

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 17, 2015.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Sarah S. Anker, Chairperson
Leg. Monica Martinez, Vice Chair
Leg. Thomas Cilmi
Leg. Lou D'Amaro
Leg. Robert Trotta
Presiding Office DuWayne Gregory

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

George M. Nolan, Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Jason Richberg, Chief Deputy Clerk of the Legislature
Doug Miller, Acting Commissioner/Information Technology
Vincent M. Mezzanotte, appointee/Commission of IT
Shaun McKay, President/Suffolk Community College
Ben Zwirn, Suffolk Community College
Kevin Peterman, Suffolk Community College
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office
Benny Pernice, Budget Review Office
Katie Horst, County Executive's Office
Lisa Pinkard, Aide to Leg. Martinez
Maria Barbara, Aide to Leg. Cilmi
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro
Greg Moran, Aide to Leg. Trotta
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer
William Shilling, Aide to Leg. Calarco
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:23 PM

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Okay, welcome to the Education, Information Technology Committee meeting. Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Martinez.

SALUTATION

Please remain standing for a moment of prayer and silent meditation as we think of those in our military fighting for our freedom.

MOMENT OF SILENCE OBSERVED

PRESENTATION

Thank you. Okay, we don't have correspondence today. We do not have public comment. We do have a presentation. We have Nicholas Palumbo, Executive Director of the Sustainability Programs at Suffolk Community College; will provide a general overview presentation highlighting a wide range of new initiatives being developed at the College in response to President Shaun McKay's vision of a more sustainable institution. So I'd like to bring up -- we have some representatives, we have President McKay here to speak and give us some information, if you'd like to.

MR. PALUMBO:

I'll have a seat.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Okay. So, welcome. And, again, I appreciate the College coming out here and discussing some of your vision that you have for the -- creating a more sustainable institution. So, welcome.

MR. PALUMBO:

Thank you. In honor of St. Patrick's Day President McKay has asked me to speak about some of the green initiatives taking place at Suffolk County Community College. So, happy to be here.

So I'll start off talking a little bit about what sustainability is. I think the general perception that a lot of people have is that it's really just about the environment, when in reality, if we're doing sustainability correctly, we're hoping to improve not only our environmental footprint, but also improve our bottom line by being more efficient in our overall operations and also creating a good environment for our students' faculty staff. So that's the ultimate goal of our sustainability efforts at Suffolk.

Some quotes here related to sustainability, Albert Einstein. Essentially what we're doing is trying to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. And so how do we achieve that in a college campus environment?

There's a group called the University of Leaders for Sustainable Future that have developed exactly that. It's the framework essentially for what sustainability looks like on a college campus. And it touches on seven different dimensions: From institutional mission, structure and planning, faculty staff and development, student opportunities, curriculum operations, community outreach and service right down to research and scholarship. So we're going to talk a little bit briefly about what's entailed in each of these different areas and what we're doing presently at the Community College.

In terms of institutional mission, structure and planning, we are developing written statements of mission and purpose reflecting our commitment to sustainability. We're developing positions such as my own, which exists to reinforce sustainability throughout the institution. And we're trying as

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much as possible to make these issues broadly visible within our campuses. And so some of the ways that we're doing that will be apparent as we move through the discussion.

The board recently adopted a resolution related to an energy conservation policy. And I'm going to talk a little bit about -- more about that later on.

Faculty and staff development obviously is an important component of our sustainability efforts. We are hiring and promoting our faculty in part based on their contribution to sustainability. So that's one area that we're looking at in terms of faculty development. And we're seeking faculty and staff development opportunities to enhance their environmental awareness. And obviously that translates to our students' awareness of these initiatives.

We've partnered with several other institutions supported by the American Association of Community Colleges. We have a Mentoring Institution in Lane Community College in Eugene, Oregon, who's really understood to be the national leader in sustainability at the community college level. And so we've had representatives from Lane visit our campuses to talk to our faculty and staff about what they're doing and remodeling our own efforts after -- after theirs.

We're also providing education on programs such as G Pro, which is sponsored by the US Green Building Council for our -- for our staff to make them aware of what the issues are related to sustainability.

In terms of student opportunities, this is obviously a big emphasis. We are talking about introducing the idea of sustainability in our freshmen orientation programs. We are integrating sustainability components into really across the curriculum in all different areas of study. And right now we're in the process of developing new degree programs, so there's an internal conversation going on about new degree offerings in the area of energy management in particular. And that will be part of a project that I'll talk about a little later on, which is our Renewable Energy and STEM Center at the Grant Campus.

There are also obviously already clubs and organizations throughout the College on all three campuses related to sustainability. There's a big student interest in this area and we are supportive of that effort. We are also offering more sustainable opportunities for our students in terms of transportation and so there's been discussion about the possibility of an intercampus shuttle. We're looking at sustainable options for that, including an electric bus that we had on our campus. We also partnered with a group called 511 New York Ride Share, which is a non-profit organization sponsored by New York State DOT. And they're helping our students and our staff to try and identify more sustainable transportation options such as ride-sharing, carpooling, public transportation. And obviously that has an environmental benefit, but it's also a logistical benefit for our students. We're providing support for those types of programs. And parking is also a big issue on our campuses. And obviously there's a benefit there to doing things like that.

In terms of curriculum, I mentioned we're trying to support our faculty to help them integrate sustainable ideas into everything that they do. And some examples of groups that we're partnering with are evident here. In particular our Culinary Arts Program has really embraced the idea of sustainability, the Slow Food movement, local sourcing of food items. And so they do a lot of work with groups like Slow Food East End, the Blue Ocean Institute, which talks about sustainable aquaculture and the Chefs Collaborative similarly. And there's -- on the left here, the image that you see is a conceptual model that was developed internally by our facilities staff related to the Renewable Energy STEM Center that I'm going to talk about later on.

We're also talking about the possibility of certificate options for students who have an interest in sustainability but don't want to make that the primary focus of their degree pursuit. So what that would be was that certain courses would be flagged as satisfying the certificate credential and they could group those together to get that certificate. And as I mentioned freshmen seminar program

in sustainabilities and development.

