

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

**OF THE**

**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Economic Development 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 Wednesday, April 23, 2014, at 2:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Legislator William Lindsay - Chairman  
Legislator Steven Stern - Vice-Chair  
Legislator Kara Hahn  
Legislator John Kennedy  
Legislator Kevin McCaffrey  
Legislator Jay Schneiderman

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory - District No. 15  
George Nolan - Counsel to the Suffolk County Legislature  
Timothy Laube - Clerk, Suffolk County Legislature  
Sondra Cochran - Appointee, SC Industrial Development Agency  
Reverend Dr. Robert Alexander - New Shiloh Baptist Church  
Bishop Michael Talbert - First Church  
Charlie B. Reed - Wyandanch Community Development Corporation  
Sadie Badon - Wyandanch Community Development Corporation  
Trevor Cross  
Phyllis Henry  
All Other Interested Parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Kevin Gruebel - Court Reporter

**MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:**

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

*(\*The meeting was called to order at 2:06 p.m. \*)*

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Good afternoon. Welcome to the Economic Development Committee meeting. If you'd all please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Kennedy.

*(Salutation)*

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Thank you for being here for our committee meeting. We have several cards here. Anyone else that's interested in speaking in the public portion please fill out a yellow card and give it to us. If I could call our first speaker, Reverend Dr. Robert Alexander. And you have three minutes to speak, sir.

**REVEREND ALEXANDER:**

Good afternoon. My name is Robert Alexander and I'm Sondra's Pastor. I met Sondra about 17 years ago when I came to assist the Pastor of the church which she belonged to at that time. One Sunday after the conclusion of services I was walking down the aisle on my way to the Pastor's office and Sondra stopped me and grabbed my arm and she looked at me and she asked with great expectation, "Reverend Alexander, will you marry me?"

*(\*Laughter\*)*

And without a moment's hesitation and with a serious look on my face I said, "I'm sorry, Sondra. I'm already spoken for". If you could have just been there to see the expression on her face, and it lasted until I broke out in a wide grin, but that's when I first learned that I -- that I had a great sense of humor myself and also it was the beginning of a great relationship between her and her family.

But let me say at the outset that this young lady is especially deserving of this honor that is being bestowed upon her today. She has many years of civic involvement while working with County Executive Bellone when he was Babylon's Town Supervisor and the present Supervisor, Rick Schaeffer, and of course your Presiding Officer, DuWayne Gregory. She has, among other things, been deeply involved in building affordable housing in our community, and also in identifying brown fields. She is active in Wyandanch Rising, she's actively involved in the New York State Farmer's Market Initiative to bring farm fresh vegetables and fruit to low income neighborhoods, and for the past two summers she has been, in tandem with Sustainable Long Island, successful in securing grants to provide summer employment opportunities and marketing experience to five neighborhood youths.

Lastly, she is an astute, no nonsense businesswoman, and when she commits herself to any project she has the tenacity of a bulldog until that project is brought to fruition. So I graduate Sondra in achieving yet another milestone in her career, and my congregation and I are extremely blessed to have such talented and tireless worker among us. I know these talents will now transition to the Suffolk County IDA. Thank you, Executive Bellone, for recognizing the incredible talent that you have added to your team.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Are there any questions for the Reverend Doctor? Okay. Our next speaker is Sadie Badon.

**MS. BADON:**

My name is Sadie Badon. I have lived in Suffolk County since 1975, and during that time I have known Sondra. First and foremost, I'd like to thank you very much for selecting her to this unpaid

position. She really doesn't need another unpaid position, but thank you so much. *(Laughter)*. She's the best person I can think of that's qualified to do a job. I have never known her to turn anybody down. Any time you call her, she's there. She's very knowledgeable. She'll start something, she will finish something. I don't care when she finishes it, midnight, early in the morning, it's done. Once more, I'd like to thank you so much because she'll be a good asset to any community. She's been a very good asset to the Town of Babylon, to Wyandanch and also to Suffolk County. So thank you again for selecting her.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Thank you. Our next speaker is Charlie B. Reed.

