
17 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

18 Okay. Thank you, Legislator Barraga. Legislator Browning.

19
20 **LEGISLATOR BROWNING:**

21 Okay. It's kind of funny because some of the things, Rob, you said
22 I don't necessarily agree with you, but I think that -- I mean, I
23 do support this because I didn't vote for the mortgage fee
24 increase, and, you know, the reason why I would like to support
25 this is because I believe we do want to send a clear message. It
26 doesn't lock us in to going over that two percent, but I think we
27 have to give a clear message.

28
29 And I think the other thing -- the one thing that I've seen is we
30 receive a budget every year from the County Exec, and there's all
31 these fee increases, and we quake when we see them because we don't
32 like them. And then we see say *well, I don't like this, but we*
33 *have to find an offset*, and we can't find the offsets, so we get
34 stuck with it. So, I do believe that this also imposes it on the
35 County Exec to try and rein in some of what he has done.

36
37 It's very hard. And, Lou, you've said it -- everything you've
38 said, you're right. DuWayne, everything you've said, you're right.
39 You know, we have a lot of unfunded mandates, and when I hear --
40 and I've said it many, many times to Rob, you know, to say people
41 are leaving Long Island, it's not because of Suffolk County and
42 what Suffolk County's doing. It's because 70% of your tax bill is
43 your school taxes. It's got nothing to do with Suffolk County
44 government and what Suffolk County government is doing.

45
46 However, I think that -- you know, I do support this. It does have
47 an avenue to allow us to go over that two percent because I look at
48 it as -- let's say there was a ten-dollar fee, and you're locked in
49 at a two percent, you know, you can't increase that fee more than
50 two percent. I don't think that's realistic, but we do have the
51 opportunity with a majority vote to increase that ten-dollar fee
52 increase.

53
54 We're hearing a lot about people complaining, and I think the
55 red-light-camera fee increases is -- I think that's the one that
56 really is kind of -- we've had enough. We've all had enough, and I

1 think that this is going to force everyone including the
2 administration to try and rein back what they're doing on fee
3 increases because, you know, we didn't want to do it the last time
4 when it came in front of us at the last meetings. So, I'm going to
5 support this 'cause I think it's a message to the residents and the
6 taxpayers that we do know how they feel.

7
8 And I think, you know, the park fees, I voted for the park fees.
9 Why did I vote for the park fees? Because the parks is not a
10 money-making venue. I mean, it costs us more money. And so, parks
11 can justify that need to do the increase because we're not making
12 any money on parks, but when I see things like the mortgage fee
13 increase, the impact, I mean, my son moved here, it's now
14 two-and-half years ago, and what was his thing? Was, well, how
15 much are the school taxes, you know. That's what he was looking
16 at, was how much are my school taxes. And we can't -- we can't
17 allow our kids to continue to leave because of school taxes.
18 That's not our thing. We have so many unfunded mandates, and
19 that's something, Rob, you know, if you're so passionate about it,
20 go up there to Albany and tell them they need to cut some of these
21 mandates.

22
23 We have a deputy sheriff back there. We just approved a new
24 contract for them. They deserve the paycheck that they get.
25 They're not asking for a lot. I don't think they got a lot. So,
26 you know, we do have -- we have expenses. Employees cost money,
27 but the employees in Suffolk County is what makes Suffolk County
28 work. So, don't beat up on a Suffolk County employee and what they
29 make. So --

30
31 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**
32 I wasn't.

33
34 **LEGISLATOR BROWNING:**
35 And, again -- and, you know, we lost somebody in the
36 administration. It just got replaced, you know. I think that's
37 something that needs to be done. County Exec laid off 1,100
38 people, but he hasn't laid off anybody on the 12th floor. He's
39 increased the staffing on the 12th floor. So, he needs to get a
40 message too, that it needs to stop, stop replacing people when you
41 don't have the money.

42
43 So, I am going to support this. I think it's -- it's given the
44 taxpayers in Suffolk County the message that we do agree with them.
45 And I -- really, I do think it's -- I don't think it's that
46 harmful. It does require a 12-person vote if we want to go over
47 two percent, and I think that we can take them as they come. So,
48 that's about all I have to say.