Operations really is a big emphasis right now. Really this is -- this has been something that's been going on for some time. We've saved a big percentage of our utility budget based on energy conservation efforts. And we see real opportunities there to go even further. Obviously based on County legislation, construction of new facilities on our campuses follows US Green Building Council guidelines. We have LEED certification for several of our campus buildings and newer campus buildings.

We are presently working with a company called Synergistic on a major energy efficiency project. What Synergistic does is they partner with institutions of higher education to identify areas of behavioral change that would help us to be more efficient and reduce our utilities costs. The annual utilities costs at the College is on the order of \$4 million. So obviously, you know, even a small percentage savings there could generate big savings for us. And so that's something that we're actively looking at. We're in the process of hiring two full-time energy specialists whose sole focus will be on identifying energy savings opportunities in partnership with the folks at Synergistic.

We also recently signed up to participate in the US Department of Energy's Workplace Charging Challenge, which is an effort to provide charging opportunities for faculty, students and staff who might have -- or want to have electric vehicles, providing that infrastructure for them. And as part of that, we've committed and actually have already purchased with significant funding from NYSERDA two electric vehicle charging stations at each of our campuses. And those will be installed later this Spring.

We are also actively seeking opportunities to site renewable energy development projects on our campuses. And obviously there's a real operational benefit there in terms of being more efficient and more environmentally sensitive in how we're sourcing our electrical supply. But peripheral benefit of doing that is that we are looking to support workforce development in the areas of renewable energies. Big potential area of growth for Suffolk County and we're looking to support that as much as we can.

I've already spoken on the Synergistic Project. We're projecting over a ten-year span, 13 and-a-half million dollars potential savings there. That's net savings. We're looking at LED lighting retrofits in all our buildings. So just as an example a type of payback expectation there. The Shinnecock Building on the Eastern Campus we anticipate for that building \$100,000 in savings or a four-year return on investment for LED retrofit.

Community service and outreach is an important element of our sustainability initiatives. That's some of the things that we can talk about there, the {Larache} Organization is very big on sustainability. We are members of {Larache} and they also have a sustainability task force of which I'm a member. We've partnered recently with both the Towns of Southampton, East Hampton and Brookhaven to participate in the New York Sun Initiative. So those towns have undertaken projects to support solar installations within the communities. And Suffolk County Community College is acting as the educational partner for those grant efforts.

We are also participants in the Climate Smart Communities, partnered with the County on development of the Climate Smart Communities. Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan, we participate -- participants in development of that report, which has now been -- I believe has been submitted to the State.

Again, the Renewable Energy and STEM Center, if time allows, I've got a short video at the end of my presentation that we can play to describe what our concept is there. And we're hoping to secure final state funding for that capital initiative in the Governor's budget in the next few months.

DR. McKAY:

It has been quite an interesting process and that we've been in touch. And Ben will speak a little bit more about the legislative side of the house in regards to what's happening in Albany. And it has been quite a busy few days for us. And Ben and I haven't had much sleep. But Ben has been making a lot of phone calls and so do I. So, Ben, could you speak on that before we move forward?

MR. ZWIRN:

Well, we -- the College brought up over 60 students and Dr. McKay recently on SUNY day. And we had the opportunity to meet with our entire Assembly delegation. The students were introduced on the floor of the Assembly, which was very nice. They got to meet with a number of our senators: Senator LaValle, Senator Flanagan, Senator Boyle, Senator Croci. And we're looking for, you know, the State to pick up their share as we've talked with a number of the Legislators here about the State is a partner in the Community College as well and trying to get them to live up to their obligations, which they have not been doing over the last several years.

The Governor gave us no increases in FTE funding. The Assembly bill came in with a \$50 increase and the Senate bill came in with a hundred. We were looking for 250 as was SUNY. But every \$50 means a million dollars to our particular campus. So it's possible that we could get it if the Senate prevails during the discussions that we could see that -- a \$2 million increase in FTE funding from the State. Still a far cry from what they're supposed to do under the law, but it's an improvement.

The STEM Renewable Energy Building is in the Governor's budget in the Capital Program. And it should pass this year. It should have passed last year. It was in both house budgets, but there were a number of Capital Programs that were left out, about 50 some odd programs just somehow did not make it into the budget. The County Legislature, to its credit, has fully funded this. So when the State comes through hopefully by the end of March, early April, we'll know that that will -- the funds will be there for that to go forward.

DR. McKAY:

Let me just say this: The Governor has included that in his first bill before it went into the one house bill. And I want to thank all of the elected officials who have signed onto that bill to make sure this goes forward. We'll be the first community college in the State that has wind, geo, nano, solar, cyber security, the first in the State to generate real jobs right here on Long Island. And that's because of your vision and because of support in the College in making this happen. So, thank you. Ben?

MR. ZWIRN:

Also there are a couple of resolutions on today for additional grant money coming in for the Workforce Development Program. You'll see with LNK Pharmaceuticals and Sea Tow. We have programs with local companies which have global -- global appeal and have a global network. So at the College you'll see that their money is coming in. And the institutions themselves are contributing to the programs. And they also have jobs and internships for our students so they'll have a place to go when they graduate. So that's exciting. And that's before you today. Because as those revenues come in, we have to amend the budget to reflect -- so they reflect it.

DR. McKAY:

And one other thing that we gotta say is that -- Kevin Peterman just joined us a few minutes ago. Kevin and I have been on the phones and on e-mails nonstop in speaking to our colleagues. They've asked us collective with Kevin and the FE and NYSUT to work with all the Upstate Colleges and the CUNY campuses to then advance our discussion as the one house bill is being debated right now. That may be done in a day or two. It's a lot of work. It's a lot of work. And the importance of what Nick Palumbo is bringing forward here, if you go back to 19, I don't know, '98, I believe it was when, you know, the whole internet computer stuff came about, nobody knew how to fix those things. So then we had to train folks. So now we are saying you're looking at fossil fuels and things that are happening naturally. Now who's going to fix that? There's no institution right

now in the County talking about that. There's none. So you talk about the holding -- about the pipeline and getting more fossils and all of that here, we talk about the water situation in regards to how we preserve, you know, our groundwater. This is going to be what's going to be able to do that. So we are at the forefront of that discussion. Right now Suffolk County is at the forefront because Suffolk County Community College has now created something here. Cyber security, energy security. Sam's Satellite is doing energy security and I'm doing cyber security. Then you got Kimberly Cline at LIU that is doing something on the management side of it. So you got three institutions down here now that are looking at how do we as Long Island start telling the story, not just across the State, but across the Country. And there are Federal funds to help us do that.

