

EDUCATION & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A meeting of the Education & Human Services 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 June 14, 2016.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Monica Martinez, Chairperson
Leg. Thomas F. Barraga, Vice Chair
Leg. Robert Calarco, DPO
Leg. Kara Hahn
Leg. Leslie Kennedy
Leg. Kate Browning

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Amy Ellis, Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature
Robert Lipp, Director/Budget Review Office
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office
John O'Neill, Commissioner/Department of Social Services
Gail Vizzini, Suffolk Community College/VP Finance
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk Community College/Legislative Liaison
Kevin Peterman, Suffolk Community College
Katie Horst, County Executive's Office
Lisa Pinkard, Aide to Leg. Martinez
Seth Squicciarino, Aide to Leg. Hahn
Ali Nazir, Aide to Leg. Kennedy
Michael Pitcher, Director of Communications/PO
Dave Schwartz, Newsday
John B. MacKay, appointee/SC Youth Board
Marvin Smith, appointee/SC Youth Board
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:32 PM

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Committee on Education & Human Services. If we can all please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance to be led by Legislator Calarco.

SALUTATION

Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

Again, good afternoon. We do have a co-presentation today, but before we do that, we also have some appointments. And I know that we have at least one present. So, I'd like to make a motion to take out of order **Introductory Resolution 1502, which is to appoint member of the Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council representing Legislative District number 9, Mr. Marvin Smith (County Executive)**. Do I have a second?

LEG. CALARCO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Second by Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Okay, so now we have Introductory Resolution 1502 before us. I would like to make a motion to approve.

LEG. CALARCO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Second by Legislator Calarco. If I can have Mr. Marvin Smith come to the podium real quick, please. Good afternoon, Mr. Smith.

MR. SMITH:

Good afternoon.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Always dapper; always dapper. Mr. Smith, thank you for coming before the Committee today. As you know, today's the appointment to your position to the Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council. There is still an additional appointment for the general legislature meeting, which is next Tuesday. But if you could just speak to the Committee a little bit about what you do and how effective you have actually been in the 9th Legislative District when it comes to our children.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you and good afternoon everyone. I'm honored to be here today. For the past 52 years, I have dedicated my life to young people. And in the 9th Legislative District, we are -- just on August 27th we have and will have organized our back-to-school rally with the Islip Town NAACP, where last year we gave out bookbags and had all-day activities for more than 800 children. This year we expect 1500 children and approximately 2500 people total on the campus of NYIT. Additionally, when called upon, I conduct seminars on character and leadership with YES program, Youth Enrichment Services, which again functions quite effectively in the 9th Legislative District. Also with the youth bill, when I'm called upon, I conduct character training for those as well.

When I was a coach with Central Islip Little League and with the Police Athletic League, both located

in Central Islip, I made sure that one of the first things that all of the young people had to do since I had to write the safety protocols, one of the first things they had to understand was that character first; and if we learned a little about baseball, that's okay, but character first. And so all of the young people, particularly on my team, had to know that character counts. And so those are the kind of things that I've done for more than 52 years of my life in working with young people. And, of course, I am quite active with the youth of the church.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Smith. I cannot say how happy I am to have you in the District. Obviously I represent the 9th. And the respect that you have garnered from the community is obviously very noticeable and admirable and I thank you for working with all these different groups. And I do look forward to you being there on the Youth Council and making sure that not just the children of the 9th District get the services that they need, but the entire County and all our children should be serviced equally.

MR. SMITH:

Absolutely.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Do we have any questions from any members of the Committee? Okay, so I would like to make a motion to approve; second by Legislator Barraga. All in motion. I mean, all in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0)** Congratulations, Mr. Smith. You do not need to appear at next -- at the next general session, which is Tuesday over in Riverhead. So thank you.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you. Oh, I do not have to appear?

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

You do not. I mean, unless you want to. But you do not.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you so much.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. Have a great day.

MR. SMITH:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Okay. Thank you for allowing me to take that reso out of order. We will now go back to the agenda. We do not have any correspondence, no public portion. Madam Clerk, do we have any cards?