49
50 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
51 Thank you, Legislator Browning. Very well said. And -- but I do
52 want to note that the last round of fee increases that had been
53 proposed were withdrawn by the County Executive without this bill
54 in place, and that's the point that I'm trying to make, that it's
55 the will of this body that really controls, not some artificial two
56 percent that we pull out of the sky and say this is somehow going

1 to magically solve people leaving Suffolk County. It's not. What
2 you really need is just the will of this body to realize that, you
3 know, if it's the will of the body that it's not going to increase
4 fees or what -- by what percentage, then so be it. But, you know,
5 passing just feel-good legislation to give us some power and
6 authority that we already have, to me, doesn't make any sense.
7 Legislator Kennedy.

8
9 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

10 Thank you.

11
12 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

13 You're welcome.

14
15 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

16 I fully understand the gravity of our financial situation, and I
17 will happily work with anyone to come up with something in addition
18 to this bill. But right now, user fees - as we've been calling
19 them - are hurting our people, the mortgage tax, the tax map
20 recording fee.

21
22 We have a law that states that there has to be justification for
23 the increase. We voted to increase the funding that probationers
24 have to pay for a urine exam when they've had DWIs and
25 substance-abuse issues, and that's a legitimate fee. The cost of
26 the urine analysis, the cost of the staff with the volume of people
27 we take care of is ever increasing. I don't have a problem with
28 that. I have a problem with those two fees. I can't justify a
29 piece of paper with some ink and 15 characters typed in by a woman
30 who types 160 words a minute worth an additional \$300. I support
31 this bill. I think it is not perfect, but it is a start. We can
32 continue to do this, and we also have to -- there are certain
33 members of our government that do not understand a basic that we
34 learn as a child; there are wants, and there are needs. They don't
35 understand the difference. Thank you.

36
37 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

38 All right. Thank you, Legislator Kennedy. Presiding Officer,
39 Legislator Gregory.

40
41 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

42 I guess I have a question for Counsel, if I may. So, through the
43 Chair. So, how would this bill actually work?

44
45 **MR. NOLAN:**

46 Well, what the bill states is that the County Executive when he
47 proposes his operating budget each year, he cannot increase the
48 revenue from any existing fee by more than two percent. It also
49 states that the County Legislature when we adopt the operating
50 budget cannot increase a revenue from an existing fee by more than
51 two percent unless by a standalone vote we pierce that cap, for
52 lack of a better term, by a two-thirds vote of the body. So,
53 that's how it seeks to control, you know, fees, is through the
54 budgeting process.

1 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

2 So, you -- so, it seems like it's structured similarly to the tax
3 cap.

4
5 **MR. NOLAN:**

6 Definitely, yes.

7
8 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

9 We'll talk offline who probably structured this bill, but that's
10 irrelevant. It's, you know, I think -- I think I stand on my
11 comments that I've made before. I think this bill is premature.
12 The Governor -- I was just at a signing last week. The Governor
13 signed an executive order. He's empowering county executives to
14 work with all the municipalities to come up with shared services
15 and find savings, and they're going to put a referendum to the
16 public this November. That's the theory and the intention, and
17 hopefully, you know, we'll come up with millions of dollars in
18 savings, certainly some form of savings.

19
20 But I think -- back to my original point, we still have to pay for
21 the services that we provide. When I first got here in 2008, I
22 think in 2010 we had a discussion about one of our marinas and the
23 upgrades. They provided utilities, electric or improve the
24 electric to the marinas, something that they hadn't done, but we
25 were charging the same fee as if we hadn't made those improvements.
26 And to me, that's certainly a benefit to the people that use the
27 marina, but it's a disservice to the general public saying why are
28 my tax dollars going to a service and we're giving actually someone
29 a benefit. They're not charging for the service that we're
30 providing. I think that's unfair. I think people would be
31 offended by that. I think they expect us to charge -- I think it's
32 irresponsible for us not to charge what the service actually costs.
33 And to say that we're limited to two percent every year when we
34 know personnel costs are going up, the cost of transporting, you
35 know, materials is going up, everything's going up. The cost of
36 milk -- I don't drink milk. I'm, you know, lactose intolerant, but
37 -- so they tell me, you know, the cost of milk today is not what it
38 was five years ago, you know. I mean, it's just -- it's
39 irresponsible to think that that's not the environment that we live
40 in. And to say -- and to limit us to two percent knowing when most
41 costs go up beyond that -- healthcare costs have gone up ten, 12,
42 even 20 percent in some -- in one year. So, you know, I think the
43 intention of the bill is well intended, but I think we can
44 certainly come up with savings in a -- in a better way, and that's
45 all I'm saying.