So the next side for us to work on is going to be the grant management side. We hired someone on sustainability. That's the first person that we've hired at the College to look at that. That would then start not just the conservation side, our preservation side, but how do we then take that message forward? We want to be leaders on this. You know, so again, you know, I got my colleagues with me and I don't want to steal your show, Ben, but, you know -- but, again, what we're doing in Albany, what we're doing down here with your support -- we're doing a great job down here. And I gotta tell you, you gotta be proud that it's going to start right here in Suffolk County.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

I just want to mention we actually have another committee meeting after this at one. Of course, our meeting will go late because we have a number of resolutions. Not to rush you, but just be aware that there is another committee meeting. Thank you.

MR. PALUMBO:

I'll just run through the last slide here. The last dimension of sustainability at the Community College we're talking about research and scholarship and obviously a Renewable Energy and STEM Center will be really the hub of that type of activity, research and scholarship. And some of the partnerships that we're looking at there are evidence here on the slide. With that I can move to the sustainability page on our website. And if you go there, you can find this short video presentation that highlights our concept of what the Renewable Energy and STEM Center will look like. And I can run that for you.

(VIDEO PRESENTATION)

MR. PALUMBO:

So that concludes my presentation. I know you're pressed for time but I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Well, I appreciate everyone coming here to talk about your vision. And, again, it will compliment where we're going. We have to teach our kids how to do this, this type of -- train this type of technology for the upcoming careers that will be available. And I appreciate Suffolk having the vision to do that. So, do we have any questions? Presiding Officer Gregory.

P.O. GREGORY:

I just want to say that -- that video was very impressive and very encouraging to see what the future can lead to and opportunities for our -- for our students. I mean, that's really wonderful. I'm excited.

MR. PALUMBO:

Thank you. We're very excited as well. It'll be a great resource for the College.

P.O. GREGORY:

So, you had mentioned earlier -- someone had mentioned, maybe it was Ben, the vote, I guess -- the State will have to vote on it since it's in there again, the Capital Program this year?

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes.

P.O. GREGORY:

And when does that happen?

MR. ZWIRN:

The end of March.

P.O. GREGORY:

Okay. All right. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Legislator Martinez.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Good afternoon. Thank you for being here. That was a great video. I wish I could participate in that -- while I was in college. But just quickly, Ben, you had mentioned funding. Can you just give me, again, the breakdown of the funding for the College, how much percentage in terms of County, State and so forth?

MR. ZWIRN:

Right. It's the three-legged stool. We get -- we have three revenue sources: The State, the County, which is the local sponsor, and the students, the tuition. And it's supposed to be by State law one third, one third, one third. And back -- well, back in the 19 -- late 1970s, the State said if the community colleges will become full opportunity programs, which means open enrollment, that the State would fund up to 40%. And that would be reduction for the other two stools, mostly tuition. The State only met that obligation one time. And it has gone down. It has gone up a little bit, but we're still at levels 2006, 2007 levels on the State. So most of it is now -- -

DR. McKAY:

Seven, eight.

MR. ZWIRN:

Most of the money now is coming -- the majority's coming from student tuition. The County will be back this year to -- we've already begun discussions with this body, which has always been very supportive of the College. And our goal and Dr. McKay's goal has been to keep tuition at the lowest possible level so that more students can participate in getting a higher education. So that is our efforts on the State. Right now, as I said, the Senate bill had \$100 per FTE. The Assembly bill 50. Last year they compromised at 75. This year I think there is an effort on the part of the Assembly after discussions that the College has had to try to move toward the \$100 FTE increase.

We have spoken with the County Executive's Budget Office to see if there can be some room for increase. During -- the predecessor to the County Executive and those of you who were here during the Levy Administration, the numbers were pretty much zeros to the College. While costs went up, tuition went up, the County contribution remained flat except for one year when --

DR. McKAY:

And let me say just say this. And, again, Legislator Martinez, I thank you for the question. When you look at the Upstate institutions, that probably had an 8 or a 9 or a 10 or 11% reduction in regards to enrollment, we were able to put out a very strategic marketing effort and then to meet

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with those high schools and meet with the guidance offices, so we are stable. We are flat. We had budget to be down 1.5, but we've come into the good, you know. When others say that you have not used your reserves, we've done that the prior year. And the current year we use \$4.3 million. Those are one-shots. We can't sustain one-shots, you know. And to keep tuition affordable, we were talking, I think, Legislator Cilmi about students leaving us to go to other places, you know. In order for us to be affordable, we need some support. And Ben's correct, that we are at all eight or nine levels. And for the County, when I look at the chart from the County, there's several years of zeros; several years of zeros. So there's a gap. There's a structural gap. And we've talked about this with the working committee and we will need your support.

I know today we spoke about the new program. That is about economic development. We're doing something that no one else in the State is doing, and which means that we can either attract firms or we can keep firms right here on Long Island. And that's very significant for this body.

So I hope that our presentation today -- I know we ran a little bit over because the other group before us ran a little bit over, but that's okay. But let me just say: This is your time to ask us any questions you have, but I believe that what you're seeing here is the future of where Long Island is going. Okay? And, again, we cannot invest more into fossils. We gotta move into this direction. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Well, we thank you so much for coming here and presenting this presentation. You know, again, this is the direction that our -- that the world is going towards. And we need to support the students to be able -- for them to get to where they need to go. So, Legislator D'Amaro has a question.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Good morning. Good afternoon, rather. Thanks for coming in. You know, talking about the College budget and the County share, we've had this discussion many times over nine years that I've been here. But, you know, in the interim the County Legislature does not have really any input to formulating a budget, as you know. We simply get presented with a budget with the proposed amount that the County should contribute and then we vote yes or no. So while the County share has not been where it should be, and I've always supported, as best I could, the College and increasing the County share, absolutely, I would like for you to address the other half of the equation just briefly about how you're finding the expense side. And, you know, what are the main drivers of the increased costs that the College is experiencing and what you and the College Board are doing to control those costs.

