

**EDUCATION & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE**  
**OF THE**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**  
**MINUTES**

A meeting of the Education & Information Technology 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 March 20, 2012.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairwoman  
Leg. Wayne R. Horsley, Vice Chair  
Leg. Thomas Cilmi  
Leg. Jay H. Schneiderman  
Leg. Thomas Muratore

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel  
Barbara LoMoriello, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature  
William Shilling, Aide to Leg. Anker  
Chris DeLuca, Aide to Leg. Cilmi  
Kevin LaValle, Aide to Leg. Muratore  
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Salvatore Nicosia  
Ben Zwirn, County Executive's Office

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

## THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:57

### CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:

Will Legislators for the Education & Information Technology please come to the horseshoe. Thanks.

Okay. I'm Sarah Anker, Legislator and Chairwoman of the Education & Information Technology Committee and we're going to begin. Can we start with the Pledge of Allegiance by Legislator Schneiderman.

### SALUTATION

Can you remain standing for a moment of silent prayer and meditation? Thank you.

### MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

### PUBLIC PORTION

You can be seated. Okay, we're going to start today with public portion. We have one card, Salvatore Nicosia. Would you like to come up?

### MR. NICOSIA:

Good afternoon, members of the Education & Technology Committee. I was here last time at the last meeting. I left some materials for you to peruse so that you can be apprised of what I'm trying to speak on today. So, may I be given some time for that and your attention? Thank you.

Just briefly, my background is education, all my life. I started teaching in 1956 in Patchogue, teaching citizenship education with relationship to local government. In the 55 years that have passed, I have noticed with dismay the significant drop off of material available to our young citizens to apprise themselves on how local government functions. So, in view of that fact, it became incumbent upon me to do something about it. I wrote a book on it called "Empowering Our Children". And that was 1997 when I had well retired from Patchogue Schools, where I worked for 30 years, not only as a teacher, but as a Counselor.

My background includes having run for Congress in 1976 on the Republican ticket. I ran for the County Legislature in 1977 against Mr. John Foley, who I had great respect for. I also served as a Deputy Commissioner of Consumer Affairs under the administration of Mr. Peter Cohalan, who is now retiring as a Supreme Court Judge. So, in my background, I also served as a County Legislative Aide for Mr. Mike Caracciolo, as a Legislative Aide for Mr. -- former -- the former County Legislator I ran against in 1977 -- '78, excuse me.

But basically I come here today with a plan that is now getting significant attraction in particularly one school where I worked as a consultant -- now we're not paying for consulting work -- but someone who's interested in advocating good education for our children, especially in the area of the political process.

So, you being a member of the Commission, you people being a member of the Education Committee, which I appeared for in 1999, when -- other people, representatives, Mr. Foley being one of them, they did a resolution at that time that they sent off to Mr. Richard Mills, the Commissioner of Education. It never really got traction at that time because I did not have substantial experience at that time. I had just written a book. And although I met Mr. Mills several times along with people at the State Education Department, other priorities seemed to have precedence over what I was trying to propose. And since I had no substantive background -- not

background -- backing is a better word -- the result was ignored. I received some cordial correspondence, which I have at my behest now. But since that time I persevered and continue to pursue this endeavor. And as I speak to you, this august body this afternoon, I have received recognition from many people from the political arena, from the community, PTA units, superintendents.

So I come to you to ask for support for this endeavor. If you got the material and you read it, you know what I'm trying to ask for. I'm trying to ask for a change in the way we teach young children the affective domain. If you're familiar with that term, it's juxtaposed with the word cognitive domain. We have apparently changed our course of action in teaching children from kindergarten on with cognitive aspects of what they're learning, which is merely identifying the material that then becomes a kind of knowledge that they can pass a test. And as you're familiar, children today are subjected to testing not only in school but at the State level. And while this is necessary, it does not mean that we have to ignore the affective domain, meaning how children process information, so that they can develop astute ways of understanding what they're dealing with.

So, consequently that plan I proposed is now going to the Commissioner of Education today, Mr. John King. And that's coming from the Office of Mr. Flanagan and soon Mr. Ken LaValle, who happened to be Chairman or Chairperson of the Higher Education Committee and the Education Committee of the State of New York.

So, today when I came here after I gave you the information last week, and to be brief so you can deliberate and ask questions, is that I would like a resolution of similar nature that you -- similar body when Vivian -- you know, when Vivian Fisher was there, an educator from Ward Melville School, that I got to know very well at that time, had sent to the Congress -- to the State. So, basically Mr. Muratore was gracious enough to issue a proclamation on my behalf, as did Mr. Mazzei, and soon to be released, Mr. Dean Murray and Al Graf of the State Assembly. And I also received a Letter of Comment from Mr. Bishop, who was instrumental in sending me to the State Ed -- to the Secretary of Education where I met people from civic and government. So, consequently that's why I'm here this afternoon. Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Thank you for coming here today. Does anyone here on our Committee have questions?

