

**ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE**

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

MINUTES

A special joint meeting of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee and Parks & Recreation 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 October 23, 2007 to discuss the matter of the Operating Budget.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

D.P.O. Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, Chairperson of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee/Vice Chair of Parks & Recreation
Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, Chairperson of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Kate Browning, member of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Lou D'Amaro, Vice Chair of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee
Leg. John M. Kennedy, Jr., member of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

William J. Lindsay, Presiding Officer
Lance Reinheimer, Assistant Director of Budget Review Office
Kevin Duffy, Budget Review Office
Jill Moss, Budget Review Office
Ben Zwirn, Assistant Deputy County Executive
Allen Kovesdy, Budget Office, County Executive
Brian Bielanski, County Executive's Office
Commissioner Carrie Meek-Gallagher, Department of Environment & Energy
Tracy Bellone, Acting Commissioner of Parks Department
John Pavacic, Deputy Commissioner of Parks Department
Chris Kent, Director of Real Property Acquisition and Management
Karen Summers-Solinas, Senior Accountant of Parks Department
Fran Siems, Legislative Aide
Debra Alloncius, AME Legislative Director
Wallace Broege, Director of the SC Historical Society
Thomas B. Williams, Executive Director Cornell Cooperative Extension
Marguerite A. Smith, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Michael White, Executive Director of the Long Island Regional Planning Board
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus, Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Denise Weaver, Legislative Aide

(THE MEETING COMMENCED AT 1:47 PM)

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Good afternoon. I would like to start the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Vilorina-Fisher.

SALUTATION

I have one card, Wallace Broege, yes.

PUBLIC PORTION

MR. BROEGE:

Yes. Just one? Okay.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Yes.

MR. BROEGE:

Okay. Thank you. My name is Wallace Broege. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Historical Society. And I'm here to speak about our 2008 budget request and the County Executive's recommended budget.

The Legislature's Budget Review Office has evaluated our request in the impact of the recommended level of funding. The review, I think, was very thorough and fair and you can find it on page 335 and 336 of their report to you. There is a brief summary on page 21, also.

The Historical Society's request for 2008 was with \$275,000. That was an increase of \$20,000 over the 2007 adopted budget. The County Executive's recommended level of funding is \$181,030 or just shy of \$74,000 less than we received in 2007 and \$93,970 less than we requested for 2008.

Faced with a staggering budget of, pardon me, a staggering deficit of almost \$74,000, the Historical Society has only two options really. One would be to reduce the modest endowment in order to avoid devastating the Society's programs because of lost staff. The other option is to cut the budget and have a loss of probably at least five part-time staff members and reduce the time that another staff member works.

The first option places the Historical Society behind the proverbial eight ball by endangering its financial base and depriving it of future growth and financial stability. The second option means an immediate cut in staff, reduced public hours for the museum and library. And by the way, this year for the first time in several years we were able to increase the hours that the museum was open to five days a week. We'd also have to close the Weather Vane Gift Shop, which actually earns money for the Historical Society. We'd cancel an ambitious schedule of public programs and exhibitions that we're planning for 2008. And basically we would have to eliminate the public relations campaign that we began in 2007.

The funding that the Legislature added to our budget in 2007 allowed us to have an overall increase in programs and exhibitions coupled with renewed public relations efforts and an increase in hours that the museum was open. We were able to increase public awareness of the Suffolk County Historical Society and the treasures that it holds for the public.

To increase the funding demonstrated a real commitment on the part of the Legislature to stabilize this organization and help it to develop to its full potential. The package of material that I've distributed to you this afternoon contains some of the new materials we've been able to develop and also lists some of the programs that we've been able to add with that increased funding. By providing an additional \$930,970 to the County Executive's recommended budget, you'll keep the Historical Society on a steady course, keep it financially stable and maintain all of our current programs. The increase in funding would allow us to have two part-time people work a little bit more each week. There is no funding in that request to add staff.