46
47 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

48 Yes, Legislator Trotta, go ahead.

49
50 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

51 Just to point out, we're not limiting ourselves. It can go up more
52 than two percent, plain and simple. So, that argument's out the
53 window.

54
55 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

56 Okay. I would also make a suggestion to all the -- to all of my

1 colleagues, you know, whether it's a committee meeting or a
2 legislative meeting, we get testimony, continuous testimony about
3 opposition to fees that are either proposed or more importantly
4 fees that we've already put in place, that the County has put in
5 place. And, again, I understand the frustration over some of that.

6
7 So, what I would suggest, rather than impose this two percent
8 artificial limitation, is if there's a fee that you disagree with,
9 then put in a bill to repeal it. And when you do that, just as
10 long as you tell me where, what cut you're going to make to offset
11 it or what additional revenue you're going to raise to offset it,
12 I'd be happy to consider that. I think that would be doing a
13 service to the folks that are complaining about the fee where you
14 attack the fee and want to repeal that fee, and I'm happy to
15 consider that.

16
17 But, you know, if you're going to repeal a fee that cuts, you know,
18 \$20 million in revenue, then I would just like to know what
19 particular cut will be made to make up the difference because,
20 otherwise, it would be irresponsible to repeal the fee, or you can
21 tell me how much you want to raise property taxes. I'd be happy to
22 listen to that as well. So, I just want to see what choices would
23 be made in repealing some of these fees in order to satisfy the
24 folks that have been - and rightfully - complaining about higher
25 fees. No one -- as Legislator Barraga says, no one wants to pay a
26 higher fee. Of course not. That's common sense. Who would want
27 to pay a higher fee? Nobody.

28
29 But at the same time, if you want your elected official to repeal
30 it, that's fine. They have the power to do that without this bill.
31 They can certainly repeal any fee they want. No problem. Put the
32 bill in. All you need are ten votes to do it, but just tell me
33 where you're going to make up the shortfall because you may want to
34 just propose a property tax increase. That would make up the
35 difference. Well, no, that's not acceptable. Wait a minute, those
36 same folks would probably complain about that. Well, tell me what
37 service you want to cut to make up the difference then. So, to me,
38 that's responsible budgeting, unlike this bill, which I understand
39 the appeal and how popular it may be, but frankly we have this
40 authority. Yeah, Legislator Martinez.

41
42 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

43 Thank you. You know, this is very difficult for me because though
44 I don't agree with the continued increase in fees I also understand
45 that we need to start looking in the way we spend certain things.
46 But I'll be honest with you right now. The way things are in my
47 district, I honestly cannot afford knowing that certain resources
48 will be cut if we don't -- first let me finish -- knowing that
49 certain fees that we don't want are going to go in in assisting us
50 in making sure that we at least keep afloat, you know, just as our
51 Legislator Barraga just mentioned before. You know, it's very
52 difficult, and I know that certain -- you know, we have certain
53 caps and certain unnecessary spending, and we really need to start
54 looking at that spending for sure, but we also have to remember
55 those districts that are in dire need too of resources.

1 And we need to remember that aside from, you know, Legislator
2 Trotta, you saying the opioid epidemic, which is very important too
3 and something that we need to focus on as well, but we also need to
4 remember those districts that are in need, and my district is one
5 of those that is in high need, and I'd be very afraid to vote on
6 something that may limit the amount of resources that go to my
7 district. Especially the way things are right now, I cannot afford
8 that. And though I understand that my district is one who has, you
9 know, been involved in getting this -- the red-light cameras, and,
10 trust me, I'm on that every single -- probably every week I'm on
11 the phone with TPVA, okay, in tickets that my residents are
12 receiving. But at the same time, I'd be very scared to vote for
13 something that may put a cap on resources that my district will
14 need at the end.

15
16 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

17 Your district's not going to lose a dollar. No one's district is
18 going to lose a dollar. It's just -- I mean, I'm assuming through
19 the Chair to the Budget Director, Dr. Lipp, I mean, I'm assuming
20 where we collect over a hundred million dollars in taxes and fees a
21 year or somewhere in that area. I don't know what it is, but, you
22 know, you're still going to get an increase. And if want more of
23 an increase, you're going to get it. I mean, your district is
24 getting probably -- you know, the police protection you're getting
25 now is, you know, unprecedented for your district, and no one's
26 saying it shouldn't be, and it's going there. So, you know, I
27 don't mind that at all.