DR. McKAY:

And I thank you, Legislator D'Amaro. Let me just say this: In the 55 -- well, 56-year history of the College, there's been no reopening of contracts at the College. Kevin Peterman is here. And when I went to the table, the faculty understood that we're not like a General Motors Plant. You can't just cut something out. What the faculty did, they came to the table and we renegotiated the contracts. In the first renegotiation, there was zero, zero, two, two. And I believe the last one we did was zero, zero, 1.5, 2 -- right, Kevin?

MR. PETERMAN:

Yes.

DR. McKAY:

I got the numbers here. But the thing about it is the faculty understood the value of what they were doing for this region, this economy. My entire exempt staff did the same thing. So I took four zeros, I believe, right, Lou? They're all saying yes back here. So I take four zeros myself and we gave that back. Now, listen, here's the other side of it.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

DR. McKAY:

To keep tuition and fees affordable, the State was not funding us the way it should. And then the County didn't fund us the way it should. So where did we go? To our one-shot. You know, so part of it -- and on the other other side is, then, how do you keep that going?

Now, the question you asked, which is, again, it's really health care, retirement, you know, plan operations, those are the things where the costs are really coming in.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

DR. McKAY:

Because on the contract side, we renegotiated. And we've got others that took our contracts as models that they used themselves, okay. So the faculty and staff have given back and so has my administration. The thing about it is this: Now, look at the winter. We had a very tough winter. So part of it for us is -- okay, so go back and look at your budget. What did you budget for the winter? We look at turnover savings. Turnover savings is when you keep a position open for a longer period of time. We have not increased faculty hiring at the College in years. And we have a 70/30 resolution where we can have 70% daytime full-time faculty teaching. We're not even close to that. So how Gail Vizzini and I balance my budget is turnover savings.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, you have our sympathy, because you are a microcosm of what every level of government is experiencing with these costs.

DR. McKAY:

Sure.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I mean, I appreciate the give-backs and I appreciate what you've mentioned as far as cost cutting measures. And it is -- it is, in fact, exercising leadership to do what --

DR. McKAY:

Sure.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- you've done with those give-backs and I appreciate that. But, you know, similar to what we experience in County government, you have uncontrollable health care costs. You have pension, contributions or whatever you're -- that's what we have, whatever your expenses may be are going up. But you're saying also that you've had the cooperation of the staff and the faculty --

DR. McKAY:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- with respect to even renegotiating contracts to try and keep those costs --

DR. McKAY:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- I don't want to say under under control, because we want to always, you know, give our

educators the best possible salaries because, you know, they hold the future in their hands figuratively, but we -- you know, it's very -- it's a little frustrating on my side here that we don't really have any type of authority over the budget itself, but yet I really hate the up and down vote. If you know anything about me, I'm not a big fan of up and down votes.

DR. McKAY:

Sure, sure.

LEG. D'AMARO:

You know, present it, take it or leave it, you know. But I do want to say I appreciate -- and the reason why I ask the question is that I think that the College has gone out of its way to -- even though we had that change over where the County lost that control --

DR. McKAY:

Sure.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- I think you've done a great job in trying to keep those costs under control. So I appreciate that.

DR. McKAY:

And, Legislator, let me just say this: The management letter that came from the audit firm unqualified, meaning that -- if you read that document, one of them had about 100 pages and I read all of them. But let me just say this: It really spoke about the quality of leadership and what we have done has been fiscally prudent as an institution. And that was written in language. And, again, if you look, there were no recommendations there. Well, maybe there was one, but it was minor. But fiscally prudent as an institution throughout its timeline under my presidency.

Now, I want to say to our elected officials who are here, we thank you for your support. We know it's difficult. But think of the other side of the equation. If these students don't come to us -- and I always say through education comes transformation and economic empowerment. If you don't have that, what you have, the social side of the equation. So what we are doing is really upscaling the folks that we got.

So we thank you. We thank you. And, Legislator D'Amaro, again, I thank you for your support. Thank you.

LEG. D'AMARO:

What do you think of the President's proposal to fund college education, the associate degree, at least? Not whether or not you think it'll ever pass, but do you think that that would be a direction that would provide relief to the College?

DR. McKAY:

Ha, ha. Let me just say this: It's a liberal discussion that requires liberal support.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

DR. McKAY:

And he doesn't have the support right now, but let me just say this: I believe that the value of education is something that needs to be at the forefront of our decisions. As political leaders we should. You know, when you look at the communities that we have, you talk about common core and everything else that's happening --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

DR. McKAY:

-- that's the discussion. It's about how our students are prepared in regards to when they're ready to come to my campus, you know. So when I get a student coming to me, they require one or more credit courses that require remediation. I gotta deal with that. You know, and that's a cost to the institution. So God bless the President. When you can figure that out, great. But I'm on the other side dealing with what I'm dealing with now --

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'm just wondering if the President's proposal, which has some strings attached to it, you don't just get your college education paid for. I'm looking at some information here. You have to perform eight hours of community service; you have to maintain a certain GPA; you have to have a mentor. There are certain requirements for it, but I'm just wondering if the President wants to fund the student portion only or the entire portion.

DR. McKAY:

Let me just say this:

MR. ZWIRN:

Student portion.

DR. McKAY:

Student portion. But let me say this:

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

DR. McKAY:

The Get There From Here scholarship at the College right now where students who are doing the exact same thing could come in and get the first two years paid at my College. Then I have the Stay On Long Island scholarship. They can transfer to about 16 institutions and get the final two years of the baccalaureate degree paid for. And then they can move on and then get their master's degree, you know. So, again, we're not reinventing the wheels here, folks. I mean -- aye, I said folks. I apologize. Ha. Legislators. We have done this. We have done this. There's a way to do this, you know. And I believe that if -- maybe a press conference can work out if the Presiding Officer and if the Chair of this body decides to do that, let's talk about what we do at Suffolk County Community College. Let's tell a story across the country. Because to get there from here -- plus last year we gave out \$550,000 in scholarships from the foundation side.