We appreciate your interest and your support. Members of the Legislature have been very fair to us and kind. And we appreciate that. And I hope that you'll be able to seriously consider this request to reinstate that funding.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

MR. BROEGE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you.

MR. BROEGE:

If you have any questions I'll try and answer them at this point or --

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

I don't see any questions.

MR. BROEGE:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you. Thank you for the brochure also.

MR. BROEGE:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to come today.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

You're quite welcome. Is there anybody else that would like to address the Legislators for the public hearings? Tracy, did you want to speak at all? Did you want to come up and tell us how happy you are with the budget?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Good afternoon. I just want to take this opportunity to introduce to you John Pavacic. He's the new Deputy Commissioner for the Parks Department. He's also the County Executive's candidate for Commissioner.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Hello, John.

MR. PAVACIC:

How do you do?

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Maybe John can tell us how much he likes the budget.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

He started yesterday, we'll give him a quick overview. Generally, happy with the budget. I do -- we do have some concerns just about some of the BRO recommendations to abolish some of the positions. They did make a recommendation to abolish the Director of Management and Research; we understand that. It's the one vacant Account Clerk Typist position. As you can see in the Budget Review's Office recommendation, they had some concerns about accounting practices and posting information to the IFMS system. We need more employees to do that, not less. And even though we'll be getting another -- in the budget recommendations we'll be getting an accountant, we would like to try to retain that position as well. We do need --

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

What was that position?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

It's the one vacant Account Clerk Typist grade 11 position. We would hope to retain that position as well.

The other item that they did recommend was to transfer the -- I'm sorry, to transfer from the 477 line two employees back to the Labor Department. As you know, Parks continues to acquire land. And we need employees to, you know, go to those properties, properly fence them, post them, do clean ups of polluted land so we would like to retain those positions if possible as well. Outside of that we're very happy with the budget.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

I have a question. In the budget on page 487, it says that the position of -- isn't it? Am I reading it across correctly? The Deputy Commissioner is not recommended in the budget? Am I reading this wrong? It says zero and then it says A and then it says -- I'm just confused about -- it's on page 787.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Oh, 787. It's not recommended that we abolish the Deputy Commissioner's position.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

No, I didn't think so. I'm just confused as to -- oh, is it intergovernmental relations? Am I reading across incorrectly?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I think it's the Director of Management and Research. It's the one above the Deputy Commissioner's title.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Correct.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Now, you just referred to management and research.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I understand the abolishment of that position and we're fine with that. It's the other position that BRO recommended in their recommendation, which was the Account Clerk Typist. They recommended abolishing that vacant title. We would like to retain that and fill that.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And your other issue about moving those budget positions from 477 back to Labor, you know, we've had difficulty with the abuse of the 477 account for salaries that really are not directly responsible for 477 issues. And the breakdown that you gave us really wasn't that clear, but it was clear enough for us to see that they weren't spending the kind of time they should have been spending on stormwater remediation. They were doing signage and fixing sheds and things like that and that's not really what 477 monies are meant for.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

And I understand that you had some concerns with my report. Actually Commissioner Gallagher just provided me with a copy of the report she's providing to you, which was more adequate. We'll go back and do the same for you to justify those positions and make sure that we're complying.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

So if you could just give me another two weeks to put that together, we'll do that.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

We'll take a look at those.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Because that's -- I'm onboard with what Budget Review is saying, that we really shouldn't be abusing that 477 account.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I understand.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. My question is the Account Clerk Typist is in the budget recommended, but BRO has recommended to abolish the position?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

That's correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Is it currently filled?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

It's -- we just terminated the employee in the position.