**LEG. MURATORE:**

Madam Chair, I'd just like to thank Sal. I mean, I know how hard he's working with this program. I've seen what you're thinking about doing. Hopefully, the State will -- I guess it's going to be the State who's going to have to institute this, Department of Education.

**MR. NICOSIA:**

Yes.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

But I see, and, you know, I attended school a long, long time -- probably a lot more than you -- maybe other than you, Sal. (Laughter) So, when I was in school, I don't even remember them teaching me a lot -- about government. I learned from my parents and -- my father was in politics. But I see a need out there with -- my nieces and nephews are children being educated on politics and on government and specifically local government. You know, I don't think they know enough about it to really go out and do something about it. And that's why we have this attitude out there with people. They're so, you know, like, they're giving up on government. They don't know the chain. When I talk to constituents and they don't know between village and county and town. And you have to tell them. And then when you tell somebody, *well, that's not my responsibility, that's a Town issue*, you're kind of like passing the buck. And I don't really like doing that.

So, I think your plan where you bring different people from different parts of government and

different parts of the community is a great idea. And, you know, I'm there for you, anything I can do to help you with getting this project started, I'll give you 110 percent. Thanks, again, Sal.

**MR. NICOSIA:**

Thank you, Mr. Muratore.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. Legislator Horsley.

**LEG. HORSLEY:**

Sal, just quickly, along with your list of Civics that you feel that is missing -- I'm also an educator and I teach history. And one of the things I always find, not only civics but also geography, it's just not in the curriculum anymore. And it's really got to be brought back.

**MR. NICOSIA:**

Mr. Horsley, it's very nice that you are an educator like I've been. And you're absolutely right. And so consequently I had to focus on one particular issue because, if I started to spread it around, I would sound very recalcitrant. But I felt that if I were to prioritize what would be more important, children have to learn geography because they got to get places and they can't help but learn that even outside of school. But the political process, which I deem essential to the development of a true democracy, which we do not in realism have today -- we have an oligarchy.

When you get election results from the School Board on, a seven percent of the vote -- registered voters of whom half are not registered in the community, when you get a Fire Commissioner turnout of one percent, when you get a school -- when you get a Library Board of Trustees, which I spent years of my life being President of the Library of Sachem, and you get a three percent turnout, when you go a little further into the Town and County on so-called off year -- I find that repugnant to call it an off-year election -- each election has equal status in this country. And so, consequently, when you get a 23% -- I happen to be a committeeman and I know the polls, 23 to 25%, I generally turn out in my district 40%. I work more zealously. I'll take credit for that. I earned it by facts.

And when you get a national election or a gubernatorial election, when you reach close to 40, 45, I think that bodes badly for the facts that we seem to consider ourselves a kind of a democracy that we go out and try to tell people and the world, when we find countries like Australia, you know, a back country -- continent, it's a 65 to 70%, something's wrong with our system and we got to look at it.

That's what I'm doing now. It's not always good to be the bearer of bad news or bad news that doesn't bode well. But rather than curse the darkness, I'll continue to light as long as I live. And at 84, the clock is ticking. So, consequently, I beseech you to consider strongly, that you prepare some kind of resolution that you can send to Commissioner John B. King with the material that I distributed, peruse it, process it, as you shall -- as I graciously wish you will do, and then if you have any further questions, I'll be glad to answer them.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. Thank you so much for coming here and giving us this information. Does anybody else have any more questions? I think we're good. Mr. Nicosia, thank you so much. We appreciate you coming out.

**MR. NICOSIA:**

Thank you for the attention. God bless you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Thank you.

Okay, it looks like on our agenda here, we're going to -- we don't have a presentation.

## INTRODUCTION RESOLUTIONS

And we're going to go straight to the -- we have an introductory resolution.

**MR. NICOSIA:**

May I just interject, please check the spelling of "allegiance." Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Thank you.

Okay, we're going to start with **Introduction Resolution 1275 - 2012, Accepting and appropriating a grant award amendment from the State University of New York for a SUNY Child Care Program 100% reimbursed by State funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.)**

**LEG. HORSLEY:**

Motion.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

And to place on the consent calendar.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

And we're going to place on the consent calendar. Legislator Muratore makes the motion.

**LEG. CILMI:**

I'll second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Second? Legislator Cilmi seconded it. All in favor? Opposed? Motion passes. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)** I hope nobody's opposed because this money is 100% reimbursement. Again, it's a great program and, you know, I'm glad the State could help us with that.

Okay, unless anyone has any other questions, the meeting is adjourned.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:12 PM**

**{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**