MS. ELLIS:

No, we do not.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. We do have two presentations from the College -- well, one from the College and one from Budget Review, but we also have our Commissioner from Department of Social Services here with us as well. Commissioner, is there anything that you would like to address to Committee?

COMMISSIONER O'NEILL:

No.

PRESENTATIONS

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. And always thank you for being here as well.

So we'll continue with our presentation. We'll start off with Suffolk County Community College and their Operating Budget for 2016/2017. We have Gail Vizzini here as well as Benjamin Zwirn. So the floor's all yours.

MS. VIZZINI:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman and thank you to the Committee for allowing us to make this brief presentation in regards to our 2016/2017 Operating Budget.

Let me just say succinctly that the County Executive's recommended budget came out exactly as the College had requested it with a 2.5% increase in the County contribution, which is very much appreciated and the College is happy with that and we can work with that.

As you will see from my brief presentation, we asked for an increase in the County contribution very much in spirit with the legislative committee that has been constituted for the five-year budget plan for the College and in -- also in consideration of the call letter that came from the County Executive's office. And we absolutely understand the challenges that face the County in the fiscal prospective.

Your Budget Review Office report was issued on Friday. I did have a chance to read it. That also gives you a good overview of the College's Operating Budget and what direction we're heading.

Everybody see the numbers okay? Glasses? All right. So what's up there is -- this is a \$216 million operating budget. We've held our expenditures. This is without grants. We do have another \$3.8 million in grants, but for the purposes of comparison, we have an increase over the prior years adopted budget. We've held the increase in expenditures to 2.1%. You can see here from the chart what pops out is the increase in equipment. What that is is we have increased our technology fee to address the overwhelming demands for creating areas of student success in terms of the availability of computers that are current, addressing our cyber security concerns. And it's an area that has placed tremendous demands on the College from the wifi accessibility, the cabling, the what have you. And now that IT reports to me, I'm extremely familiar with the demands that we need to address.

So this assures that we've institutionalized a five to six year replacement schedule in the operating budget. Prior to this we actually relied on surpluses to develop in order to be able to replace computers. But in light of the increase -- the necessary increase in the technology fee, we can no longer rely on hoping that a surplus will develop, but rather institutionalize the cost.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Gail, just to clarify, right now we're just looking at the budget without grants; correct?

MS. VIZZINI:

Yes. This shows -- this shows you with the grants.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Okay, thank you.

MS. VIZZINI:

When you -- when you adopt your resolution, you'll be adopting the total budget which will be the \$219 million figure, which includes the \$3.8 million in grants, which is about \$600,000 more in grants than we've had in previous years. We try to go after whatever grants we're able to administer each year.

Implicit in these numbers were certain expenditure reductions that we made in order to bring our budget gap from what was initially almost \$14 million, not so much with the increase of expenditures, that was less of the problem. And those expenditures -- the College's expenditure increases are very much like those of the County where we have contractual salary agreements that provide step increases to our employees even if they accept a zero or a one-and-a-half or modest percentages increases, so we have to calculate for that.

In addition we had increases in our health insurance, not as bad as in previous years, but still increases. We also will be operating the Learning Resource Center, which is a welcome library at the Grant Campus, and I had to provide for the operation of that facility assuming that in order to complete the interior construction, we'd have to turn on the air conditioning turn, we'd have to turn on the heat, the lights and what have you. So we're estimating that at least for half this '16/'17 fiscal year, there will be those increases.

As far as the decreases, we're anticipating continued savings in fuel. We're being smarter with our advertising. We are experiencing energy efficiencies with our contract with Synergistics and we hope those to continue so we expect cost savings for light, power and water in about the five hundred thousand dollar area. And some of our marginal facilities are getting on in years. That presents other problems, but the good thing about that is the lease, the rents go down. So we have some savings in terms of the rents for those modular facilities.

In light of the fact that our enrollment was declining more than we had initially expected this time last year when we put together the '15/'16 operating budget, we were -- we are experiencing a decline in revenue. And that is the larger part of our budget gap problem. So we -- Dr. McKay instituted a policy of extended vacancies. So not only do anything that -- does anything that is vacated due to retirement or other circumstances receive the normal scrutiny, it's anticipated that vacancies will remain vacant longer than usual and so we have additional savings there in the salary lines.