LEG. D'AMARO:

The employee's been terminated, but the intention is to replace the employee?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. And so it's not like that sat there as a funded vacant position, you actually had someone there.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

She's been out since January on a workmen's comp related issue, but other things happened and she was eventually terminated.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So you went since January without that position filled because the employee was out on Worker's Comp --

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

-- or on some issue.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

And going through medical evaluation procedures.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right, all right.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

And, you know, I have to say that having her out related to the reason why we weren't able to post the numbers as quickly as we should have and what we got criticized in the report.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Now talk about that; there was some criticism. I don't have the report in front of me, but it's posting information to one of your computer systems or what's that about?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

It's posting the information, the revenue that's received from Parks in a more timely fashion to the County's Financial Management System. The problem is we generate so much revenue in our parks, that when the money comes in, and we actually have to spend the time reconciling it to the bank deposit statements from those parks. So in reality we need two people full-time to do that. On top of, you know, the other staff members to handle the other accounting functions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Do you have any read on what the timing is in posting with that position filled as opposed to that position not being filled? What kind of delay is being caused by not having that Account Clerk Typist position filled since January?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I'm just referring to the senior accountant in the accounting unit.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. Well, what's the delay now?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

This is Karen Summers-Solinas.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Hi, Karen.

MS. SUMMERS-SOLINAS:

Hi. Right now because we only have one person doing the daily revenue checks from -- each park at the end of the day submits one closeout worksheet per shift, so per cashier. Some of the parks like Smith Point have 12 for one day. There is currently with this person being out one person checking that, one full-time person and one seasonal person. I just finished reconciling through July for all

the parks.

So we're talking at this point without that person we're at least two-and-a-half, three months behind where we should be in getting the revenues posted into the County system. Last year, we were only -- we were behind because of other reasons, but the process was a lot quicker having that position filled.

LEG. D'AMARO:

What's the ramifications of posting two and three months behind?

MS. SUMMERS-SOLINAS:

The Budget Office cannot do their estimates of how much money is actually coming into the County and neither can BRO.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And if we retain this position and fill it, what are you going to bring the delay down to, just projected?

MS. SUMMERS-SOLINAS:

It should be within a month, you know, the end of each month.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So a 30-day cycle?

MS. SUMMERS-SOLINAS:

30 days, 45 days, yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay, okay. Thank you.

MS. SUMMERS-SOLINAS:

Okay.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Madam Chair?

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Can I ask a follow-up question to Legislator D'Amaro's? Hi, how are you?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Good.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good, good. The collection of fees function is something that goes on in a lot of different departments. And in a prior life we did a lot of this work out in the Clerk's Office where we had tremendous use of reader printers each day with coin deposit. And one of the ways that we stepped away from a very labor intensive function each day was we moved to the swipe cards. Now is there any -- have you ever contemplated or looked at an effort to go ahead and move from what are -- that function that our toll takers or attendants when you enter parks or transaction of change, and instead looked to go ahead and vend the swipe cards and install swipe readers so that we can get away from actually having to count coins and paper?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Absolutely. We've spoken -- as you know two years the County instituted a new point of sale reservation system.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yes.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

We have spoken to the company about eventually going to more of a E-ZPass type card where people would put money on the card and they would use that or a credit card system, you know, accepting more credit cards and reservations on-line through credit cards so there's not that exchange of money at the park.

However, for the past year-and-a-half we've been really getting the system up to meet our services. And I think in the next couple of years we will go towards that. The company knows we're interested in eventually leading to that and they have to develop software and make a proposal to us to go to that. But that's exactly where we want to be.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I would offer you even a step further that if you have an opportunity from Parks go out to the Clerk's Office and take a look at it. The software that we put in was from Debit Tech, that was the vendor. It was relatively nominal as far as the acquisition costs. It was only about 35 or \$40,000 /and this was some seven or eight years ago. And it immediately relieved what was on average two to two-and-a-half hours a day of staff time associated with counting, wrapping change and doing the annual deposit. It moved -- it eliminated much of the difficulty associated with the cash reconciliation at the end of day.

