JOINT COMMITTEE HEARINGS
ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Operating Budget Minutes

A special joint meeting of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee and the Parks & Cultural Affairs Committee was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on **October 22, 2004**, to discuss the matter of the Operating Budget.

Members Present:

Legislator Jay Schneiderman • Chairman/Parks & Cultural Affairs
Vice•Chair/Environment, Planning & Agriculture
Legislator Ricardo Montano • Member/Parks & Cultural Affairs
Legislator Peter O'Leary • Member/Parks & Cultural Affairs, Member/Environment, Planning & Agriculture
Legislator Daniel Losquadro • Member/Environment, Planning & Agriculture
Legislator Vivian Viloria•Fisher • Member/Parks & Cultural Affairs

Members Not Present:

Legislator Michael Caracciolo• Member/Environment, Planning & Agriculture, Vice•Chair/Parks & Cultural Affairs
Legislator Angie Carpenter • Member/Parks & Cultural Affairs
Legislator Jon Cooper • Member/Parks & Cultural Affairs
Legislator Cameron Alden • Member/Parks and Cultural Affairs
Legislator Dave Bishop • Member/Environment, Planning and Agriculture

Also in Attendance:

Mea Knapp, Counsel to the Legislature
Alexandra Sullivan, Chief Deputy Clerk/SC Legislature
Jim Spero, Director/Budget Review Office
Kevin Duffy, Budget Review Office

Sean Clancy, Budget Review Office
Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive
Thomas Isles, Director/Suffolk County Planning Department
Patricia Zielinsky, Director/Division of Real Estate/Planning
Ronald Foley, Commissioner of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation
Richard Caggiano, Budget Analyst, Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Minutes Taken By:
Diana Kraus • Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING CONVENED AT 1:36 PM)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Legislators for the joint meeting of Parks and Environment Committees, please report to the horseshoe.

All right. We're going to get this joint meeting going. We're going to co•chair this. I'm Chairman, Jay Schneiderman. I'm Chairman of the Parks Committee. And we have Chairman Losquadro of the Environment and Planning here as well. If you will rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Losquadro.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
We're going to start with the cards. We have a few cards. Once we exhaust the cards, we'll turn it over for general comment. And do you want to do the cards first and then the Commissioners? Let's do the cards first; then we'll bring the Commissioners up.

The first one is Paul Matthews, Long Islanders for Environment Clam Restoration, if I'm saying that right. How are you doing, Paul? Hand•outs. Do you want to wait 'til later? I'll give you the option.

MR. MATTHEWS:
Yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You got it. We'll •• that's fine. We're going to hold Mr. Matthews off until the rest of his entourage arrives. Let's move onto Wallace Broege. Is that •• I'm probably not saying it right.

MR. BROEGE:

Sounds pretty close. It's Broege.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Broege is a city in Belgium so••

MR. BROEGE:

There should be an umlaut over the "O". That's a long story.

My name is Wally Broege. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Historical Society in Riverhead. The Historical Society is an authorized agency of Suffolk County, which means we fall into the contract agency category. We've been a contract agency since 1969. We operate a museum, a library and archives; and we conduct educational programs in Riverhead. That's our only location.

I realize that there are a number of Legislators here that may not be very familiar with our programs. And in the package's that's being circulated, I've prepared a little booklet that will tell you a little bit about our art history, what we do, and why we do it and how we do it.

I've come today to talk about the 2005 budget. The County Executive based his 2005 funding of the Suffolk County Historical Society on his recommended funding for 2004 with a small increase. The Legislature very generously added $32,000 to our budget to close a gap and •• a funding gap. And to forestall or prevent laying off of staff members and cancellation of programs. And unfortunately that has not been included in the County Executive's budget. Therefore, we've facing a $28,657 deficit for 2005 if that budget is put in place. The Historical Society has been struggling financially. We're doing our best to get the institution on a little bit firmer financial footing. In the past few years, we've cut discretionary spending to the bone. We've lost our librarian in 2002 and a curator in 2003 because of funding difficulties. So, the $28,657 deficit is really going to hurt the Historical Society. In fact, it will mean the loss of five part•time staff members. And we're a small institution. There are just three of us full•time and nine part•time. I'll lose three museum educators, a custodian and our gift shop manager. With the loss of those part•time educators, perhaps 40% of the school children that normally visit the Historical Society won't be able to visit. The loss of the gift shop manager will probably

mean that we'll have to close the gift shop if I can't keep it open with volunteers. We'll lose revenue there.

