

**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 November 27, 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  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Leg. Gregory  
Kevin LaValle, Aide to Leg. Murtore  
Ali Nazir, Aide to Leg. Kennedy  
Rick Brand, Newsday  
Terrence G. Pearsall, Chief of Staff  
Kevin Peterman, Suffolk County Community College  
Thomas Vaughn, County Executive III  
Donald Rodgers, Commissioner/Information Technology

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

**THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:00 PM**

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Will members of the Education and Information Technology please come to the horseshoe?

We're going to begin Education, Information Technology Committee. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Cilmi.

**SALUTATION**

Please remain standing for a moment of silent meditation as we think of those, especially in our services -- our military protecting our country. Thank you.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you. Okay, we have no correspondence, no speakers, no presentations, no tabled resolutions. We will go right into the Introductory Resolutions.

**INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

Okay, we have **Introductory Resolution 2089, Authorizing transfer of surplus County flat screen monitors to the Smithtown Parkinson's Therapy Center. (Kennedy)** I'll make a motion.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Seconded. All in favor? Opposed? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

**IR 2090, Authorizing transfer of surplus County flat screen monitors to Response of Suffolk County. (Hahn)** I'll make a motion.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

All in favor? Opposed? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

**IR 2091, Authorizing transfer of surplus County flat screen monitors to RSVP. (Kennedy)** I'll make a motion.

**LEG. MURATORE:**

Second.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

All in favor? Opposed? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

**LEG. CILMI:**

Madam Chair, before we adjourn?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Yes, Legislator Cilmi.

## 11/27/2012 Education and Information Technology Committee

### **LEG. CILMI:**

Sorry, George. (Laughter) I see Commissioner Rodgers in our midst. And I had hoped that possibly we can get an update on the federation of our IT Departments.

### **CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay, Commissioner Rodgers, would you like to come up? Welcome to our Committee. And I know you have a lot of work that you're doing. And, again, if there's -- if there's a little bit of information that you can update us on the consolidation of the IT Departments and how that's working out.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Good afternoon. Thank you for having me here today. I have to hold it? Okay, now it's on. Usually I don't have a problem with anybody hearing me.

In response to your request, Legislator Cilmi, we have received approval for the integration of the Departments we requested with the exception of Probation into the federated environment that we are currently in the process of building. This will be an enormous benefit going forward.

What we are doing right now is we are -- we had waited for the final approval so that we could reach out to the various Departments. We will be bringing that staff in for meetings. We're in the process of establishing a skill set review and an actual current environment review of every Department as to what they are currently working on. We want to get a good assessment as to what the staffs' capabilities are, where we think they're going to need support going forward, and where we think that we can possibly have a significant transfer of knowledge to the staff. All right?

One of our big concerns in doing this is to look to distribute skill sets across the County. As I believe I mentioned in the past, if we take a look at the distribution of titles and skills throughout the County, to a large extent we see an inversely proportional relationship from the standpoint of the skills that we need.

So we are now looking at those staff that may have programming capabilities, of staff that have networking capabilities, of staff that have support capabilities. And what their distribution is within the Departments. And I will then be meeting with the Commissioners of each Department prior to January 1st to discuss what their expected needs are going forward.

All right? We anticipate -- I hate to use the term but we anticipate to hit the ground running on January 1st. We're not waiting until January 1st to get going on this. We are meeting with staff starting probably about a week and a half. And I have already had conversations with a number of the Commissioners. Certainly the recent emergency situation with Sandy has pointed out some areas where we know that we want to enhance capabilities and where we are -- we would expect to be able to provide greater support throughout.

So I'm looking forward to it. Obviously, if I wasn't, if I didn't feel strongly about this, I wouldn't have presented it. It will provide, I believe, an enormous benefit to the County in terms of performance and in terms of utilization of technology across the County.

### **LEG. CILMI:**

And that really brings me to my next question, which is, if you could choose -- what are your top three projects that -- that you'll be working on in the coming months?