**MR. REED:**

First I'd like to say good afternoon to everyone here, and then my Pastor has spoken for me already, but I'd just like to reiterate my knowing of Sondra because I am her Deacon also. Even though you heard from our Pastor, but I'm her Deacon. I'm one of her Deacons. And also, I am her Vice President for the Wyandanch Development Corporation. So I understand and I know Sondra, how influenced she can be. I also understand that she'll be a great asset to this new committee, not a new committee, but a new person on this committee, because she bring quite a few attributes to that committee if she's selected.

So I'm here just to say you didn't go wrong by putting her name in there and you won't be wrong if you select Sondra today. So I'm here to say in advance congratulations, Sondra, on your appointment, and I think you will be well pleased when you start working with Sondra. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Thank you, Mr. Reed. Our next speaker, and I apologize because I can't read the handwriting too well, Trevor Cross? Did I get that right?

**MR. CROSS:**

Thank you, sir, you got it right. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Trevor Cross. I'm the Administrator of the Martin Luther King Health Center for the past seven years. During that time I had the opportunity to meet Sondra. I worked with her on two committees, the Wyandanch Coalition and the Wyandanch Implementation Committee. If you're looking for someone who completes a task, you've got the right person. If you're looking for someone who is committed to the community, you've got the right person. I have been very impressed. And when you -- you know, I'm a newcomer in the area, relatively newcomer to a lot of these committee, and you listen very carefully when someone say something and those who follow through, and she has consistently followed through in whatever she's stated at these meetings. She has a lot of creative ideas that she's brought forward in these various committee meetings that I've attended, and I am very overly confident that she will serve well on this committee and she will make a big difference in the development of Suffolk County as a member of this board. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Thank you, Mr. Cross. And finally, we have Phyllis Henry.

**MS. HENRY:**

Good afternoon. My name is Phyllis Henry and I have lived in Wyandanch for 40 years. I work in Wyandanch as well and I'm an advocate for the community. I met Sondra -- I can't remember how many years ago, but she was working under James Wallace, who was the Director of the Wyandanch Development Corporation. Under his leadership he groomed this young man -- this young lady in the position that she's in now. Even the times that he wasn't well enough because he was getting older as years went on, she was the woman behind him. She basically ran the organization. She brought the organization up to what it is today.

The community, how can I say it, she's very, very involved in the community. Her organization works with the Town of Babylon. They were there when the idea of the Wyandanch Rising was adopted and as you can see now where we are with Wyandanch. She's an intricate part and partner with the Town of Babylon for the Implementation Committee as well. Whenever you need Sondra for something, she's there. Whenever something is going on in the community and she's not quite sure of what's going on, she'll make a couple of calls, she'll get back to you. She'll help in every way that she can. Her housing program is pristine.

I work, too, out of the Martin Luther King Health Center and at times there are a lot of individuals that are looking for housing and looking for programs for mothers with children. I have not to this day heard anything bad about the program that she runs. She's a very, very vital person to our community. She donates a lot of her time. She's on the Wyandanch, besides the Implementation Committee, I'm sorry, she's with the Ujima Program. She takes some internships for students to mentor them and help them. These are minority students. So if you choose to allow her to sit on your board, you've got the right woman. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Thank you, Miss Henry. Do we have any anybody else? Any other speakers that wanted to speak today? That closes the public portion -- oh, I'm sorry, sir. Would you like to speak? If you could state your name and address for the record, please.

**BISHOP TALBERT:**

My name is Bishop Talbert, First Church Pastor, Wyandanch, coming to just give my support to Sandra. One of the things that -- one of the only things that brought me out was knowing that she is a person of productivity. Raise and promotion ought to be based on productivity. Sondra can get the job done and I think that if you would choose her, you would not regret your choosing. God Bless.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Okay. Not seeing any other speakers, that'll close the public portion of the committee hearing. We don't have any presentations today, we don't have any tabled resolutions, so we'll go right into the introductory resolutions. Miss Cochran, if you could come forward, please.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Good afternoon. Thank you for having me.