So, my purpose in coming today is to ask you to please restore our funding to the 2004 level, which was $199,140. I'm pleased to find that the Budget Review Office in its recommendation for the Historical Society recommended that that funding be restored. I realize that doesn't mean that the money is going to be available to be there; but Budget Review has always been very fair with us and always conducts a pretty thorough review of our programs. So, I hope you'll be able to concur with that and reinstate those funds. If you have any questions about the Historical Society, I'll be happy to answer them. I think that's •• I don't want to take any more of your time today.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Any questions? Thank you, sir.

MR. BROEGE:
Okay.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Thank you, Mr. Broege.

MR. BROEGE:
You're welcome. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
All right. Russell Davis. So, we're still waiting; right?

MR. MATTHEWS:
Yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
You got it. Karen Blumer is also with you?

MR. MATTHEWS:
Yes, she's the one we're waiting for.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
All right. Let's go over to the Commissioners, then, because those are all the cards.

Why don't we start with the Parks Commissioner. Mr. Foley.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Good afternoon. This is Rich Caggiano, our Budget Analyst. Is that on?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yes.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

How do you want to do this?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Well, do you have a •• do you want to bring anything to our attention?
Do you have a particular presentation you want to make or do you just want to open it up for questions?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Well, I made the presentation in most of your offices already. Everyone who is here has heard it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You seem to have gotten much of what you wanted in this budget.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I think we did. We abided by the rules and presented a zero increase budget. And then went back to the County Executive and said here's a number of initiatives that are important to us. He agreed and proposed those for funding in reduced fashion. They include the environmental stewardship unit, an audit function within the department, which it has not had. And I think the Comptroller's audit stresses the importance of that. A maintenance team and a contracts person to take over the functions of the Friends of Long Island Heritage we were formerly operating and three new golf positions in the organic maintenance program. Those are the highlights.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So, you're satisfied with what the County Executive has presented for your function?

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I am.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Any other questions?

Chairman LOSQUADRO:

No, I know •• the Commissioner and I had actually gone through this earlier. So, we had discussed some of the finer points of this. As long as the Commissioner has nothing new to add, I'm pretty up to date on what they were looking for.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah, I met with the Commissioner as well.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I commend him for reaching out in the way that he did. So, we're pretty well versed in this.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

Unless you got questions about ••

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The recommendation is to find a new contract agency; to not try to manage all these concessions like the St. James General Store. I hope that moves swiftly.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

I don't know if it will move swiftly. I don't disagree with your concept there. Rather than a concessionaire, it may be a collection of local support groups or something like that. But we hope to take the coming year and see what's around. There's opportunities. I don't disagree that we shouldn't have store clerks and things like that working for the County. But I want to find the right path and make the right replacement.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. I think it's for your own sake. The quicker it happens, the less you'll have, you know, to be micro•managing these operations, pulling you away from more important functions.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

I'm sorry if anyone has asked this question already, but I was very pleased when I had looked at the budget and saw that there would be more Parks management personnel. The

environmental analyst, I believe, the title was •• now, when I looked at the Budget Review Office recommendation, and, Jim, you can help me with this, the Budget Review in your recommendation did not recommend that environmental analyst position. Jim, maybe you could help me to figure out where there is. But I remember that you did not agree with that recommendation. Is there a reason, Jim, why ••

MR. SPERO:

It's a brand new unit. And we just thought •• I think there was a total of four positions created in the new unit. So, we thought just to start it up, start with three and then see where you go from three. And then if you need more, you can add them in the next budget cycle. That's all.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

Okay. Because when Cheryl Felice was here from AME and she was talking about the fact that •• and perhaps I'm mixing apples and oranges, so please correct me if I'm wrong •• but back in 1999 and 2000, we did have •• we tried to create a formula wherein the more land acquisition we had, the greater the number of people working in our parks system to manage the land. And we really haven't been keeping up with that ratio. And so I thought that we should try to be as liberal as we could with having land management in our parks, especially when we're also asking the people of Suffolk County to vote for another $30 million in open space acquisitions. So, I'm just, you know, wondering about, you know, what the rationale was and what your reaction is, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:

