

**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 December 10, 2013.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairwoman  
Leg. Wayne R. Horsley, Vice Chair  
Leg. Thomas Cilmi  
Leg. Jay H. Schneiderman  
Leg. John M. Kennedy, Jr.

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

George Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature  
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature  
Renee Ortiz, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature  
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk County Community College  
Robert Lipp, Director/Budget Review Office  
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office  
Kevin Peterman, Faculty Associate/Suffolk County Community College  
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer  
Thomas Vaughn, County Executive's Office  
Paul Perillie, Aide to Leg. Gregory  
Amy Ellis, Aide to Leg. Anker  
And all other interested parties

**MINUTES TAKEN BY:**

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

12/10/13 Education and IT Committee

**THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:11 PM**

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Please, will all Legislators come to the horseshoe for the Education and Information Technology Committee. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Horsley.

**SALUTATION**

Remain standing for a moment of prayer and silent meditation as we think of those in our military protecting our country.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED**

Thank you. Okay. We do not have cards for public comment and we do not have a presentation.

**INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

We also do not have any Tabled Resolutions, but we do have an Introductory Resolution. We have **IR 2100, amending the 2013 Capital Budget and Program and appropriating funds in connection with a Countywide replacement of computer equipment/infrastructure (CP 1816). (Co. Exec.)** I'll make a motion. I'll make a motion. We have a second by Legislator Horsley. And on the motion, Legislator Kennedy.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Quick question, just through the Chair to BRO, probably the equipment is much needed. IT made the case. And I had a conversation yesterday. My only question with this is the bond; the duration of the bond. Hopefully we're limited to whatever the PBU is: Three years, five years.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Benny, you want to fill us in? And also Mr. Vaughn, would you like to come up? Tom?

**MR. PERNICE:**

Yeah, the Executive's Fiscal Impact Statement has a five-year bond attached. You know, it'll be when they actually go out to do bond will determine what it is. But it's shown as a five on this one, which is probably what the useful life is; the minimum for this equipment.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

So the answer, Benny, is it's a five-year bond.

**MR. PERNICE:**

That's what the Exec's Fiscal has.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

I see Mr. Vaughn's at the table. Should we ask him if he agrees?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay, go ahead, Tom.

**MR. VAUGHN:**

We nearly always agree with the learned opinion of BRO.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

(Laughter) okay.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. And I'm assuming --

**MR. LIPP:**

It's not a five-year bond.

**MR. PERNICE:**

What was it?

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Did you have -- did you want to comment, Rob?

**MR. LIPP:**

The PBU is five years, but that's not the way we borrow, so --

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

(Inaudible)

**MR. LIPP:**

Correct. So we borrow -- the way we borrow is like we borrow for, like, 120 different purposes for a typical serial bond. So whatever the weighted average of all the PPU's are, that's what we borrow for. So on average it's typically like 18 years.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

Which was my concern. So is there a way, Robert, to have this go out with a shorter duration? Or does that screw up our whole borrowing process?

**MR. LIPP:**

We could do that, but not we, the Legislature. It's up to the Comptroller. So there are two -- there are two main ways of borrowing. I won't go into specifics unless you ask me. We did once, I guess, like a year ago or maybe two years ago, we carved out a small piece of the bond issue for cars that we did three and five-year bond issues for as small pieces, but that was the exception.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

And so what you're telling me is, is in order to get that same type of treatment for this equipment, it would require a request to the Comptroller?

**MR. LIPP:**

That's a way to look at it. I think, you know, we need to discuss, though, beyond this particular resolution, what moving forward the County's policy should be. There's a short run savings if you do it the way that we are doing it now, but it's a longer run cost if you do it that way. So it's a bigger overarching policy issue than just this one individual resolution.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

But this one resolution is talking about a million dollars for equipment that in many respects has a very finite use, you know. We beat up computers. And in the sixth and seventh year they're doorstops. They have no use anymore.

**MR. LIPP:**

Right. So, for instance, the 120 useful purposes that we're borrowing for could have some 40 and 30 and 20 and 15 and 10 and 5 year PPU's. And when you take the average weighted by the amount of principal you're borrowing, you'll wind up with typically, not all the time, an 18-year bond.

**LEG. KENNEDY:**

I understand. All right. I guess I'll have to take my concerns up with the Comptroller. Thank you,

Madam Chair.

**CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Legislator Cilmi.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Thank you. I had an opportunity to have a lengthy conversation with our IT folks about this particular bill. And I guess partly in answer to Legislator Kennedy's concern, they are trying to sort of migrate to less of a hardware -- less of a need for hardware and to do more of this stuff, as much of it as possible in the Cloud, through servers and whatnot. So at least DOIT is sort of cognizant of the fact that, you know, there is a useful life of hardware that is not so long. And we can save some money in the future by not spending so much money on hardware.

Now that being said, there is clearly a need for this -- for this equipment. In fact, of the one million dollars, apparently about 90% of it is for the Police Department and for the Department of Social Services combined. The rest of it is for other departments. And I believe -- and I haven't gotten the answer to this question yet, I'm waiting for it, but I believe that in the Police Department at least -- and, Tom, maybe you can speak to this a little bit, the money, which is I think about -- I want to say it was 53% was for the Police Department -- is for desk tops as well as for the mobile data terminals. Do you have any specific information as to the breakdown, Tom?