**P.O. GREGORY:**

Please have a seat.

**MR. LAUBE:**

Would you like to sit?

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

You have a very impressive fan club that joins you here today.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

They fooled me.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

If you could just begin, just tell us briefly about yourself, maybe some of the areas that your fan club didn't cover during their presentations.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

My mom moved us out here to Suffolk County in 1971 and I left for about a year and a half or so, but I ended up back right here in Suffolk County. Growing up I always thought that I could save the world and I did a few things and wanted to be a social worker, took some classes towards that and ran into a brick wall, got hit in the head with a brick realizing that I could not save the world at about 26, 27 years old.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Still can't.

*(\*Laughter\*)*

**MS. COCHRAN:**

So I decided to try to do other things that would, you know, be productive in changing things. I started working with -- started back working with Mr. Wallace. Actually, I worked for the Wyandanch Community Development Corporation when I was young, with the OJT, On the Job Training Program in the Town of Babylon. I worked there for a year and a half and I went back in 1991, I started back with WCDC. I have been there since.

I was a Housing Assistant, a Housing Counselor, a Housing Specialist, Deputy Executive Director and worked my way to Director. I have been the Director of WCDC for seven years. During that time, we've done all kinds of housing programs, we've done home ownership programs, we've done -- we do affordable rental, that's one of our biggest things, for income eligible people. We've done ownership rehab for elderly and frail, elderly people, rehabilitating their houses, looking at issues that would cover energy deficiencies and code violations.

Right now we're working on -- we're using Urban Initiative's home funds to build six more units in the Town of Babylon, all single family, but single family actually matters a lot. It takes blighted properties in the community, puts them back on the tax role, give people places to live, bring up the property value of other people's property, but what it really does is give people that have been displaced places to live. Just to see children come in that has lived in a room, a family of six in a room or in grandma's house, and the kids get their own room or get to share a room with the sibling and they're like, "Oh, my God!" So my heart is in community development and the nonprofit sector. I can't see myself doing anything else.

The reason why, when this was brought to me about being on the committee, is I see another avenue to lend my expertise, to help the economic development in Suffolk County. I'm also, like it was mentioned before, on the Wyandanch Implementation Committee. I have been with Wyandanch Rising Initiatives from the inception when they had the charrette, so that was in 2002. So this is my life. This is who I am.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Any questions from the committee? Legislator McCaffrey.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

Thank you. Thank you for being here and the rest of the fan club for coming as well. Just a couple of questions. The first is Suffolk County has a residency requirement. If you work for Suffolk County you have a period of time before you have to become a Suffolk County resident. We now have some employees that couldn't meet that residency requirement working for Suffolk County that now are working for the IDA because it is technically a separate entity than Suffolk County. What are your thoughts on people who do not reside in Suffolk County having the ability to work for the IDA.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Well, I would have to really sit down with the board and see, you know, what's going on. What does the bylaw say, what does the regulation say. I have no idea. I read some of it in the bylaws. The bylaws that's online right now, are they current on the website? You know, I would have to check into it. I really would not care to give an answer on that, a straight answer on that until I checked into it.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

Yeah -- not a question about what the bylaw, whether they can or not. My question is would you support a requirement that they become Suffolk County Legislators -- Suffolk County -- not everyone wants to be a Suffolk County Legislator, a Suffolk County resident.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

It really depends on whether it is for the betterment of the company or not. I would have to look at the person, look at their credentials. I can't really say.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

So a definite maybe?