The legislation you referred that made the relationship between acres and staff, I think, was specific just to police if I had that right. But almost for the same reason Mr. Spero is giving for knocking that one out, I would keep it in. It's a new unit. We want to give it as much as substance as we can. We're talking about a kind of backlog of 30 something, maybe 40 something thousand acres that we haven't looked at, monitored, cleaned up, posted, marked, assessed for environmental sensitivity. I would advocate that we keep that as proposed in the County Executive's budget so we can make some immediate progress. And then figure out what we need to come back for in future years, if anything.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

Okay. Well, I would like to see that position kept as well simply because, Mr. Chair, when I was Chair of Parks for •• I believe it was three years, I did go and look at many of our parks and saw that there was a management issue, that there were management problems in the parks

and that we needed •• and I know when we had an issue with a park where there had been encroachment on Forsythes Meadow and there had been a fence built, and we needed analysis done of the level of damage, etcetera, we had one person. We had Mr. Gibbons who was the one person that we could rely on with that kind of expertise to go out there and look at the environmental impact. And for a County that holds so many tens of thousands of acres of parkland, I was really very concerned about having only that one person to depend on. So, I'm hoping, Mr. Chair, that we •• although I understand what BRO is saying, we want to look very carefully, but I believe this is a very important unit. I'm really concerned about management of all of these parklands. Thank you. That was my only question.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
No other questions for the Commissioner. Thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER FOLEY:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Commissioner Isles. Environment, Agriculture and Planning.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Hello, Mr. Isles, how are you?

MR. ISLES:
Good afternoon. I am well.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Do you have anything you would like to present to us before we begin?

MR. ISLES:
Nothing specifically. Certainly if any of the Committee members have questions, I'll do my best to answer those questions. Obviously, we worked with the County Executive's Office on the submission of the budget before you. The core planning functions, I feel, are well protected and will enable us to continue to provide the services to the County that have historically been provided. And the appropriations that are suggested, we feel •• I feel would be sufficient to do that.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Mr. Isles ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Read my mind. That was going to be my first question. Do you feel you have the sufficient funding; and more importantly staffing levels? Obviously this year with the approval of the Master List and, you know, the many planning steps resolutions that we have seen, you know, there obviously has been heightened interest in the revitalization of our Land Preservation Program being that it had •• unfortunately slowed down in the recent past. Is the staffing that you have now sufficient? Could you •• obviously I'm sure you could use more staff; and what sort of effect would that have? Do you have a backlog right now? And if you care to address the first couple of questions before we go any deeper.

MR. ISLES:

Sure. Okay. In terms of the staffing now, is it adequate? No, it's not. The County Executive, however, has •• and this is based on the discussions when the master list was being considered, authorized the filling of a number of positions both in the planning unit itself as well as in particular the Real Estate Division for a total, I believe, of seven positions. So, those have been authorized and budgeted. We are in the process of filling those positions. So, as we speak at the moment, we're still staffing up. We have had success in that. And certainly we're on track to get all of those positions filled, hopefully by the end of this year. So, it is a very important point. We certainly •• you're correct that there has been a significant increase in activity in terms of the acquisitions that are proposed both from the executive and legislative side. And that, of course, results in more appraisals. There's more requirements in terms of the review process. There's the new environmental trust board, which, of course, has administrative duties associated with that. We feel with the completion of the •• filling the vacancies that are currently there with these new positions that have been created, we will be able to provide the service that's expected of us.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

And as you said those positions are already budgeted.

MR. ISLES:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Legislator Schneiderman.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Commissioner, in the budget, as well as, I guess, with subsequent resolutions would have the Division of Real Estate that you just spoke of move from your department over to a new Department of Environment and Energy. In the budget process, I guess my first question is, is it the identical staff levels that are moving to the new department? And what would be the impact on Planning? Real Estate has always been in recent history with Planning. And Planning obviously considers many issues from the environment to transportation issues to socioeconomic types of issues. In the County Executive's budget, he is creating a new department in moving this to the Department of Environment. And I'd like to get some comment from you as to whether the budget adequately funds all those positions that would be necessary; and what the impact on your department would be.