So we brought back what -- we brought down our initial budget gap by \$1.1 million. We also abolished five vacancies, one from a grant that was no longer funded but for regular college positions that had been vacated from retirement to assure that we get the savings that we're expecting. So based on what we have here, our budget gap was \$12.8 million. Only 4.4 million was due to increases in expenditure. The larger concern was a revenue shortfall of \$8.3 million.

This slide explains why the revenue shortfall. It's comprised of -- due to the -- the decline in enrollment from what we anticipated enrollment to be relatively flat for '15/'16 and it was not. It went down by about 3%. We experienced a shortfall in tuition of \$4.8 million. This also rolled into the state aid, which is based on our weighted formula based on the past three years. And, of course, some modest shortfall in terms of student fees.

We have been relying on the use of our fund balance over the past three years. And as you well know, the use of the one-shot automatically translates into a revenue shortfall for the following year. So there was the 2.7 million that we were expecting from the -- from the fund balance.

So this is what we're doing to bridge the \$12.8 million shortfall. By the time we put this budget together, we already knew that the State was going to increase the rate for full-time equivalent or FTE by \$100, not as much as the NYSED and the other advocacy groups we're advocating for, but

still very, very helpful. So that \$100 per state aid based on our enrollment projections is going to provide the College with an additional \$1.9 million in revenue.

Additionally, as I said in my earlier remarks in the context of the legislative committee for the five-year budget plan, we've asked the County to do for us the same that they did last year. Last year the County contribution was increased 2.51%. We've asked for 2.51 increase again this year, which is another \$1,19,000.

As I indicated earlier, the technology demands are such that the trustees approved a \$45 per semester increase in the technology fee. And we have a new provider for e-transcripts to make it a lot easier for students to request and for the institution to transmit transcripts electronically rather than having to do it either snail mail or in person. But in order to pay the provider, it necessitated increase in the transcript fee from ten to fifteen dollars. We expect that we will have to use the reserves, but the trustees also agreed to a \$100 per semester increase in tuition, bringing our tuition to 4770 annually.

I don't know if you know, but a Newsday reported that Nassau had to increase their tuition by \$334 annually. That brings their tuition to 4868 compared to 4770 for Suffolk. I know sometimes we compare. Nassau has, as you may have read, some considerable challenges in terms of its accreditation from Middle States. And much of it is financial; some of it is leadership, ethics. I think 7 out of 14 standards are in question. We should have some more news on that later in June when Middle States goes there. But I wanted to point out that their reserves are down to about \$4 million, which is contributing to some financial concerns.

At any rate, the increase in the tuition, for every \$100 in tuition, it's about \$2 million in revenue to the College; therefore, \$100 per semester, \$200 annually, \$4 million in revenue. That still not enough to bridge the \$12.8 million gap. Therefore, the balancing number would be an authorization to use \$3.9 million from the reserves.

So just in summary, the changes here are the increase in the rate per state aid, the 2.5% increase in the County contribution, the technology fee and the transcript fee, the tuition. And this shows you that tuition will go from 2285 per semester to 2385 or annually from 4570 to 4770 annually. All these items taken together will bridge the gap. That leaves our fund balance, which is currently on or about \$22 million, assuming that we use all of what we're authorized to use for '15/'16, that will bring us down to about 20 million. Should we use the 3.9 million authorized by the trustees for '16/'17, we estimate that the fund balance at the end of the '16/'17 operating year will be \$16.1 million.

And, as you know, sometimes we're criticized for it, but as you know, we are extremely conservative, tighten-our-belts during the course of the year. And if there's anyway that we cannot use the full authorization, we try to do that. However, at this point in order to adopt a balanced budget, it is necessary.

I'm happy to answer any questions if you have them.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you, Gail. Are there any questions from the Committee? Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

So, Gail, as I understand it, our fund balance will be down to about 16.1 but that compares to four million for Nassau?

MS. VIZZINI:

Yes.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Okay. So a lot of the revenue shortfall has to do with a decline in enrollment.