I mean, obviously you still have to make an accomodation, but if the lion's share of your transaction can go through its swipe, you know, your posting is automatic. Your reconciliation and your vending and sale, you know, you have much less actual human interaction, which for a variety of reasons you want to get away from. You eliminate the error. You eliminate -- I mean not that we have, you know, the staff that aren't trusted, but once in a while, you know, selling out of a cigar box, money disappears.

So I would strongly encourage you to go ahead and make that follow-up and make that contact because from a systems perspective I think we should be doing it any place that the County exchanges service and where there's currency that's involved.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Thank you.

LEG. KENNEDY:

That would be my advice.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Thanks.

LEG. KENNEDY:

You're welcome.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

And just as a follow-up I agree with you, Legislator Kennedy, that is of course the way to go in this day and age. I see it might be a little difficult though at Smiths Point with so many different people going unless you can swipe their driver's licenses as they come in, something like that.

LEG. KENNEDY:

E-ZPass.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

We were talking about tying it to the Green Key card and actually having some kind of technology. The company is doing research for us now.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

But does everybody that goes to Smith's Point have to have a Green Key?

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

The don't have to have a Green card. You're not going to get away from cash completely ever.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Yeah.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I mean, because you're going to have tourists that come.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Sure, okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

But for the majority most people do have Green Key cards for the discounted rate.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Sure. Well, it's the way to go. Okay.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Commissioner, you didn't say anything about the -- or maybe you did and I missed it, the recommended reduction in the Organic Maintenance Program that was recommended by the -- by Budget Review of \$99,000. And I was a little puzzled by that Budget Review. So I'd like a little bit of dialogue on that because I know that we're really trying to work hard on our Organic Maintenance Program at our golf courses and I assume that that would be fairly labor intensive.

In the Budget Review document it's page 242, and I don't know what page it is in the budget, but maybe Budget Review could tell us why you're seeking that \$99,000 reduction there? Is it again because you don't feel that it's in compliance with the 477 guidelines?

MR. REINHEIMER:

We wouldn't -- we don't say it's not in compliance. What we're saying is that it's Legislative policy or option, there is two vacant positions in that -- in Parks in the Organic Maintenance Program that if you want to or choose to you can transfer them out of fund 477 into -- our recommendations actually to take those two people, which I think is a labor crew leader and an assistant, transfer them to the Labor Department, to create a Suffolk Works crew out on the east end of the Island where they need that to meet their TNAF goals. It's strictly policy whether you want to keep them in Organic Maintenance or try to throttle back on the number of employees you have being paid out of 477 funds, water quality funds.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And I agree with what you just said. My concern though is that we're focusing more on that organic, you know, organic farming or IPM and other ways of reducing our fertilizer pesticide load. And isn't that going to be more labor intensive? That's -- I guess that's why I was asking the Parks Department to weigh in on that.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

The \$99,000 is for the two positions. It's the salary positions.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

But are those positions important to the Organic Maintenance Program is basically what I'm asking? Or are they doing --

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

No, I --

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

-- laborer work that's not --

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

No.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

-- focused on the organic? I'm just confused about their function.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

I apologize. I testified that we need them for the Organic Maintenance Program.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

You don't.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

We do.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

You do.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

And I would like to retain them. And I know you had some questions about the report I gave and I will give you a detailed list about what each employee is doing.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

But actually in this case my question is more to Budget Review why they would want to cut that because organic maintenance is something that we're ratcheting up. But I guess, Budget Review, you're asking us to take a closer look at that and --

MR. REINHEIMER:

Yeah, that's correct. And to see if it's your policy or interest to keep those positions funded out of 477 or fill another need with those positions. Labor Crew Leader and Assistant Labor Crew Leader are difficult positions to transfer to other departments. The Labor Department does have a need so it's an option for you if want to switch these people over, put them back in the General Fund where they originally came from in the Labor Department or keep them in Organic Maintenance, that's, you know, where the need is.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Well, I'd love to see them in the General Fund because it frees up the money in 477.