MR. ISLES:

Okay. In terms of adequately funding those positions, there are a number of changes in terms of moving the Real Estate Division •• principally the Real Estate Division into the new Department of Energy and Environment. Most of that goes over intact to their •• there are a couple of exceptions including the proposal by the County Executive to move the condemnation unit to the Department of Public Works since principally that's where the work is associated with. And so there are also some changes in administrative duties that would also result in changes in several positions within the department. I think at the end of the day in terms of accounts of personnel within the unit, my understanding of it is that it would be satisfactory then to cover the work that is required. So, here again condemnation moving over. And then the rest of Real Estate moving into DEE, the new department.

In terms of your second question in terms of the impact on Planning, you're right. The Real Estate moved over to Planning in 1999. It had previously been with the Department of Law. At one point it was its own department. And the •• we've enjoyed working together with Real Estate certainly in the Planning Department. And I would certainly expect that that would continue in terms of having, just as I work with the Health Department, the Department of Public Works and so forth, as part of the executive branch structure, there's obviously cross functions that happen. And it's obviously required by the departments and the department heads in particular to make sure that they work smoothly. So, it is a relatively recent turn of

events that Real Estate was included with planning. There are functions where planning, it is helpful, I think, for Planning to be involved in Real Estate in certainly acquisitions. And then transfer of properties. Certainly I would anticipate that Planning would continue to have a role in that. I have no reason to believe that wouldn't happen. And here again, I look back on the prior forty years of history of Suffolk County Planning Department where Real Estate was separate. And, you know, I had faith that that would continue to work on that basis.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
I'm not sure •• maybe you're the wrong person to ask this question •• but I'm not sure what the advantage to moving Real Estate over to the Environment is. From a •• from a good government or from a managerial perspective, an efficiency perspective ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
With all this talk about Real Estate, perhaps we should call Ms. Zielinski up.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Yeah, maybe if you'd ••

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Please, care to join Mr. Isles?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Also, Mr. Isles, in Real Estate, there are many functions, there's the 72H, for instance, which is your affordable housing. You have all your tax default parcels, which are not predominately environmental in focus like the affordable housing or the tax default. So, I don't •• I'm just wondering with those functions why it wouldn't be more efficient to try to keep them with Planning?

MR. ISLES:
Here again, I believe it's the intent of the County Executive to provide more of an emphasis on environmental and energy matters by providing for this consolidation. In terms of the functions that you spoke of, Real Estate does do quite a lot. And they have a number of different units. And the ones that we've become very •• that are very apparent are the land acquisitions, the 72H's. They also handle redemptions, property management, inventory work and so forth. A lot of those really probably aren't directly related to Planning. And I don't know that they necessarily need Planning involvement. But I think those functions probably would be able to move relatively easily without interference with Planning and so forth. In terms of the new

department, are they logically within an environmental purview, I think from the standpoint of •• here again, Real Estate becomes almost like a round house of, you know, properties coming in and then properties going out; either going out through redemptions. They come in through tax default, go out through redemptions, property sales, 72H's, direct sales. In terms of having some sort of environmental division, department oversight of that, I think that's what the purpose is. I don't speak for the administration directly on that point. I'm more here on the Planning side of it. But that's the logic that I think applies here, is that it's putting it under one basket in the environmental sense.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I guess my •• I just have a general fear. And if you're telling me that you're going to be involved in the process, I have obviously less of a fear. But my fear is as we •• you know, the County moves ahead and we have some very compelling issues in this County, you know, I often speak of affordable housing as an issue that, you know, the County will have to grapple with today and in the future. We're doing •• we seem to be doing well on the preservation side. We're preserving thousands of units •• I mean thousands of acres of land. But we haven't ••• I can't really think of any units of affordable housing that we've been able to make happen. And I see certain pieces of property that are in areas that are on bus routes or even in downtown areas. And, yes, okay, it's important to have open space in those areas, too. But we have a lot of needs to balance. And if everything is looked at from, you know, the perspective of how much open space can we gather, it may be more and more difficult to identify properties that could meet some of these smart growth principals, you know, connect to public transportation, walking to post offices and things like that. That's really what's at the heart of my concern.

MR. ISLES:

And I think that function has to happen. And I think Planning should be involved with that. And I believe it's the intention that that would happen. I think really what the County Executive, here again, I don't speak for him directly, but is to unsaddle Planning with this heavy administrative oversight involvement with Real Estate that the County Executive, I believe, thinks that Planning should do planning and not do line department administration of an administrative agency. And in my discussions with the County Executive and his staff, it's been, we want Planning to do planning; for this County to be available to take on those functions. And it reminds me back in my town days where should a Planning Department have a building department oversight, and there's always debates whether they should or shouldn't.