MS. VIZZINI:

Yes, it does.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Any analysis as to why that has happened? Because, you know, I have constituents come in, they talk about the tremendous expense associated with sending their sons and daughters to private schools. Many of them seem to have adopted the rationale to go to a community college for the first two years at an inexpensive tuition. And then move onto a four-year school. Historically the College usually in recessionary times the student enrollment goes up. In good times, you know, things shift off to private schools. Any analysis ever been done in terms of why a decline in enrollment of two or three percent? And is there any analysis being done prospectively for the next 12 months in terms of student enrollment?

MS. VIZZINI:

Yes, as a matter of fact, anecdotally and based on the data what we experience is, although -- I mean, first of all, let me preface this with our marketing efforts are all over. We are veteran-friendly; we are -- we're in the airports; we're on cable TV; we're on sticky notes slapped on Newsday. So we definitely have extensive marketing going on. You know, I think one of our slogans is smart -- smart people choose wisely or something along those lines where we certainly are the affordable first step. But as you know, we are open enrollment. So sometimes students do come to us facing some academic challenges to begin with. And we're -- our data allows us to track students to see whether they're achieving the success that they identify for themselves, whether that be "let's try it for one semester before I get in where I need to go", you know, "let's stay for a year and then transfer someplace else."

We have joined the Achieve the Dream Organization, which will also help with us benefit from benchmark strategies to help with retention of students and student success. We're trying to focus on guiding the student to choosing curricula that will move them along in terms of what their desires are in life, employment or future education. We've reduced consistent with SUNY 64, we've reduced all our -- almost all of our academic programs to only 64 credits to get the associates degree. And SUNY is focussing on its seamless transfer where most or all of those credits will be transferrable to another SUNY institution.

So we're trying to identify those at-risk populations that need either follow-up after developmental studies or guidance to get them to remain committed, complete and then go onto compete in the efforts to get into a four-year or into the marketplace.

LEG. BARRAGA:

The FTE, the increase was a hundred dollars for FTE. What's the total number of FTEs now at Suffolk?

MS. VIZZINI:

Roughly 19,300.

LEG. BARRAGA:

So as the student enrollment decreases, the FTEs is also affected in a negative way?

MS. VIZZINI:

You know, FTEs is all the credits everybody takes, which on a full-time basis averages about 14.3 credits; and part-time could be anything from --

LEG. BARRAGA:

Say, you have a decline in enrollment of 3%, some of those -- good chunk would be FTEs so that's \$100 per student you're not getting from the state.

MS. VIZZINI:

Yeah. The numbers that we have in this operating budget have the FTEs going down by yet another 1%. So we'll be closer to eighteen five, eighteen three, something like that.

LEG. BARRAGA:

What's the County share at this point? They're giving you what, 2.3, 2.4 percent, whatever you request, then I guess the County is coming up with, but what is the share versus tuition versus the State of New York?

MS. VIZZINI:

Percentage of revenue? Roughly 23%.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Has that been pretty much steady at 23, 24 for a number of years now?

MS. VIZZINI:

Yes.

LEG. BARRAGA:

All right. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. Anyone else? Okay. Gail, if there aren't any other questions, I did look over the entire booklet here, binder. And what the College has done in terms of finding ways to reduce certain things, I thank you for that. And I can also thank you very everything that you're doing in terms of marketing, in terms of keeping our kids here. I know there's a loan default program. I mean, you guys are doing everything possible for our young to stay here and make it affordable. So I do thank you for that. And we now have the BRO's report as well, but I just want to say, you know, with the -- with the legislation passed by our Presiding Officer in terms of the five-year longevity budget, you know, to see how we can make our College even more affordable, or at least keep it affordable, you know, it's just great that we're all working together for the same goal. So I do appreciate all those efforts.

MS. VIZZINI:

Thank you for your comments and your participation on the five-year budget planning committee.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thanks, Gail. We will now turn it over to BRO, Dr. Lipp.