**MS. COCHRAN:**

I'm being honest with you. I would have to know more about it. I don't make decisions offhand just like that. I have to know more about it.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

Okay. Another question we have is quite often what happens is when we give actually Suffolk County's money for people to retain jobs and keep jobs on Long Island, that's what the IDA does and that's, I'm sure you're familiar with that process. What happens many times, though, in the construction of these facilities that are being built and expanded is the use of out of town workers. And one of the things that we've spoken about, and I know we have the support of the Chairman and other members of this committee, for the requirement for any of these contractors to be, I don't want to say union labor, but I would like to say union labor but I can't, but I'd say a requirement that they have apprenticeship language in any one of these contractors that they use, which would almost guarantee that it would be at least local residents that would be doing this and not out of town contractors. So would you support requirements of contractors doing work that benefit from the IDA funding to at least adopt this requirement of having apprenticeship language for any of the contractors that are being used in that work.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Personally, yes.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Presiding Officer Legislator Gregory.

**P.O. GREGORY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't really have a question, I guess more of a statement. Sondra, I want to thank you for your commitment to the community for decades and all that you do. You are a tremendous person, a tremendous asset. I think you will be a great addition to the Suffolk County IDA. We have a mix of people from different backgrounds. I think your background is well suited, that you are a community person, a person with a history in not-for-profits to bring a different perspective to things. So I ask my colleagues to support your nomination and I think you'll all

make us proud. Thank you.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Thank you very much. And that's why I'm sitting here today, to do so, to try to do so.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Legislator Stern.

**LEG. STERN:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sondra, welcome and it's good to see you again. We had the opportunity, you had the opportunity to speak with a few of us prior to today. We had the opportunity to talk about particular issues. I have been here for a few years now and I've never seen quite, not just the number of supporters in support of your nomination, but a very impressive lineup of community leaders and clergy and I can certainly see why they are so supportive of you and this particular nomination. So I know you have the support of your community, I know you have the support of the Presiding Officer, and it is going to be my pleasure to support you for this nomination. Congratulations and I wish you every success.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

I appreciate that.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Legislator Hahn.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Hi there. I would like to echo our Presiding Officer's comments and Legislator Stern's as well. I do have two questions. For -- I guess sort of I'll find a way to form the question. Often, or often recently, how about that, I don't know that this is something we've been doing very much prior to most recently, but the IDA has the ability to offer tax incentives, tax breaks, savings on sales taxes for companies. But there's been a little bit of a concerning trend in my mind in offering tax cuts on current taxes, so that what a company is currently paid gets reduced, and that burden then gets spread around to the rest of the existing tax base when that happens. And so I want to understand your position on just how much you understand how important it is to use that very sparingly and only for projects that there is real return on that investment for us. If you could speak a little bit to that.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

I don't believe in tax incentives unless it works for everybody involved, especially when it comes to economic development. In the long run if it's going to benefit the community and, you know, a lot of times properties sit and they -- it's a tax burden. If the property's given to somebody or a tax incentive is given to somebody to come in and create jobs and eventually start paying 100% of the taxes then, you know, you look at the whole picture. You run the numbers. If it works, it works.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Good and so we're counting on you to be very diligent in running those numbers and you're our representative on that just to make sure that we're getting that investment back and then some for our communities. And so along that vein, you know, I think we've made improvements in this area, but I'd like to see -- or I'd like you to comment on the importance of what we're incentivizing being good paying jobs. You know, we're choosing to give out a limited number of tax incentives to companies that want to either stay here, grow here or move here, more than likely grow here and, you know, we really want to make sure that the jobs we're incentivizing, I believe, at least in my mind, jobs that we're incentivizing are good paying, sustainable living type of jobs. And so I'd like, you know, just if you could comment on that as well.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Well, personally and business wise, you know, from experience I know for a fact, and we all know that living on Long Island isn't cheap, okay. We don't need jobs to come out here to pay people minimum wage. We need jobs, if you're going to come out and help us out economically, you know, help the community grow or be sustainable or whatever the case may be, you have to be viable. And low paying jobs, that's not going to do it.

I just want to say one thing. When it comes to tax incentives and other incentives for agencies to come out, companies to come out or whatever the case may be, I have seen it in the past, the lack of regulation when it comes to them keeping their part of, you know, the deal. So that's one of the things that I want to learn more about how the IDA works with regulating, so.