28
29 But this has to do with controlling the fee increases. It's not
30 fair. Our children and our seniors can't afford to live here
31 anymore, and if we're going to be serious about it, this isn't
32 limiting it to two percent. We can go over the two percent, and I
33 have no problem, as using the Presiding Officer's example, if
34 there's a ferry or a marina that we have to increase it because we
35 did some upgrades, I have no problem with that, and no one would
36 have a problem with it, but I do have a problem with making up a
37 fee, a tax and calling it a fee and making, you know -- charging
38 our youngest people who are buying houses here an extra \$300 or a
39 senior citizen who wants to redo their kitchen and has to pay
40 \$1,100 on a 10,000-dollar loan. That's what I'm against, and
41 that's what this will control.

42
43 It's all about being responsible. Now, you can make all the
44 justifications you want in your mind and it's a -- and because it's
45 an election year we pull these things out because next year they'll
46 be back in, but this is something that gives us the ability to
47 raise it above the two percent.

48
49 If you don't want to vote for it, don't vote for it, plain and
50 simple. But this is the reality of what this County needs to get
51 its fiscal shape in. I mean, I go under the guidance of Supervisor
52 Vecchio from the Town of Smithtown. The guy runs the place like a
53 clock. Our debt is \$17 million when any other town is over three
54 or \$400 million, and that's what we should be doing, and we're not
55 doing it. We're not taking our responsibility seriously, and
56 that's why I introduced this bill so we start to take it seriously.

1 And it gives us the ability to go above the two percent. So, it's
2 about responsible government, and this is what this bill's all
3 about.

4
5 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

6 But you too, Rob, you just said it, right? You just said, you
7 know, election year and next year it might be thrown out. This
8 shouldn't be based on politics.

9
10 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

11 I'm not talking about this bill.

12
13 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

14 Can I finish?

15
16 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

17 I'm talking about the bill that the --

18
19 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

20 Legislator Trotta, one at a time.

21
22 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

23 No. But I -- she misunderstood what I said.

24
25 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

26 Okay. But let her speak and then you can correct her.

27
28 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

29 Okay.

30
31 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

32 Okay.

33
34 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

35 My -- that's my issue, right? Something that we should be working
36 on together, bipartisan. This shouldn't be a bill where it's
37 putting us against each other because no one wants to raise fees.
38 This is something that this body doesn't want. It's not like we go
39 out there every single day and say *hey, let's raise our fees*, no.
40 We need to find ways to work together collectively in making sure
41 that we find ways to cut our spending, but this shouldn't be -- and
42 I'd be willing to work with you, and you know that, Rob. You know
43 that you and I could sit down and find a bill that we can put in
44 together where it could be a bipartisan bill. What this bill does,
45 it pits us against each other when we --

46
47 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

48 No.

49
50 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

51 -- should work together.

52
53 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

54 It most certainly does not. It does the exact opposite. It makes
55 us work together. It makes us justify why we have to go above the
56 two percent because you know, Monica, that if you came to me and

1 said *listen, we need to raise this ten percent for this reason, I'm*
2 *there for you. I am there.*

3
4 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

5 And you know what, I must agree with you --

6
7 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

8 And this gives us the ability.

9
10 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

11 I must agree with you because the one thing you have done, yes,
12 you've been very supportive of my district as has the entire body.

13
14 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

15 And I will continue to even --

16
17 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

18 So, I don't want you to say next time PD has -- is spending too
19 much money when they're in my district. But, you know, this is
20 something that we really need to look at together as a body.

21
22 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

23 This is -- this is -- there's no more bipartisan bill than this
24 bill because it makes us work together, and the reference to the
25 election year was the County Executive pulling those additional fee
26 increases. That's what I'm --

27
28 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

29 I'm not in charge of what the County Executive does.

30
31 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

32 I know. I know that.

33
34 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

35 So, for example, this is a bipartisan bill. Did you speak to any
36 of us on the other side of the aisle regarding this bill?