**MR. VAUGHN:**

Yes, sir. So in the Police Department there is a large portion of the funding that will be going to the data processors that go into the cars, the mobile units. And those actually cost us about \$7500 a piece from what we're being told. The --

**LEG. CILMI:**

Do they use any of those in the Department of Social Services? Obviously not the same ones, but --

**MR. VAUGHN:**

No. What we're talking about specifically with the \$7500 machines are the machines that are in the police vehicles themselves, the Toughbooks, and we've had to start replacing those as we've been going over to the -- to the other police vehicles. And unfortunately some of the machines were not able to be taken out of one vehicle and put into another due to both size constraints; and when they do the upgrade, the way that the software -- I'm sorry, not the software -- the hardware was reconfigured. So, for example, like your Iphone, the latest version of the Iphone has a different plug in the back of it; the same problem we ran into when we were upgrading some of these Toughbooks so -- whereas we thought that we could just pull some of them out of older cars and put them into some of the newer cars, we're actually experiencing a problem with that, which is one of the things that's also necessitating the need for some of these -- for some of these books at this point in time.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. Do you know, do we use any sort of mobile technology in our Department of Social Services?

**MR. VAUGHN:**

Just one moment on that. I just have a chart that I'm taking a look at here. It does look like we are looking to purchase some amount of laptop computers for the Department of Social Services, which to me indicates that we do have some mobile capabilities within the Department of Social Services.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. Hopefully I'll get the detailed information that I requested from DOIT prior to Tuesday's meeting, and I think I will. They seem relatively eager to share information.

The one significant concern, I have here is a, I guess this is through the Chair to Budget Review, this is really a departure for us to be bonding for this type of equipment, is it not? My understanding is that in the Operating Budget, there was a request from the Department for almost half a million dollars to be used for this purpose. And that budget line was cut in the proposed operating budget to \$75,000 with the intent to capitalize these types of expenditures; is that accurate?

**MR. LIPP:**

Yes, and this is a new capital project, too. It's just sort of like indicative of our trend over the last several years of going away from Pay-As-You-Go and also moving things to capital that used to be in Operating such as this.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. So you're describing a trend to rely on borrowing to pay for expenses that historically have been paid for through operating funds.

**MR. LIPP:**

Right, it's indicative of the fiscal problems we're having.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Interesting. Have you seen other areas of the County where that's been evident?

**MR. LIPP:**

Well, the obvious is we don't -- we haven't been budgeting for Pay-As-You-Go funding anymore. Like so, for instance, there was a fund in the budget fund 401 for that stuff that we haven't utilized in a few years.

**MR. VAUGHN:**

I'll also say that specifically we've had to go to borrowing or bonding for things like police vehicles, bullet proof vests, firearms, I believe. But in the case of computers, the difference between the computers and those other items is, I believe, that the PBU on a police car and vest are certainly less than five years. With our computers we are generally getting more than five years, which is where we're at right now, you know. 2008 was the last time we did a significant purchase of bulk purchase of computers. And that was obviously five years ago.

Now since then we've gone to more of a model where we've been kind of -- you know, as indicative of the financial crisis that we've been dealing with, we have gone to a model where we've been replacing on an as-needed basis. But now we're at a point where even with -- even with the layoffs, the laptops that became available through attrition, we're still at a point where we've got a significant amount of machines that just need to be replaced. And that's we're where at now.

**LEG. CILMI:**

Yeah, yeah. I don't -- I don't doubt that at all. Just from a policy perspective, and I understand the reasons behind it, but it doesn't mean that I necessarily have to agree with it, that borrowing, you know, for an 18-year average period to pay for equipment that lasts us five years or less, you know, is -- it's unfortunate that we're in that position and that we're doing that. And the fact that we've balanced an Operating Budget that otherwise could have paid for this equipment without paying interest and -- but instead we've chosen to balance an Operating Budget saving X amount of money. And now borrowing the money, which is going to cost us more in the long run, is an issue for me. It's not specific to this -- or it is specific to this particular bill, but it's the general trend this is -- that's more concerning to me. I recognize how desperately we're in need of this equipment. So I will -- I'll support this legislation or this bill. But, you know, I think we all need to be cognizant of this trend moving forward. I don't think it's a good trend.

I guess the other question I have is that with respect to the overall amount, if, in fact, the initial

## 12/10/13 Education and IT Committee

operating request was for something less than half a million dollars, and now we're capitalizing a million dollars, why is that? Why did the number double?

### **MR. VAUGHN:**

Legislator Cilmi, I couldn't specifically speak to why the number doubled, but what I can tell you is that we have done a pre-comprehensive needs assessment of the departments. And the needs assessment of the departments came in at \$2.6 million. And what we've done is prioritize so far what we believe those needs are and have gone \$4 million asking for that to be capitalized at this point.

### **LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. Fair enough. The folks that I spoke to in DOIT described to me the fairly extensive process that you go through in terms of assessing those needs. And I think that's a good process. It's a multi-tiered process so there are multiple levels of sort of oversight, which I think is appropriate.

The last thing we want to happen is for the Department of Social Services in a vacuum to request and receive, you know, this type of equipment and for the Department of Public Works to request and receive that type of equipment without any sort of consistency to what we're doing. But I understand that because of the process, that there is consistency and there is a grand plan and --

### **MR. VAUGHN:**

That's correct. And the other -- and the other issue is to make sure that we're not buying more computers than we can put on line in a given year. So the department IT has a general idea about how many computers you would be able to put into any one given department during the course of a year and want to keep under that number.

### **LEG. CILMI:**

Okay. Thanks very much, Tom. I appreciate.

### **CHAIRWOMAN ANKER:**

Okay. So I believe I made the motion. We had a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 5-0-0-0)**

With no further business, I guess, we will adjourn this meeting. Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:26 PM  
{ } DENOTE SPELLED PHONETICALLY**