On April -- no, May. May 7th we're holding the gala. And I hope that you would all be there. I know, Legislator, you've been there several times, but we've -- we're recognizing the financial industry this year. Each of those -- or at least four of them having to give \$25,000 a piece. And -- and also they're going to also then give their rolodex so we can get to their contacts, you know. And -- so you know, by the way, we're almost sold out already for that event. That has never happened in the history of the College.

So you look at the marketing that we have done. We have won about 12 national words now. Twelve. The most in the history of the College. And we're getting a lot of advertisement, recommendations. So, again, it's all because of your support. So thank you.

LEG. D'AMARO:

The -- just finally, the President's proposal would cover costs that are not covered by grants or scholarship.

DR. McKAY:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But what's interesting about it is, just as a Legislator is when I first heard about it, I thought, wow, that, you know -- so if it's covering the student portion, then you could kiss your County portion goodbye.

DR. McKAY:

Right, right, right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So it's a very interesting dynamic. It's a very complex dynamic which we don't need to get into right now. But I just thought if you wanted to throw anything out there on it, I was interested.

DR. McKAY:

I thank you. If and when that is approved, I'll be the first to shake your hand.

LAUGHTER

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

We can always -- again, you're always invited back to discuss, you know, the projects that you're working on; and also anything related to the budget, because, you know, like Legislator said, we really appreciate inside into knowing what you're doing so we can help approve the financial means to do that. So, again, thank you so much for coming out here today. Thank you.

DR. McKAY:

Thank you. On behalf of all the students, our faculty, our Board of Trustees and the folks that are in the room, our Faculty Association needs to be commended. And all the unions that have worked with me to renegotiate a contract to help us through this process, where SUNY New Paltz has cut an entire nursing program, in Nassau, our colleagues who have frozen about 50 positions, we were able to maintain and grow. And then also to add plus two to our class sizes. So, again, I thank you for all that we have done and that you have approved. So thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Thank you. It's nice to see people working together and getting things done.

DR. McKAY:

Thank you.

INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Okay, we're going to move onto -- with the agenda here this afternoon. Okay, we do not have any Tabled Resolutions. We're going to go right to the Introductory Resolutions. And we will take IR 1186 out of order. I'll make a motion.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Okay. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Okay, we have **IR 1186** in front of us, **Confirming appointment of Suffolk County Commissioner of Information Technology Vincent M. Mezzanotte. (Co. Exec.)** Right, Mezzanotte. And he's here before us. I'll make a motion to

approve. Second over here.

MR. RICHBERG:

We didn't vote on the take out of order.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Oh, I just did. Yes. Okay -- I did. I made the motion. You seconded (referring). Unanimously approved. So the motion is out of order. And then I made the motion to approve 1186.

MR. RICHBERG:

Got it.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

And again seconded by Legislator Martinez. Okay. Welcome. We're here to learn a little bit more about you. Again, we have resumes available for all the Legislators here on the Committee. And, again, if you could maybe start out explaining some of your past experience, let us know what you're doing currently and then your vision for the future and possibly as the Commissioner of IT.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Okay. Well, first of all, thank you. It's an honor and a privilege for me to be here today to seek the confirmation of the Commissioner of Information Technology position for Suffolk County. I'm not only extremely excited about the opportunity to service Suffolk County, but I'm also extremely excited about the opportunity to work closely with you as well as all the employees of the IT Department and the key stakeholders within the County as we move IT forward in a positive direction.

As a brief introduction to my background, I've been directly involved with supporting technology for the past 34 years. And one of the things I've learned during that experience is that it's extremely critical to establish as a leader in IT, establish an environment that's open, transparent, where there's a heavy duty level of collaboration and communication, not only within the department but outside the department.

And it's my vision to really engage everyone within IT as well as within the various departments to understand and assess where we are today organizationally with people; where we are today process-wise within IT; what core processes really need to be focused on and addressed and well-documented and improved, if possible; and what our underlying technologies are so we can look at where we have opportunities for improvement. Security is a key concern within my vision, a robust and resilient infrastructure that supports the applications and the information that we need to function as a government. And, you know, establishing the people skills that are critical to move that forward.

So I've had the pleasure and the opportunity over the past 30-plus years to act in various capacities. The most senior level positions were Chief Information Officer at Long Island Railroad and at Metro-North. And I think those experiences really bring -- or provide me with a good foundation for what we need to focus on within the County. It's a very similar environment. We operated in a financial constraint world, but we try to get the most out of the resources we had so we could deliver adequate services to the public, which is very similar to what I would focus on here as well.

I firmly believe in establishing structure and processes around how we function. Managing demand and the intake of work and ensuring that our recesses are aligned with what the leadership feels is critical is really a high priority for me.

And then finally as a lifetime resident of Suffolk County, I'm really excited about the chance to take my passion, my passion for technology and apply that towards making Suffolk County a better place to live. So -- and with that I guess I'll open up to any questions you might have.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. Mr. Mezzonette?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Mezzonate. Mezzonate is --

LEG. D'AMARO;

How do you say it?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Mezzanotte.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Mezzanotte. Okay, thank you. And thank you for putting yourself forward for this position. It's a -- I did have an opportunity to review your resume. And it's quite impressive. And you obviously do have a lifetime of experience of working in this field. So it's really a pleasure to have you here today. And I just want to go through a few areas of questions, though.