PRESENTATION

MR. LIPP:

So it's a technical glitch that we're -- we have to change the plug from one computer to the next. So if you wait one minute -- it's done. Okay, so -- so what you have on the screen is last year's resolution. The point I'm going to make here is that what you could do -- what you're going to do next Tuesday at the General Meeting is adopt the College budget and there are only two things you could focus on given the agreement with the College: And that is what's the total operating budget, that's the Second Resolve Clause. It will go up from 214.7 million to 219.9 million. That's a 2.4

percent increase. This includes grants. Gail had spoken with you about grants. What we look at is the total budget with grants because that's what you could do.

And then lastly look at the total contribution Resolve Clause number three, and that'll be going up by -- from 41 -- from 40.7 million to 41.7 million, round it off. And that's a 2.5% increase. So you're going to get a 2.5% increase that'll result in a little over a million dollars extra.

Of that million dollars -- I'll cut right to the chase, there we go. So of that million dollars, what happens is the following: You have the County contribution down over here, is -- it would be going up from 40 to 40.1. Of that 4.4 million is considered property tax. And the remainder is considered an expenditure that the County will include in its General Fund operating budget in the fall. So you're going to have a little over a million dollar increase. Overall it's going to be from 40.7 to 41.7, but you won't see in the operating -- the general fund operating budget a line item for their college property tax. It's 4.4 million. The remainder is what you will be budgeting for and have to increase the General Fund budget by.

I could go on and talk about the history of contributions and state aid and tuition, but if you have specific questions, fine; otherwise I won't bore you to tears.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you, Dr. Lipp. Are there any questions for BRO? Thanks, Dr. Lipp. This is the first year that we all agree; everything came in the same, County and the College. So that's good. I don't have any questions either. I think, like I said before, you really have done both of you your due diligence and I appreciate everything that you are doing. George, I know that in the past the Committee sponsors the entire resolution for the General Meeting.

MR. NOLAN:

Right. So that's a question for each member of the Committee, do you want to be a sponsor of the budget resolution that we're going to act on Tuesday that reflects the 2.5% increase in the County contribution and the total and so forth?

LEG. BARRAGA:

Absolutely.

LEG. CALARCO:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Are we all in agreement? Thank you. All right, thank you to both, again.

MS. VIZZINI:

Thank you all for your support.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Okay, so that concludes our presentation portion of the agenda.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

We will continue with the agenda. And I know that we have **Tabled Resolution 1337**, and I do see our appointee here, and that's **To appoint member of the Suffolk County Youth Board Coordinating Council representing Legislative District No. 6 and that's John B. MacKay (Co. Exec.)**. Mr. MacKay, if you don't mind coming forward to the podium. I'm glad you were able to make it this time.

MR. MacKAY:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

If you could just give us, you know, a quick synopsis of why you would like to be on this Council, we'd appreciate that.

MR. MacKAY:

Well, I've been working with youth in this community since 2008 as a volunteer with the North Shore Youth Council. I've been on the board of the Youth Advisory Committee for the North Shore Youth Council since 2010 and yearly during the school year and throughout the summers I had worked teaching art classes to kids in between the districts of Shoreham Wading River and Mt. Sinai.

In addition to that, most recently I've volunteered with the Suffolk County Jail to do art therapy with inmates in the Suffolk County Jail. So my focus has been more or less to work with those youths who are not represented by a conventional means. I'd like to continue doing that and, you know, giving more of those youth a say in what happens in their community.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you. I appreciate that. Any questions?

LEG. HAHN:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Okay. Motion to approve by Legislator Calarco.

LEG. HAHN:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Second by Legislator Barraga. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0)**.

Thank you, Mr. MacKay. You do not have to appear at the General Legislative meeting, which is next Tuesday.

MR. MacKAY:

Great. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON MARTINEZ:

Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

And continuing with our agenda, we now move onto **Resolution 1504**, and that is **to strengthen the Teen Pregnancy Advisory Board. (Spencer)** I will like to make a motion to approve; second by Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0)**

Introductory Resolution number 1542, and that's **Appropriating funds in connection with infrastructure at the College Wide.** And that's **Capital Project 2149. (Co.Exec.)** I'll also make a motion to approve; second by Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0)**.

6/14/2016 Education & Human Services Committee

That concludes today's agenda and today's meeting. Thank you.

**THE COMMITTEE CONCLUDED AT 1:04 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**