37
38 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

39 Yes. This bill has been out there. There was a public hearing.
40 Of course. This is a no-brainer bill.

41
42 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

43 Did you reach out to --

44
45 **LEGISLATOR TROTТА:**

46 This is a no-brainer bill. This is a no brainer. This is
47 something that we can all agree on, *Hey, we want to control*
48 *spending*. And if we need to go above that spending, the mechanism
49 is in place.

50
51 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

52 Legislator Gregory.

53
54 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

55 One last comment --

56

1 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

2 Yes, sir.

3
4 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

5 -- because Legislator Trotta who said something and I don't think
6 he realized he said it, and if you didn't maybe I'm interpreting it
7 wrong. I think you just made a statement that disqualifies the
8 reason for this bill. You've been talking about, you know, putting
9 fees on the County that don't exist before. So, would this bill
10 even address those fees? How can you cap a fee that hasn't existed
11 before?

12
13 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

14 Well, no. It doesn't affect the bill that hasn't existed before.

15
16 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

17 Okay.

18
19 **LEGISLATOR TROTTA:**

20 No, it doesn't.

21
22 **PRESIDING OFFICER GREGORY:**

23 All right.

24
25 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

26 Okay. Well, I hope those listening appreciate the fact that this
27 Committee and this Legislature and this County government is not
28 enamored with raising fees and taxes and we are mindful of
29 taxpayers and particularly to the folks from the Long Island Board
30 of Realtors. I understand your testimony here today. I understand
31 you coming down and opposing this fee, but I ask that you balance
32 that with looking at the track record that we've had here at least
33 in the last eleven and a half years that I've been here in dealing
34 with the County finances as opposed to every other taxing
35 jurisdiction out there. And I think you'll find that we've
36 actually done a pretty good job of managing County finances and
37 coming up with revenue streams without always dipping into the
38 pockets of the taxpayers because if I did that, then your testimony
39 up here would be *How could you be raising taxes? You're driving my*
40 *homeowners and my potential buyers off Long Island or How can you*
41 *be cutting these police services? Our neighborhoods are not safe,*
42 *and we have reputations in our communities now, and no one's going*
43 *to buy on Long Island, or, you know, How can you cut, you know,*
44 *daycare services or How can you cut these other services?*

45
46 So, again, I understand the frustration, and I certainly appreciate
47 all the comments that we hear over and over again about the fees,
48 but there really needs to be some balance in this debate. People
49 need to understand that we're making very tough choices. We are
50 looking at the revenue side and at the cutting-expenses side.
51 We've done that too. And, you know, frankly, if the will of this
52 body is not to raise taxes or fees by more than two percent, we can
53 do that without this bill.

54
55 So, with that said, we have two motions. Tabling motion takes
56 precedent. I'll call the vote. All in favor? Hands? Table?

1 Opposed? All right, late entry. So, I believe that was -- to the
2 Clerk, what's the vote, what the tally?

3
4 **MS. ELLIS:**
5 I have four.

6
7 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
8 Four to table. So, the bill is tabled. Okay. Thank you. (VOTE:
9 4-2-0-1. Tabled. Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote.
10 Legislators Browning and Kennedy opposed. Legislator Stern not
11 present.)
12

13
14 **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**
15

16
17 Okay. The next resolution is No 1273 2017. Adopting Local Law
18 No. -2017, A Charter Law requiring departmental justification of
19 proposed fee increases. (Trotta) BUDGET AND FINANCE. This requires
20 a public hearing. Legislator Trotta, would you like to make the
21 motion? Oh, that's right. Motion to table. Second by Legislator
22 Browning. Thank you. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?
23 Resolution is tabled. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Tabled for Public Hearing.
24 Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not
25 present.)
26

27 Next is Resolution No 1275 2017. Approving County funding
28 for a contract agency (Islip Food For Hope, Inc.). (Martinez)
29 BUDGET AND FINANCE. Motion by Legislator Martinez. I'll second.
30 All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. (VOTE:
31 6-0-0-1. Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator
32 Stern not present.)
33

34 Resolution No 1279 2017. To readjust, compromise, and grant
35 refunds and charge-backs on real property correction of errors by:
36 County Legislature (Control No. 1038-2017). (Co. Exec.) BUDGET AND
37 FINANCE. I'll offer a motion to approve and place on the consent
38 calendar. Second by Legislator Martinez. All in favor? Opposed?
39 Abstentions? Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Consent Calendar.
40 Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not
41 present.)
42