I want to talk first a little bit more about your background and your history. I want to talk a little bit about clearance issues or, if you will, your access to proprietary information. And then I want to talk a little bit more about your specific knowledge of our County system and what those long-term, short-term goals may or may not be to the extent you've had an opportunity to take a look at that. So when I scanned your resume, I noticed that you spent 30 years in working with the MTA initially. You have 1980 to August of 2010.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So that was, you say, Senior Executive of the Information Technology Department. Was that the entire tenure while you were there or did you move up the ranks, so to speak?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, I progressed --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

-- through various positions within the department.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So in dealing -- would you say that the system that you dealt with over those 30 years was as extensive or complex as the County system that you would be responsible for should you get approved here?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

My sense is that it's very similar. I've seen over those 30 years the IT support role transform from a back office support function to really day-to-day operational support where we were delivering information and data and services that really directly impacted the customer and the user of --

LEG. D'AMARO:

The County's system quite extensive. We have obviously several locations where IT services are required, they're enter-connected.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And my history with IT Commissioners has been it's really just about coming in and telling me how outdated our equipment always is and why we need to upgrade it and it's always for security reasons. So it's tough to say no. But keeping on your background, after the 30 years of public service, you jumped into the private sector.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

As a consultant; correct?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Only for two years, though. Did you really miss the public domain that much or --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

To be honest with you, when I was offered the position at Metro-North to come back as Chief Information Officer, I gave that some serious thought. And I realized that what I enjoy more than anything is the day-to-day tactical and strategic operational issues that are associated with operating an IT department. In the consulting capacity I was moving around from project to project and providing some sound advice, I believe, in managing different initiatives.

LEG. D'AMARO:

It looks like always within the transportation area.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Transportation. Yeah, it was primarily transit although we had a -- it's not on the resume but we had a waterworks project out in San Diego that I was involved with.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So but -- go ahead.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

But I realized that I really enjoyed the leadership role associated with managing the IT operation. And that's what drew me back into it and that's what attracts me to this position once again.

LEG. D'AMARO:

When you were with Booz Allen Hamilton, BAH?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And CH2M Hill --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- is that one company or two?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

What happened was one year -- when I was with Booz Allen after one year CH2M Hill purchased the transit division of consulting. So there were roughly two to three hundred employees within that division. We were all brought into the new organization.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So you list both because one transitioned into --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Exactly, exactly. But it was really, you know, it was not my doing that changed the company.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. Sure I understand, but you went along for the ride.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah. And we were really focussing on the same projects. It was, you know, in that world the product is people.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. Now you did that for two years. And you've explained that this other position with Metro-North Railroad became available. But while you were in the private sector with Booz Allen Hamilton and then CH2M Hill, did you consult for Metro-North?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I was on a project engagement at Metro-North which involved a time -- a new time and attendance system, yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

You did.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

U-huh.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

As a senior -- I wasn't involved with the day-to-day project, but I was responsible for providing the overall oversight and administrative support.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Metro-North was one of the firm clients would it be fair to say? Or is that --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

It was one of the -- I'm sorry?

LEG. D'AMARO:

Was that a client of the firm, Metro-North?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah, yeah. All the MTA operating agencies were clients of the firm.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So when you went over to the -- to Metro-North Railroad, you were -- I mean, you had worked with the Long Island Railroad but you were extremely familiar with their operations and their systems.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I was -- I wouldn't say thoroughly familiar because there were some differences, but I had a pretty good idea of what their --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

-- what their structure was.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I want to ask you having come from the private sector for two years and then two years you went to Metro-North Railroad, which according to your resume ended just at the end of last year, do you maintain any tie or connection to the consulting industry?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, I don't.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And so you've severed your relationship with Booz Allen Hamilton and CH2M Hill?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Absolutely. Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So there's no side agreement, consulting agreement, part-time relationship whatsoever.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Not at all.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. And if you were to be appointed as the IT Commissioner here in Suffolk County, that would continue to be the case.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay, there'd be no further outside employment compensation, consulting, weekends, nights and weekends, anything.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No. I sense that the Commissioner's job will consume enough of my time. I would not get involved with any other consulting.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. Good. All right. Tell us why you left the MTA after two years.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

It was a two-year engagement that had an expiration on it based on the fact that I had retired from Long Island Railroad.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

And now was working for another agency out -- within the MTA umbrella. So they had a policy that allowed for a two-year waiver. And then once that two-year period ended, I had -- there was no choice. I probably would not have left if there was an option to stay on because I was enjoying what I was doing. I felt like I was contributing and adding value.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So you were only permitted by law to stay with Metro-North Railroad for a two-year period.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Internal policy. It wasn't a -- it's not -- it's not a State law.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

It was a policy that MTA --

LEG. D'AMARO:

What's the rationale behind the policy? I don't understand the policy.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I think the concept was that if you retired from one agency within the MTA, they wanted to adhere to similar standards as New York State. And if you took a job within another agency, it should only be to fill a critical void, an emergency-type situation; and that other provisions should be made to bring somebody on board that would not necessarily be --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Let me understand it. You could only remain in that position if you had come from outside the MTA umbrella?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

If I was hired from outside -- yeah, if I was hired from a private organization that had not had a prior affiliation with an MTA agency, I could have stayed on as long as I wanted.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Oh, was it by virtue of the fact that you had an affiliation --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

-- with Long Island Railroad.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- with Long Island Railroad.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Which was another agency.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Not the private sector?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, because I was -- I retired as a Long Island Railroad employee.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So you're -- are you presently retired?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

From Long Island Railroad, yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

You are. Okay. So the policy there is as a retiree from the Long Island Railroad, the MTA has a policy that permits a short-term engagement to bring in expertise or experience that may be critical and necessary, but it cannot operate as a long-term position --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Exactly.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- by virtue of being retired.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

They would have to request a waiver or get the approval of the Chairman and --

LEG. D'AMARO:

The waiver's only good for two years.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Did you seek a second waiver?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

There was really no -- I mean on their side it was -- I think they felt it was a little -- it was a little too extreme because their obligation to get the initial waiver was to find someone to replace me in that two-year period.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Oh, I see. Okay. Good. Okay. Wait, hold on. No, I'm not done. All right. So let's go to -- is there any particular clearance or security check that's done? Because as IT Commissioner you have access to virtually all information within the system.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I mean I guess that's -- that's a policy issue within Suffolk County.