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Well --

**LEG. CILMI:**

I was thinking that the hurricane, the storm might have brought some things to light, either with regard to storm preparedness or otherwise. Give me top -- the top three major projects that you see yourself working on over the next several months.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

I can give you three major ones. I wouldn't necessarily say they're the top three, all right, but I can give you three major ones. The access -- the issue of access into buildings throughout the County is of a significant concern to us. There are numerous different methods that are in place for access to Departments.

And one of the things that we did see during the storm was we needed to gain access to buildings because power was out or equipment was out. And actually trying to find people to get into them was a problem. All right. So that's a real concern and we really want to look at that.

The use of the swipe cards to go in would provide a high level of security and would also allow us to be able to be sure who has and doesn't have access. The use of keys into buildings and closets really provides -- is problematic. You don't know how many keys are out. You don't know who has them. So this is a concern. All right?

I'll also leads us into the area of a standardized database, identifying staff. And this way when staff are no longer here or require greater access, it can be handled quickly and straight forward.

The development of initially a private Cloud, which we have recently acquired the -- a new SAN and we're putting into place the development of a private Cloud with utilization of data availability across the County is another area that we are hoping to make major inroads on going forward. And that I'm exceptionally looking forward to because I think it will -- I think it can have a big benefit to everybody both in the County and as we go forward to create it as a hybrid Cloud with availability outside of the County.

You know, one of the things that we definitely want to look forward to is to work with Economic Development to identify what data may be needed by them and what we can make available to them. And then to utilize the technology outside of the County as well going out to the various Towns and Villages. All right. One of the things that we did see during the emergency is the need for resources by the Towns and Villages. And to the extent that we can make that available, I think, it'll be very beneficial. Okay.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

I just want to -- let me --

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Yes, sure.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

-- ask a quick question. As far as connecting with other Towns, again, the most vital part during an emergency is communication. And, you know, I know we can -- I've seen what we can do with health permit process, how we work -- we're working with Towns in creating a smoother process. But, again, do you feel that we're -- that we're making inroads as far as connecting with municipalities and utilities and other groups that we really need to connect to in order to make the process easier for our constituents?

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

It's better in some places than others. I honestly do believe that if we take the approach of making the tools available, you know, if you build it, they will come scenario, and, you know, we have an

## 11/27/2012 Education and Information Technology Committee

enormous amount of GIS data in this County. And one of our major thrusts will be to coordinate that and provide a comprehensive utilization of it. So that from the standpoint of whether it's a brush fire or flood, a snowstorm, that that information -- that data's available for meaningful use.

### **CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

And, of course, the issue of security, I mean that goes beyond, you know, connecting with -- with the issue of communication. Do you feel by integrating the components of having everyone part of this main IT Unit, that will raise the level of security versus where it was before where everything was kind of spread out? How do you see that --

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

It does a couple of things first. And security is certainly one of them. This past holiday weekend we spent a significant amount of time here dealing with the STEP Program. And we did utilize resources from Planning. We utilized resources from FRES. We utilized resources from IT to facilitate the development of maps and information to allow us to go out and provide support to those people what still didn't have power or whose homes were not truly liveable. The skill sets that we saw coming from Planning, the skill sets that we saw coming from FRES incorporated with the skill sets that we had in IT were enormously helpful. Because their perspective was different.

Now from a security standpoint -- excuse me -- from a security standpoint, what we do see sometimes is that staff don't have access to the things they need because they're not always working on those areas. So what we want to be able to do is enhance that and identify exactly what they should or shouldn't have access to. And then, again, when we create the federated environment, the expansion or contraction of those things is much easier.