But it does become a large burden. The Town of Brookhaven's in the process of segmenting their Building Department from Planning starting November 1st just for that exact reason, to free up Planning to be able to do planning.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Ms. Zielinski, do you want to comment on this issue?

MS. ZIELENSKI:
No.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
No. Okay. Legislator Fisher.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:
Legislator Schneiderman, you know that you and I have become very intimately involved in looking at smart growth. And I'm sorry, I must have worded that badly. I saw a lot of snickering.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
That we've become very intimately involved?

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:
Sorry. I'm trying to retract what I said. I'm very sorry. Let me rephrase that. We've been very concerned about smart growth and protecting our open space while encouraging the type of growth that we need in appropriate areas. And I think that's a very important function of the Planning Department. And I know that the Planning Department also has the lead in, for example, how we're using the TDR's in workforce housing, which helps to define where we are encouraging density. And that's certainly the purview of Planning. And that's where it should be. And looking at planning as a department that does have more of an overview and a broader view, I think it does make sense to relieve you of some of those day to day functional duties that would be part of the Real Estate Department. And I suppose that would be the basic •• the basic crux of why we're having this break off and separation. Especially with what we're facing now with workforce housing and open space.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
To me, what you said would make it easy if you used the word Real Estate Department. I think it would be easy if I knew there was a Real Estate Department because then I knew •• I would

know that Jim Morgo for Housing and Economic Development would be lobbying, you know, with his concerns for housing. And I know that Mike Deering with his concerns for the environment would all be going kind of equally to the same person who had department level status. But that's not quite what we're seeing. We're seeing functions coming out of Planning divisions, the housing division, which is now going to Economic Development, we see the Real Estate Division going over to environment. And it seems to be a shrinking of what the Planning Department's purview is. And Planning's got to be one of the number one concerns for this County. It's really •• our future's at stake. And, you know, long range planning is essential as we go through rapid changes. So, it's just kind of a concern. I want to make sure that, you know, it's one thing to say okay, we're easing your burden by taking away your responsibility. It doesn't really jibe for me.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:
But if we buy into the planning, then it becomes a chart; a kind of navigational tool as to where those divisions should be going.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
But if you can't effectuate those planning changes, then, he can say all he wants and dream all he wants, but can't make it reality.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
I think if you think of Real Estate as a service unit that doesn't necessarily make policy and procedure that gets input from all the different agencies, it might make you more comfortable.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
That's what I'd like to believe.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
Yeah. I mean we're certainly ••

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
More functional.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
•• barraged, you know. We can get ••

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
But you will have a new boss.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
Yeah, we get directives. But we would still get directives from the same directions. Pretty much that we do now.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Right.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
I mean I would still expect to hear regularly from Tom. And I do hear regularly from Mr. Deering.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
But I would imagine you'd have to clear things, you know, with your immediate supervisor. And your immediate supervisor would be changing.

MS. ZIELENSKI:
That's true.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Any other questions? Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Okay, Mr. Matthews, I guess Ms. Blumer has arrived. Please, panel type set up would probably work better here. Is the microphone turned on?

MS. BLUMER:
Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Yes. Yes, it certainly is. It's nice to see you. I had first Mr. Broege, now Ms. Blumer. I have a

lot of my neighbors here today.

MS. BLUMER:

Yes, that's right. Well, my name is Karen Blumer, gentlemen and Vivian. Nice to see you today. I'm usually here for open space issues and land issues. Today I'm here •• I've changed my hat. I'm here for a marine environment issue. It's no different in the sense that it's really for the marine •• for restoration of the marine environment particularly for the Great South Bay. You all have copies. This is a proposal which we're hoping that you will consider and work into the budget for hard shell clam and marine habitat restoration within the Great South Bay. And the unique part of this proposal is using an early larval release program with the unusual mobile marine hatchery. As many of you know, the condition of the bays are rather depauperate especially in the Great South Bay. I've also submitted a report from the Nature Conservancy, which you may or may not have seen before. In the 1970's and '80's the population of clams was close to a 1,700,000. In 2000 they have been reduced to practically non•existent. As you may know in the 13,000 acres that the Nature Conservancy has inherited from Bluepoints, there is barely a clam out there. So, we're looking at a very serious situation. The dearth of the clams, as you probably know clams filter a lot of the pollution and elements out of water. So, we are lacking this incredible component of the bay, both clams and other bivalves. Let's see. Besides just their water filtering quality, clams and other bivalves are considered a pioneer species in that they provide a lot of food in their larval stages for other elements of a consortium of species. So, they really are providing a basis for the health of the entire ecosystem.