43 Next is Resolution No 1280 2017. To readjust, compromise,
44 and grant refunds and charge-backs on real property correction of
45 errors by: County Legislature (Control No. 1039-2017). (Co. Exec.)
46 BUDGET AND FINANCE. Same motion. Same second and without
47 objection same vote. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Consent Calendar. Presiding
48 Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)
49

50 Resolution No 1281 2017. To readjust, compromise, and grant
51 refunds and chargebacks on correction or errors/County Comptroller
52 by: County Legislature No. 462-2017. (Co. Exec.) BUDGET AND
53 FINANCE. Same motion, same second, same vote. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1.
54 Consent Calendar. Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote.
55 Legislator Stern not present.)
56

1 Resolution No 1282 2017. To readjust, compromise, and grant
2 refunds and chargebacks on correction or errors/County Comptroller
3 by: County Legislature No. 463-2017. (Co. Exec.) BUDGET AND
4 FINANCE. Same motion, same second and same vote. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1.
5 Consent Calendar. Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote.
6 Legislator Stern not present.)

7
8 Resolution No 1305 2017. Amending the 2017 Operating Budget
9 and appropriating funds in connection with bonding for judgments in
10 a liability case against the County. (Co. Exec.) BUDGET AND
11 FINANCE. This authorizes a total of \$456,572 to comply with the
12 judgment in a liability case after trial. I will offer a motion to
13 approve. Second by Legislator Martinez. All in favor? Opposed?
14 Abstentions? Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Presiding Officer
15 Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)

16
17 Resolution No 1307 2017. Amending the 2017 Operating Budget
18 to provide funding for Empowerment Collaborative of Long Island
19 (ECLI) and Empower 1 Self, Inc. (Martinez) BUDGET AND FINANCE.
20 Motion by Legislator Martinez.

21
22 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**
23 Second.

24
25 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
26 Second by Legislator Kennedy. All in favor? Opposed?
27 Abstentions? Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Presiding Officer
28 Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)

29
30 Resolution No 1308 2017. Approving 2017 funding for a
31 contract agency (Sag Harbor Youth Center, Inc.). (Fleming) BUDGET
32 AND FINANCE.

33
34 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**
35 On the motion.

36
37 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
38 Okay. One second. Hold on one second. There is Janet Grossman -
39 come on up - on the bill. Thank you for coming and joining us this
40 morning. We appreciate it and --

41
42 **MS. GROSSMAN:**
43 Hello. I'm Janet Grossman. I'm the president of the Youth
44 Resource Center of Sag Harbor.

45
46 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
47 Right. What we're going to do before you start is just -- this --
48 just for the Committee's information, this bill is releasing
49 \$40,689 in funding for a contract agency that's above the 20
50 percent threshold, actually, a little above 26 percent, and I
51 understand the agency is now working with the Comptroller's office,
52 and, Ms. Grossman, you're from the organization, correct?

53
54 **MS. GROSSMAN:**
55 Yeah.

1 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

2 Okay. So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to make a motion to
3 table for discussion purposes first. Is there a second?

4
5 **LEGISLATOR MARTINEZ:**

6 Second.

7
8 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

9 Second by Legislator Martinez. And I'm going to ask you to hold
10 back for one moment and ask Legislator Kennedy: Did you want to
11 speak or ask a question first?

12
13 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

14 Yes, I did. You're over 20 percent, which is our rule. Do you
15 know how much over administratively you are?

16
17 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

18 I want to explain why we're over. I would like this to be passed
19 out to everybody. The problem is our accountant put our insurance
20 costs of \$10,058 into our administrative expenses when it's really
21 an operating expense for the program, and that's the reason why
22 we're over -- the percentage is over the 20 -- is at 26 percent.
23 If you look on the sheet, if you look at all the other expenses,
24 it's not going to come to over 20 percent.

25
26 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

27 And you've been working with the Comptroller with this?

28
29 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

30 Yes.

31
32 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

33 Okay.

34
35 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

36 And we've -- I've been working with our accountant with this. So,
37 this should be rectified in the 2016 tax return, you know, and
38 that's in the process right now. We should have it. Supposedly
39 I'm going to get everything this week, but you never know. So,
40 we're working with the accountant on that, and that was our big
41 problem.