LEG. D'AMARO:

When you worked for MTA, was any such clearance --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- or investigation or background check required?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

There was always -- there's always a background check, especially for policy-maker decisions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

So they would do a complete background check on me before I was hired.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

But I'm not really sure how extensive that got into security check. You know, I mean it's a -- it's a basic background check.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. You know, don't take these questions personal, but I'm not sure either. It's something I've always wondered about as we've seen a few IT Commissioners come through here. There's an awful lot of information that's stored on the County system. And it's proprietary and it's confidential much of it, I would assume, especially when you get into Social Services employee information and --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Do you know of any check on denying access within the department to use or misappropriation of that information? How do you control that?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Well, I think it's through proper administrative rights and security rights within all employees in the department.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'm sure we have policies in place. And I'm not really questioning that. I'm not saying that the County is just doing it blindly.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, I -- right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But I'm just wondering on your take given your background, having worked with larger organizations, the MTA and running IT departments, you know, how much of that should be a concern; and is what the County doing sufficient?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah. Absolutely safeguarding data is critical. Many times where vulnerabilities occur is within the organization, not just from outside. So I think it's important to ensure that you have the right policies and controls in place to prevent those types of things from happening.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right, I would agree with that. Are you familiar at all yet with what the County policies are?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, I have not looked at --

LEG. D'AMARO:

It's okay that you're not.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah, yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Crawl before we walk here. And I understand that.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But you -- it is a consideration that you've had in your past positions that you have personally addressed.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But you'd be in a position to evaluate whether or not the County's policies are sufficient.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes. And I would work closely with the folks within the security area of the department to understand what we currently have in place and to enhance that, if necessary.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Do you think -- let's talk a little bit about the County system itself, to the extent that you are at all familiar with it. Well, first let me ask you, have you had an opportunity to even learn how our system -- or what systems we have? And forgive the laymen terms, I'm not an IT expert. But are you somewhat familiar with our system?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah, I've had the opportunity to meet with several members of the leadership team within IT. And, in fact, received a really good tour of the data center here in building 50. And I was impressed with not only the level of sophistication but -- and the reliability, the robust level of it and also the security level.

LEG. D'AMARO:

U-hum.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I've looked at a lot of documentation, which provides me with some insight into the different systems and applications and structure. But it's really been more just, you know, reading through material and not a whole lot of dialogue and discussion, which is really where I would take it next as --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Do you think that IT services for Suffolk County should be centralized or not centralized?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I would say they need to be coordinated. I don't -- I don't necessarily feel a centralized approach is the only way to go. I think that to coordinate, I think that would open trust and communications across the various entities that support technology. We could accomplish the same thing. So I would be -- I would be encouraging towards making sure that we all communicate so that we can share data and share information and apply --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, that gets to the central -- in the past we've talked about various departments gathering data, okay, but then funneling that data centrally for use and processing and conclusions and reports or whatever, you know, needs there might be.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Are you an advocate of doing that for the County? Or do you believe that the department should be more freestanding on their own; and even at the level of utilizing the data should be doing that on their own?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I believe that in every instance you need to identify who the data owner is. The data owners belong in the business units or in the departments. IT's role is to be a custodian of that data, to make sure it's safe, secure and available to the people that need to have access to it.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

So I would be an advocate for making sure that with any new systems or systems that are currently in place, that we are clear on who the data owner is and that we try to leverage that data so it's beneficial to all entities within the County, not just necessarily the ones --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. In order to do that, do you feel that the County or yourself would have the expertise available? Or do you envision a need for outside contracts, consultants in administering the County system or improving the County system?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I mean, I would need some time to assess that, but I would -- I would think that you need a bit of a mix. I think that there's always instances where when you take on something new, you may need to bring in some specific skill sets.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, if it's a new software or program, you know, you don't have any familiarity --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- you need to subscribe so to speak.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

But being optimistic, I would think that we've got enough talent within the County to at least --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

-- take the lead on looking at those types --

LEG. D'AMARO:

With your cursory review that you've had so far of our system, what's your general first impression; outdated, out-moded, current, needs a lot of attention, little attention? Give me some impression.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

The area that I think needs some attention would probably be with our financial systems and -- the County's financial systems and their payroll system. My sense is that they're running on older technologies where it's difficult to even find the skill sets to support that technology. And that we're probably limited with functionality and feature that we can get from some -- some newer technologies.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right answer. I appreciate that. But in your role with Metro-North and with the Railroad --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- were you also responsible for keeping an eye on the costs?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And budgets? Did you prepare a budget at any point?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes, yes. We had a \$50 million at Long Island and 60 million at Metro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

That you were responsible for -- for --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

MTA.

LEG. D'AMARO:

For the MTA you prepared yourself, you know, with your staff?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah, our Operating Budget, yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. Because you know then you would be familiar with the tug of war that constantly goes on between the need to have the best --

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- and, you know, as opposed to, you know, who's going to pay for it and how do we pay for it.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

The one thing I would say to that, though, is as the IT lead in the IT department, we really should not be the decision-makers on what initiatives take place. We should be providing input in terms of what the technical feasibility is, what the costs are --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, but you make the recommendations.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

And we should provide you --

LEG. D'AMARO:

And they are very forceful because we are not experts.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And we're relying on your expertise. So I need to know that -- I don't want to discourage you from making recommendations or saying look, this is what we really need to do and here's why.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But I need to know that, you know, somewhere in that process you're cognizant of the fact that it's wildly expensive to do a lot of this stuff.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yeah. And closely partnered with the stakeholders of the system, the people that are going to benefit and use that system, so that it's clear that what we're presenting from a technical perspective fits into a business need.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. You were starting to go into what, again, with the cursory review of the County system, where you think the biggest problem areas. And you mentioned the financial software or processing was one area that already caught your eye.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Is that correct?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I mean just in terms of the fact that it's older technology. I would really need to --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. But you see that is a discussion, should you become IT Commissioner that -- let's say you come here and you say it's older technology. It's older and they don't service it anymore or it's vulnerable, you know. And then the proposal is "we need this \$4 million system to replace it". You know, I'm just giving you my concerns, okay. I'm not really looking even for a response at this point. But it's very important that as the head of a department -- and I you know this from your days at the MTA if you managed a \$50 million budget, that you have to -- unfortunately cost is a driver of things often. Just as much a driver of what's required as may be, you know, the best technology out there. And I would ask that should you become Commissioner, that you always keep that in mind.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Okay.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add along those lines of questions that I've asked you to today?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

No, not at this point.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. Well, I really appreciate your answers. It's been nice to have this conversation with you. And I want to thank the Chair.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Oh, you're welcome. And I also wanted to mention, too, as far as priorities, at least with me working with IT in the past, I appreciate the fact that the current IT is working with the Legislators on projects; and one specifically is the stopbullying.org. You know, previous -- the previous committee, you know, they were talking about bullying and issues, it's life or death situation for our residents. So, again, I hope you will also consider that. And, again, you mentioned before working with the Legislators, working with the department in what they're doing and just making it better. That's really what we're hoping for. Legislator Cilmi has a question.