So until this time, the classic attempts to reestablish clams and other bivalves has been by introducing clams at a later stage. And that's either as adult clams as is being done by the Nature Conservancy in the Bluepoint project or a little bit smaller as thumbnail size juveniles. And very often they get knocked off by predators. This project, however, proposes introducing clams at an earlier stage than that. And it's just before •• their very micro •• you can barely see them. It's just before the sticky appendage is developed. And that's called the byssal plantigrade. I'm sorry to load you up with too many terms. I've had to learn these myself. And that stage is approximately seven to ten days after spawning. The introduction of this early stage has actually routinely been used over decades by individual bay men and small businesses, but it has rarely, or we'd say never, been considered by larger operations such as those that we feel will be needed to restore an area as vast and clamless as the greater part of the Great South Bay. One reason for this is the placement and distribution of huge quantities of clam larvae in desirable places has been difficult or impossible. Additionally the quantity of

larvae that can be produced that is required has been limited. Before this the technology to produce this quantity and deliver it to selective portions of the Bay just hasn't existed.

The uniqueness of the proposal before this committee resides in a small 57 foot retired oil tanker thoroughly cleaned up and retrofitted to become a "marine mobile hatchery". Its six tank capacity, which is 4,000 gallons each, provides spawning and a protective devise and mobility to raise 24,000 gallons of larvae, which would be nutured in those tanks and released judiciously within the bay from the mobile hatchery at places that would have to be agreed upon. This is a numbers game. Rather than the routine, one billion larvae a day that can normally be produced on the hatchery vessel, the new additional technology from this boat can produce an order of magnitude more. It's closer to 50 or more billion quantities. Now to those, you know, to us lay people, who knows, a thousand or a million or a billion; but this is a large quantity. This accompanying technology involves an apparatus called a bottom conversion vessel, which Paul Matthews and Russell
Davis, who are with me, they're knowledgeable about the technology, will explain and then take some of your questions if you have them. Russell has developed this •• he's an agricultural economist, an agriculture engineer. The flexibility and ability to deliver massive amounts of larvae to selected areas of the bay is a significant aspect of this new technology. An attached sheet detailing some aspects of the BC vessel is provided. You all have that.

In short, the excess billions of larvae that can be produced and collected above the spawning sanctuary can be captured and sifted together and carried to other desired locations within the Great South Bay. An additional, and really for me as an ecologist highly significant aspect of this proposal, involves the use of local native Great South Bay clams; thereby preserving the local genotypes in the bay, as an alternative to importing clams, which is now done from other parts of the northeastern seaboard. And it's only because of the quantity that can be produced with this method that that would be allowed or possible because we don't have a huge population already of native clams.

There is support from the scientific community and various agencies already for this project. Regarding the final result on where work would be done will really be a result of discussions and further agreements with many stakeholders. The project has already received current great interest from various individuals and groups working in the Great South Bay. We've entered into discussions and a commitment with Jeff Kassner from the Town of Brookhaven regarding the practical supplying of quantities of larvae proposed for three of the town's spawner

sanctuaries. Because the quantification of this process is very difficult, we're really quite excited and happy that Dr. Robert Cerrato from Stony Brook Marine Sciences Center has expressed interest for a coordinated research effort and already has suggested some very promising and novel •• well, actually rather very brilliant, actually, aspects of the study. Other interest has come from Dr. Robert Nuzzi from Suffolk County Department of Health, the Office of Ecology, who has already for decades monitored the water quality in the Great South Bay and welcomes this opportunity to coordinate data with the project's ongoing work.

Other support has come either in the form of our early discussions or letters from the Blue Points Council, the Nature Conservancy, Dr. Chris Gobler of Southampton College Marine Studies Program, the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council, DOS, the Department of State and Erin Crotty, Commissioner of New York State DEC. Last, of course, but not least we have preliminary •• we've done preliminary talks and early interest from Mike Deering for the County Executive's Office, discussions which we hope to continue.