MR. REINHEIMER:

And that's our thought, too.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

But I don't want to take them out of Organic Maintenance if they're needed in Organic Maintenance because that's such an important constituent part of 477 and stormwater remediation. So, okay.

ACTING COMMISSIONER BELLONE:

Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON NOWICK:

Thank you. Okay. I will turn this over to Legislator Vioria-Fisher because I think that's all for Parks.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

And I don't know if Legislator Kennedy is aware that this is Mr. John Pavacic, who is the new Deputy Parks Commissioner and who has been recommended by the County Executive to be the new Parks Commissioner.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Greetings and welcome. As a matter of fact I think you're a fellow Smithtown resident?

MR. PAVACIC:

That is correct.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

MR. PAVACIC:

About 18 years.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

It's so warm and fuzzy here for you Smithtown people.

LEG. KENNEDY:

I only got you by about another 12 or 15. North or south of Jericho?

MR. PAVACIC:

North of -- south of Jericho, north of 347.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Bingo, you're my constituent, too, go figure. How are you? But also coming from DEC most recently, as a matter of fact I've done quite a bit work with Commissioner Scully on a few things so I'd be interested to talk with you about my interest going forward. As Madam Chair knows, and as a matter of fact I'm about to speak with Tracy about Blydenburgh Park, it's of great interest to me and actually has many needs. And so being from Smithtown I guess you know it, but I look forward to working with you.

MR. PAVACIC:

Likewise, I'm looking forward to working with you as well.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you. Commissioner, Gallagher. Okay, we're all ears.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

I really am, you know, for the most part happy with the budget. We got almost everything that we requested so there aren't, you know, there aren't a lot of issues. I did want to share with you I prepared a memo in response to a request from BRO detailing all of the currently -- the job duties and projects that are the responsibility of the currently filled 477 positions. I also included in there the projects that would be overseen by the vacant positions because I'm currently hiring for four of those positions. The four that I had mentioned at EPA Committee I thought were most critical I am

currently hiring for. I have a new environmental analyst slated to start November 1st.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Excellent, very good.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

And two very -- a good candidate for environmental projects coordinator and a good candidate for the other environmental analyst. I'm just waiting essentially for Civil Service to qualify. So let me just distribute these.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Now, you know what that -- that leads me to my first question. Because I recall very distinctly you're saying -- you're describing the positions that you needed in the 477 -- under the 477 account to be critical for the working of -- I know that there's a lot of work that you have to do in stormwater remediation water quality. And it puzzles me why the farmland's administrator would have been suggested to be taken from the 477 account. And I agree with Budget Review who doesn't feel it should be out of the 477 account; that it should be in the Division of Real Property Acquisition and Management. And I particularly agree with them on that because of the issues that we've had with farmland development rights acquisitions and the greenhouses and sorting all of that out. And I think it would be very, very important to have a farmland's administrator in that shop working with that.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

I agree and we had actually recommended, Chris and I had recommended in the budget that we submitted that it be put in the General Fund within the Division of Real Property Acquisition and Management. I don't know if Allen wants to address it, but I can only assume that the County Executive to be consistent with the recommended 2007 Operating Budget moved it back to 477 because that's where it was placed. That's where it currently resides.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Oh, okay. So then we're on -- basically on the same page with that. And I certainly concur with Budget Review. I think that that made a lot of sense. And again it's guarding that 477 account so that it's used appropriately.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Right.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Did you have -- you distributed something.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

That's just for your review. It's in response to all the discussions we've been having at EPA Committee and the request of Budget Review Office to detail exactly what work the 477 funded positions in my department are currently doing. And Kevin Duffy assures me that I've complied with his request and hopefully you'll find it sufficient information. But if you have any additional questions, I'd be happy to answer them. And as soon as I have these new staffers on board I will be bringing them to committee to meet all of you.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

I did just want Chris to briefly address one of the other comments. We already got to one under the Farmland Administration, but the other comment that BRO had made was with regard to the sale of Brownfield tax liens.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, good because that was a little confusing, Chris, I'm glad you're going to talk about that because I was -- as I read the budget and then Budget Review and I read about the tax liens and the lis pendens and all of that, it got a little confusing. Thank you.