**LEG. HAHN:**

Yeah, I believe that there's a -- I have been attending many of the meetings and this is up to the board members I am sure to keep them on top of making sure that the promises that are made are kept or we get our money back. So, you know, we count on you to be on top of that as well and thank you very much for your commitment to that. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Legislator Schneiderman.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Thank you, Sondra. Thank you for your willingness to serve. I also got to be part of the Screening Committee so I was able to ask you questions there. I find you very impressive. I don't have to ask you the same questions again.

Let me say this. Part of your job on the IDA, or a big piece of your job is attracting businesses to Suffolk County. The reason why a lot of companies don't come here, I believe, is because they cannot pay their employees enough to live in this area. They can't do it and still have the economics that allows them to bring their goods to market at a competitive price. The fundamental piece, I believe, is the housing piece, which is your experience. So to have somebody on the IDA who gets it, who understands that we need affordably priced workforce housing I think is really critical. And I think this is great I think insight by the Presiding Officer and the others who have put your name forward to get somebody on that board who understands that component. It's probably the largest impediment to bringing new businesses to Suffolk County. If you want to comment on it I welcome that, but you really have a very impressive experience in that area and I would welcome that on the IDA Board.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

You know, in rolling things over in my head, I've had a few weeks to think, and that's why my knees were a little shaky today, but one of the things that I was thinking about is building a better relationship with Workforce Housing -- is that Joe Sansavarino? Is that still in his department? Does anybody know? I'll find out, don't even worry about it.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

It's Jill.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Oh, Jill. Then that's it right there. I just got off the phone with Jill yesterday. It's very important. If people can't live it doesn't make any sense to take a job somewhere that -- where you can't live, can't afford to live, so.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

When you say oh, the employers, you got to pay higher wages, but once they pay those higher wages then they no longer are competitive in the marketplace, so it's got to be this balance. You know, decent wages but you ought to be able to live on those wages.

We had a presentation, you weren't here this morning, we had a presentation in front of I think it was the Government Ops Committee, somebody from Community Housing Innovations, a guy named Alec Roberts, and presented the demographic data on the flight of young people from Suffolk County. It's frightening how many people are leaving. And Tom DeNapoli, the State Comptroller issued an affordability report recently, too, that looked. In Suffolk County the numbers were astounding how many people are paying more than they can possibly sustain.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Over 50%.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Over 50% were paying more than 30% of their wages for rent. And then when you add in all the other expenses, the transportation costs, cell phone, cable, you know, utilities, childcare.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

PSE&G.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Everything, yeah, and they can't make ends meet. So they either leave or they fall into poverty. So we have to address the housing piece in a fundamental and meaningful way. I think we have to link them together so when you're talking to prospective employers about locating in Suffolk County, we have to help them find housing for their employees. It has to be part and parcel of this equation. That's why I think having you there would be a good thing.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Are there any more comments? At this point I would look for a motion. ***(1321 - appointing Sondra Cochran as a member of the Suffolk County Industrial Development Agency (IDA) (Presiding Officer).***

**LEG. STERN:**

Motion to approve.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

By Legislator Stern.

**LEG. McCAFFREY:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Second by Legislator McCaffrey. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Abstain.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

The motion passes. Congratulations. ***(Vote: 6-0-1-0 Abstention: Legislator Kennedy; Presiding Officer Gregory is included in the vote)***

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

You wouldn't need to attend -- it'll go before -- the procedure from this point is it will go before the entire Legislature. You're more than welcome to come and attend, but it is not required.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Will someone let me know? I'll be notified?

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

We're in session on Tuesday of next week. You don't have to come, but like I said, if you would like to we're in Riverhead on Tuesday. Congratulations and we look forward to your approval before the full Legislature on Tuesday.

**MS. COCHRAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN LINDSAY:**

Without any other business on the agenda, we are adjourned.

*(\*The meeting was adjourned at 2:36 p.m. \*)*