As to the budget and the product that would be produced, again, that would finally be a result of coordinated discussions. But at this stage we're proposing to guaranty a delivery of a minimum of twenty billion clam larvae per season, which lasts from March to October at one spawner sanctuary site to be chosen. The realty is that the production and delivery is expected to be far greater than this promise even though this promise is traditionally much larger than is usually given. The project hopes to have more sites than one. More sites will produce greater amounts of larvae, more than the twenty million guaranteed.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

It says billion above, and then •• I'm assuming it's billion quantity.

MS. BLUMER:

Oh, billion, yes. Did I put million? Oh, yeah, that's an error. I'm sorry. It would be billion.

Regarding the requested budget, we're requesting an amount of 300,000 annually, which cover all costs of personnel, spawning equipment, installation of new technology and operations costs. The request is for a three•year commitment to see the clams from spawn to adult stage. In summary, the uniqueness of this proposal resides in the various aspects of a mobile hatchery, the increased production using the BC vessel, an unprecedented quantity of clam spawn produced which would be used to produce the clams as well as provide food for predators and building up the entire habitat ecologically, and the use of the local genotype Native Great South Bay clams for restoration purposes. We feel Suffolk County in its

Legislature has never been shy about initiating unique projects and programs, many of national importance. We're proposing that this project be added to that list of initiatives to bring the bays back to life. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Thank you. Legislator Schneiderman.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
The boat you already have; is that correct?

MS. BLUMER:
Yes. Actually Paul can address that.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
And it can be fitted for these purposes?

MR. MATTHEWS:
We're in the process of doing that now.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
And the area where you are looking to release, is it a protected area? Or can anybody go in there and •• you know, assuming the clams have matured, which I'm going to get to in my next question, but who can go there and actually harvest the clams?

MR. MATTHEWS:
Well, we are interested in having that resource if it did come to be very successful to be managed.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
So, it would be off limits for awhile, right, to allow these things to go into second generation?

MS. BLUMER:
It would really depend upon who owned that bay bottom and who was managing it. For example, the Town of Brookhaven manages certain parts. And they have an agreement with the Blue Points Council. So, it would depend really on where this work ended up being done. Right now the only real, you know, concrete agreement has been with the Town of Brookhaven. And that would be in the marine •• their sanctuaries that they already have established. And we're hoping because Blue Points property is a, you know, open slate. You

know, it's wonderful for research purposes as well as restoration; that we'll be able to work out some areas that TNC is not doing their implantation in now.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Let me ask one more question about the project and then I have a question about the funding. You're proposing to release these •• the clams at a very, very early stage. I have a little bit of experience because we •• when I was Supervisor of East Hampton, we managed a shellfish hatchery out in Montauk. And we had •• we changed the whole program to allow for the clams to be released at a much, much later period because the smaller we let them out, the higher the predation rate. The green crabs were just literally •• and other things •• just gobbling up the clams. And so we were seeing, you know, extraordinary mortality rate. And we found that by over•wintering them and getting them to a larger size, they •• the survival rate was much higher. So, I'm just questioning a little bit about the methodology here and whether you're just going to be putting all this nourishment into the bays, all these clams for other things to eat.

MS. BLUMER:

Okay, do you want to answer that?

MR. MATTHEWS:

Well, there certainly is an aspect of that. And the idea is to provide enough of a larval swarm so that you can feed the predators and have an acceptable survival rate of maybe 1% or something like that. Even with that type of rate, we would start to win. And the reason for releasing them at that period where they have the sticky appendages because this is when they set into the environmental normally in the course of their life cycle. So, it really is mimicking nature and helping the natural process of clam propagation at a very basic level. And we concentrate those swarms so that they survive almost 100% through that first seven days. And then they release before they want to stick into the environment. In this respect, this is very similar or exactly similar to current hatchery procedures where they have tremendous success rates within the hatchery for the first week.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Onto the funding, some of these operations, as you know, are commercial operations and don't ask the County or other municipal type of agencies for funding. There is a similar project that is being funded with the scallops. It's a quite expensive project. It's a similar idea of an overwhelming amount placed into an area with the hope that the •• they'll be enough there for

further propagation. You're looking for funding out of the main budget. That funding comes from, I think, the quarter penny money. I think you have to make •• and I'm not quite familiar with the process •• maybe somebody from BRO or another colleague on the Legislature can tell me. I think you make an application. There's probably some kind of advisory committee that deals with that. But I would think that would be the first place to go is towards that quarter penny money. Does BRO have any comments?