### **CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

You mentioned LIPA. And I remember when -- last year my area got hit very hard with Irene. And the biggest problem was LIPA locating the power outages in certain areas. And what the Legislature found out was that LIPA does not have a computerized system that will locate where there is no electrical service. But Verizon and Cablevision have a system set up. So when LIPA was in front of us, I asked them, I said, "would you please look into that and see if you can get a similar system." I'm just curious with your expertise how easy would it be for LIPA to set up some type of system where they can see, you know, where there's no electric available.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

What I can say to you is this: One of the things that we have seen is the levels of communication need to improve dramatically in terms of getting data from different areas and who has access. You know, we are making significant efforts to work with New York State to make sure the data is available to us. LIPA, even though they are under State oversight, is a separate creature to a large extent. But what I have found in many cases is if we try to exploit the State or the Federal government, a lot of the data that we really need is there.

With regard to some of these areas, you always run into the situation where there is the statement that data is not readily available because it is a public safety issue, you know, in terms of how the grid is laid out. And LIPA would be a resource for that. For them to actually develop a system is a significant effort; is a very significant effort.

### **CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

I was hoping you would say, well, you could handhold LIPA and help them with this, you know, process.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

I wish we could. I really do. But I'm not completely familiar with what they have feeding back to them. But from a standpoint of actually identifying the grid on their point and what they get coming

back, it's a significant effort.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

You're welcome.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Legislator Schneiderman.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Good afternoon, Don.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Good afternoon.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

So you were talking about the GIS system a moment or two ago. And that system's basically a computerized map. And it's got topographies. It's got shaped files for every tax map parcel. I imagine we can overlay flood maps. I imagine we can overlay groundwater maps. It's a potentially valuable resource to Towns and Villages, but it's also potentially a valuable resource to us, something that not only the public might want to have access to data, but software developers as well, tied in with a -- we could tie the GIS system in with the GPS, suddenly you get real time, real location information. And I know some areas have open policies for data that makes it available. Some places charge for data. Have you given any thought in terms of setting up partnerships with software developers or some kind of relationship with software developers and also in terms of public access to some of this -- what's potentially is very usable information.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

It's interesting you asked that question. I just -- before I came over here I was just looking at a particular site that's available from another state and the wealth of information that is readily available to the public there. We do have to have some conversations, which I'm in the process of having with regard to how we make data available be it to the public and what the controls are under that. I have had some phone calls with a member of the commercial development area regarding that. But beyond that, we are currently in conversations with some software vendors to work on leveraging not only the GIS but also some other data that we have to build a business intelligence process to allow us to better manipulate that and hopefully get it out to the public as well.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Do you know what that might look like in term of licensing data or would we just sell them a disk or would they have live access to our network and charge them on a per clip basis? Have you thought that through?

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

You know, I haven't thought it through. I've looked at a number of other areas in terms of how they do it. And it really varies. Some localities will sell data in batch. And they do sell it. Some localities charge a license fee to actually have greater capability into their own system, but don't allow downloads from it. Others will allow downloads, but the downloads are generally small. I mean, the way to actually get it is to purchase the data or have it made available in batch unless we can enter into a partnership agreement. Not much unlike probably what New York City recently did with Microsoft, which was beneficial to New York and Microsoft.

## 11/27/2012 Education and Information Technology Committee

### **LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

You had mentioned making our data available to the Towns. You know, some of the Towns have their own GIS systems. Our GIS -- but they've added significant amounts, their own layers to that.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Yes.

### **LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

It might be building permits; it might be sanitary systems; open space purchases, whatever it might be. Are we doing anything in terms of trying to get some of the Town data into our system? Or is it all just the other way? We're trying to make our systems available to the Towns?

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

No, I think if we're going to do this successfully, it's going to have to be a partnership with the Towns for that very reason. Because a significant amount of the permitting is done at the Town level. And, you know, the recent SST application that was put out on the web deals with licensing from the County to the Towns. We really need to see that as a complete loop so that individuals that do go on can actually see where they are on both sides of it.