LEG. CILMI:

Thanks, Madam Chair. Welcome. You and I had an opportunity to speak at some length yesterday. And Legislator D'Amaro asked some very good questions. And I found your answers to be equally good. The question I have -- and I'm not sure that you really can answer it is do we need you?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Do we need?

LEG. CILMI:

Do we need you? Do we need a Commissioner? And the reason I ask that question is -- and we need a Commissioner. There's no doubt that you need somebody leading the Department of Information Technology in the County. But we've been, you know, without an additional -- without the position of Commissioner there now for several months, I think. Doug Miller has been Acting

Commissioner. And by all counts, at least by our counts, or at least by my counts, he's done a fine job as Acting Commissioner. We pay him "X" amount of money. I don't know what his salary is. What's the proposed salary for your job?

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

One hundred fifty thousand.

LEG. CILMI:

A hundred and fifty thousand dollars. So while that salary may have been budgeted in this year's budget, as Legislator D'Amaro alluded to and as should be abundantly clear to you and anybody who is really exploring employment with the municipal government -- with a governmental entity in the public sector is that budgets are incredibly tight. And so we are -- we're running a structural deficit here in Suffolk County. We continue to borrow extraordinary amounts of money, not only to, you know, provide for services, but to provide cash flow relief, etcetera. And I'm wondering do we need to spend an additional \$150,000. And so my question is not in any way reflective of the expertise that you bring to the position. It seems to me that you bring quite a bit of expertise to the position and that your service to the County would be incredibly valuable. The question is do we need to spend the money? And I don't know if you can really answer that question.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

I believe you do.

LAUGHTER

LEG. D'AMARO:

Tell us why.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Just what I think you need is you need -- at the most senior level you need someone that's going to bring all the different disciplines and functions together. And I think Doug's done an admirable job, you know, keeping things together. But I think that, you know, with any organizations, you need the proper span and control and focus. So, you know, typically from my experience, what the CIO or the Commissioner's role would be was to make sure that the application folks, the infrastructure team, the security folks, the network -- everyone's working together hand-in-hand. I don't think there's -- again, being somewhat biased towards IT, I don't think there's too many departments that require that level of coordination and communication. It's so critical to make sure that one hand is talking to the other and also managing up. It's not just managing down, but it's managing up to make sure that we understand what the needs are and what the priorities are and that we're delivering services that are inline with those priorities. The managing down part is actually hard, but sometimes managing up is more difficult. And from my experience in the role that I've had in the past, I would focus on both and make sure both was a priority for me as the Commissioner. And I don't know if you would get that if you didn't fill the position.

LEG. CILMI:

So along those same lines, we spoke at some length here with respect to your exposure to the County's hardware, software, and, you know, whether or not it's up-to-date. I'd be curious to know if you've had a similar opportunity to explore our staffing situation in IT.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Not yet, I have not. But one of the first things I want to do is really lay out, I kind of call it the roster, understand where all our resources are allocated today, what our skills sets are, because, you know, training is extremely important. And identify not only what we need to do from a technology platform and direction, but what do we need to do to make sure that we're developing an IT Department that can meet the future needs. So it would be a priority for me, but I have not really looked -- I have not looked at that at all yet.

LEG. CILMI:

Because one of the questions that is always in my mind is, you know, what's the proper mix of high level staff to, you know, the folks who are actually in the trenches getting things done.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Right.

LEG. CILMI:

And time and again in a variety of different departments here in the County, you know, we find ourselves struggling to get things done with the number of employees that we have here. So, you know -- I mean that needs to be a consideration. I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Good. Presiding Officer good? Okay, I think we're good to go. Can we take a vote? All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)** Congratulations for getting out of Committee.

MR. MEZZANOTTE:

All right. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Now it will go to the full Legislature. Thank you.

Okay, we're going to continue with our Introductory Resolutions. We have **1164, Accepting and appropriating a grant award increase from the State Education Department, the University of the State of New York, for a Liberty Partnerships Program (LPP) 100% reimbursed by State funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.)** I'll make a motion to approve and put on the Consent Calendar.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(CONSENT CALENDAR. VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

We're going to go to **IR 1165, Accepting and appropriating a grant award from the State University of New York, for a Workforce Development Training Program Entitled "LNK Pharmaceutical Quality Program," 91% reimbursed by State funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.)** I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

Second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

IR 1166, Accepting and appropriating a grant award increase from the State University of New York, for a Workforce Development Training Program for Sea Tow Services, International Inc. Phase 2, 93% reimbursed by State Funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.) I will make a motion.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

IR 1167, Accepting and appropriating a grant award increase 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.) I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

And put onto the Consent Calendar. Legislator Martinez has seconded. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(CONSENT CALENDAR. VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

IR 1169, Accepting and appropriating a grant award increase from the United States Department of Education for a Student Support Services (TRIO) Program grant, 95% reimbursed by Federal funds at Suffolk County Community College. (Co. Exec.) I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. MARTINEZ:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON ANKER:

We have a second. All in favor? Opposed? Abstention? Motion carries. **(VOTE: 6-0-0-0. PO GREGORY INCLUDED IN VOTE)**

We have no further business, this meeting is adjourned.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:36 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**