MR. REINHEIMER:
I'm not quite sure, but I'll have somebody come up here and check. I'll get an answer for you in a minute.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
Yeah, there's a section of that quarter percent that's reserved for water quality type of projects.

MR. REINHEIMER:
I'm not sure if it meets that definition, but we'll have Kevin Duffy check that.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Okay, well, that was going to be exactly my question, from what funding source was the scallop project money drawn out of.

MR. REINHEIMER:
That was funded previously?

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:
Yes. This was a project that we undertook just recently.

MR. REINHEIMER:
If it was through Cornell, it was probably through the general fund.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:
You guys sent out a big press release on it.

MR. ZWIRN:
It was quarter percent.

MS. BLUMER:

It was quarter percent.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The decision, I think, was made during the year to do that.

MR. ZWIRN:

That's correct.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right. So, we'll get that answer. Now, there's nothing in the County Executive's budget •• there's no funding appropriated for this project; right?

MR. MATTHEWS:

No.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Right. The Cornell project was 477, water protection. And Kevin Duffy will be here in a minute and be able to answer whether this may meet the definitions of 477 account.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Well, I mean that's something we could address, you know, we can look closer at the project and see if it would •• I don't know if we could make that determination right here and now as you sit here, but that is certainly an avenue to pursue in that a similar project was funded through the 477.

MS. BLUMER:

I think it was also this 475. I think there was a small part from a different section of the budget.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I mean it sounds like a noble project. It sounds like a promising project. I'm concerned a little bit about taking the money from the general operating fund when it may be better placed out of the quarter penny.

MS. BLUMER:

Yeah, it was transferred from one section to Cornell under the quarter percent

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

I can't hear you. What did you say?

MS. BLUMER:

It was transferred from one section of the county money. And it was the quarter percent and I think one other small fund to Cornell to carry the scallop project out.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

I have a question.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Mr. Duffy, did you want to add to whether or confirm whether a project of this type which is basically to introduce large amounts of clam larvae into Great South Bay particular area would •• could potentially qualify under the quarter penny water quality funds?

MR. DUFFY:

Well, my understanding of how the program works is that although there's a committee that had been established by the County Executive to make recommendations to the Legislature, it has always been the position of the Legislature that that committee is merely advisory. And if the Legislature made a determination that a particular project would satisfy the requirements of water quality, they could do it. The only thing I would suggest •• that was Paul Sabatino's interpretation of the Legislation. I believe Mea Knapp's interpretation is similar but I would check it with her when she's available.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So a funding request under that program could come in at any time during the year; is that correct?

MR. DUFFY:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Legislator Viloria•Fisher.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

Mr. Duffy answered the question that I had.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Okay, very good. This is something obviously we will revisit. You know, this is just •• obviously, you know, this is just the budget hearings. So, we have your information and we'll be in touch. And obviously this is something that warrants another look. And as has been discussed can be addressed by the Legislature at any time throughout the year. So, we will certainly take another look at it. Thank you for your time today. Do you have anything else you wish to add before you go?

MS. BLUMER:

No. We'll continue or discussions with other people. So, you know, definitely we'll find out from you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Thank you.

MS. BLUMER:

Thank you very much. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

Those are all of our cards. Does anyone else •• anyone else wish to be heard today before we close the public portion? Seeing no one, public portion is closed.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I think we're adjourned.

CHAIRMAN LOSQUADRO:

I believe that is all that's before us today. Thank you.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

Are you a for•profit?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The question is from Legislator Viloria•Fisher for Mr. Matthews, I think, concerning the marine

mobile hatchery and whether it is a not•for•profit or a for•profit operation.

MR. MATTHEWS:

We had originally intended to operate as a not•for•profit. Currently the status is we haven't met requirements for that. So, my accountant tells me that it can go either way. I think it's safer to say it's just a regular corporation for the time being.

LEG. VILORIA•FISHER:

Okay. Thank you.

(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:29 PM)