So, absolutely, we would have to consider how do we embrace the Towns and reciprocate with regard to their data? Now, if we do this on a Cloud, which is where we want to do it, we would be able to provide an extremely secure environment and an operationally clean internet aspect to it.

### **LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

In terms of efficiencies, and I know you're going through Departments, it seems to be a lot is still being done by paper, you know, a lot of things, information -- the Health Department when they go and inspect a restaurant, you know, they got a sheet of paper with, I think, couple of carbon copies in there, you know.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Now you're just trying to torture me, right?

### **LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

And by like -- you know, by the third -- the pink copy, that's the fourth one, they can't even read the thing. And sometimes you can't read the handwriting even on the front page. All that stuff ought to be entered into an iPad or some kind of PDA so we have a permanent electronic record. The data can tie in with, you know, other things like a GIS system. There must be so much redundancy with the various people within a department or one department to another entering the exact same information.

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

I agree.

### **LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

You're looking at this, right?

### **COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

I absolutely agree. Unfortunately -- and I don't mean this as to try and sidestep it because I'm not, one of the things that we do have to pay attention to is what is the platform that we're working on? Where are we going to do this? Within the industry today there's a large push towards bring your own device to work. And the real question is does that work? Does that work as a solution from the standpoint of what is the security and how do we protect our data? Our data is the most valuable thing we own. And it is extraordinarily important that we do protect it. We are right now examining various tablets as to make a determination on a standardized one that we would want to

use.

Now, that doesn't say that you cannot have a bring your own device environment. But what it does say is that accessibility would be restricted and that we need to clearly define those devices that would be permitted to have significant access. And in line with the business intelligence architecture that we are talking about, we absolutely are addressing, and it would be great if we had a flood and somebody had a hand held device and was able to look at it and say "am I in an area that I need to evacuate?" Because we have a GPS component to it and they can see that and they know "I really shouldn't be standing here."

So the answer to your first question is yes, there is way too much paper. That's not to say that we will be paperless. Paper's not going away and probably -- not at least in my lifetime. However, the redundancy of collection of data, the redundancy of demographic information needs to be significantly reduced or eliminated. And that is the direction that we are looking to go. And this is also one of the reasons why when we start this conversation, we start to talk about utilizing what we have in place right now and which GIS is a significant part. And the thrust here is to highly integrate the GIS that we have with the data that we have and to add additional data to that so it becomes a single useful tool and they are not separate entities.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Yeah, let me know how I can support you. Because I'm happy with what I'm hearing. I feel like you have the skill set to actually do what some of us have talked about for years in terms of consolidating some of these functions and using technology to the advantage of the County. So, I applaud your efforts. I wish you success because we really are very outdated in the County.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Thank you.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

And we can save time. We can save money. We can save natural resources. And we can make it so much more user-friendly for the public and make data so much more available to the press or to, you know, anyone who wanted to do the research and get the information they needed. We're a long way from that point.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

We will get there. We will. I'm confident we'll get there.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I feel like you know how to get there. And I appreciate that.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

We will. We'll get there.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Question.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Sure.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

In your prospective, where are we compared to the rest of the country? Are we kind of in the middle? Are we a little more advanced? Below average? Where are we as far as technology with county or municipality?

11/27/2012 Education and Information Technology Committee

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

We're probably in the middle. We should be a technological leader. We should be. Okay? We have the -- we are the largest county population-wise in the State. We are the largest county geographically in the state outside of New York City. And we can be -- we can be a technology leader.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Have you reached out to BNL and Cold Spring and some of our other scientific communities?

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

We haven't yet. We will. We haven't yet only because we don't have some of the foundation in place that I want to have in place before that. We are engaging. We are entertaining, reaching out to the universities as well to try and tap into some of their talent that they have onboard and have some of these young people who are actually learning new technologies come in.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

You're in very good company because with higher education right here in the midst of this Committee, you're very much supported so --

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Any more questions? Okay, with that this meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

**COMMISSIONER RODGERS:**

Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:24 PM  
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**