42
43 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

44 That's fine. As long as you're working to rectify.

45
46 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

47 Yeah. Can I just say a couple more words?

48
49 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

50 Sure.

51
52 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

53 Even though it's tabled?

54
55 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

56 Oh, no, it's okay. Go right ahead.

1 **MS. GROSSMAN:**

2 I just want to say that, you know, we're listed as the Sag Harbor
3 Youth Center, but our organization merged with the Sag Harbor Youth
4 Center, and we are now the Youth Resource Center of Sag Harbor, and
5 that's who your -- the grant comes to, and we run a beach program
6 during the summer, Monday, Wednesday, Friday nights for kids, sixth
7 grade, this year, to tenth grade. And middle income and low-income
8 families who can't send their kids to camp depend on this program.
9 We also support the after-school program at Pierson High School for
10 kids so middle school kids don't go home to an empty house after
11 school. It's a very important program to our community. We
12 provide -- we don't provide the salaries for the program; we
13 provide the supplies, the furniture, the materials, the games. So,
14 believe me, your money is going a long way with this program.
15 Thank you.

16
17 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

18 Thank you.

19
20 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

21 Thank you very much and just please continue to work with your
22 accountant and the Comptroller's office, and what's going to
23 happen -- this Committee has jurisdiction over this type of
24 situation. We've had several other organizations that have come
25 before this Committee with the same situation you're in, and
26 usually once we take a harder look at how the expenses are being
27 classified, we're pretty successful in getting you to that 20
28 percent where you need to be, which you're confident that you'll
29 make as well. So, continue with that process and just in our next
30 Committee meeting just you or someone report back to us the outcome
31 of the review by your accountant and the Comptroller, and we'll be
32 happy to act on the bill at that time, okay? All right, and we
33 appreciate you coming down today. Legislator Kennedy.

34
35 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**

36 The organization's name, can that be changed by someone --

37
38 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

39 Oh, yeah. Dr. Lipp, that requires a bill to change the name of the
40 contract agency?

41
42 **DR. LIPP:**

43 Yes.

44
45 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**

46 It does. Yeah, so, perhaps reach out to Legislator Fleming and
47 just let her know that the name of your organization has changed,
48 and she'll take it from there for you, all right?

49
50 All right, there's a motion pending to table, I believe, and it's
51 received a second. I'll call the vote. All in favor? Opposed?
52 Abstentions? **Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Tabled. Presiding**
53 **Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)**

54
55 Next is Resolution No 1327 2017. **Approving 2017 Funding**
56 **for a contract agency (Gallery North, Inc.). (Hahn) BUDGET AND**

1 **FINANCE.** This is 20,000 in funding for the organization which has
2 administrative expenses above 20 percent threshold, and they're
3 working with the Comptroller's office to reclassify. So, I'll
4 offer a motion to table.

5
6 **LEGISLATOR KENNEDY:**
7 Second.

8
9 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
10 Second by Legislator Kennedy. All in favor? Opposed?
11 Abstentions? **Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Tabled. Presiding**
12 **Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)**

13
14 Resolution No 1362 2017. Adopting Local Law No. -2017, A
15 Charter Law to implement one-year rolling debt policy under 5-25-5
16 Law to mitigate budgetary shortfall. (Co. Exec.) **BUDGET AND**
17 **FINANCE.** Requires a public hearing. I'll offer a motion to table.
18 Second by Legislator Barraga. All in favor? Opposed?
19 Abstentions? **Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Tabled for Public**
20 **Hearing. Presiding Officer Gregory included in vote. Legislator**
21 **Stern not present.)**

22
23 Resolution No 1363 2017. Approving County funding for a
24 contract agency (St. Elizabeth's Roman Catholic Church Parish
25 Outreach). (D'Amaro) **BUDGET AND FINANCE.** This releases 4,500 in
26 funding for this agency, which missed the deadline, but they are
27 now in compliance. I'll offer a motion to approve.

28
29 **LEGISLATOR BARRAGA:**
30 Second.

31
32 **CHAIRPERSON D'AMARO:**
33 Second by Legislator Barraga. All in favor? Opposed?
34 Abstentions? **Motion carries. (VOTE: 6-0-0-1. Presiding Officer**
35 **Gregory included in vote. Legislator Stern not present.)**

36
37 There is no further business before the Committee. We are
38 adjourned. Thank you.

39
40
41 (THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 11:35 A.M.)
42
43
44
45
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