MR. KENT:

Well, the lis pendens wasn't really with reference to the Brownfield; that was with reference to the surplus auction.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Auction, right.

MR. KENT:

That lis pendens was lifted, which allowed us to close on the parcels that were sold at auction in 2004. We have now closed upon all the parcels that will be closed upon. And we realized \$3,351,000 from the sale of lands from that auction. And that money has been remitted to the Suffolk County Treasurer. We won't be realizing anymore monies from that auction. The estimate for lands --

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Chris, is that reflected in the budget that we have?

MR. KENT:

The original estimate for 2007 was -- or the original budgeted amount was 5.5 million, which was reduced down to 3.3 million in the estimated 2007 budget.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

So then it's very close to what we wound up with.

MR. KENT:

Right. We have 3,351,000.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

MR. KENT:

We still have a couple of parcels left to do on direct sales, which we'll realize some money from.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So go ahead, Chris, you wanted to talk about the Brownfields.

MR. KENT:

So on the Brownfields I did want to address the comment in the report about the monies that we're realizing this year and the estimate for next year. We did have a Brownfield auction on August 15th. From that auction we will probably realize in 2007, \$922,000. The estimate for 2007 was revised to 905,000 so I believe we will realize that amount of money.

For 2008, the Budget Review Office had stated that they thought it was optimistic for 500,000 to be included within the 2008 budget. But just since the Legislature recently adopted the Brownfield list for the next Brownfield auction, the list of parcels to be included within the next Brownfield auction, we have already had one property redeemed. And we have two others that are in active negotiations to be settled and removed from the list of properties to be included within the Brownfield auction. And I -- that is a direct result, I believe, of listing it in the resolution to be auctioned off, to have the lien auctioned off. And those two liens alone, which we will realize the monies in 2008 exceed the \$500,000 that we're estimating to that -- they we have included in the 2008 budget as revenues from the sale of Brownfield auction -- Brownfield tax liens.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Of course, subject to the Legislature approving the sale of the tax liens.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So how many are left on the list?

MR. KENT:

Well, right now I have 17 tax parcels that will be sold as 11 assembled parcels. But if those two that are in settlement are taken off we'll be left with nine parcels that will be included, but that will be -- 11 tax liens will be included in the sale of Brownfields.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And that sale is scheduled for '07, but realized in '08 proceeds?

MR. KENT:

We have aggressively scheduled it right now for somewhere between December 12th and December 17th, but I haven't put the brochure out yet. And with the advertisement we need at least two months lead time. So I'm hoping to get it out within the next couple of weeks. Maybe we have it done in December. If not, it can be done in January and we would still realize the monies in 2008.

But on the parcels that we're reaching settlement on, we will definitely realize that money in 2008. We'll have to realize the money -- we'll have to have an agreement and some deposit prior to the auction for us to remove the parcels from the auction.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

And the resolution would come -- would be before us at the next meeting for those two parcels?

MR. KENT:

No.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

The ones that you've settled on?

MR. KENT:

One resolution has been tabled in committee to remove it, but we advise the attorney who represents that property owner that we're not going to remove it from the auction list until there's a settlement agreement in place and a deposit of 20% on account.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Well, you'll be seeing that in Ways and Means.

LEG. D'AMARO:

We did.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, well it's coming up, yeah.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Any other questions? Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Could you just fill us in on the Yaphank Lake, what's happened recently? There's some --

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

You'll be seeing in December there will be a resolution before the Legislature, it will go through obviously CEQ and EPA Committee first, but there was at the September 26th meeting of the Water Quality Review Committee a project recommended to -- well, for invasive species restoration, watershed management and a pilot project, both at upper and lower lake in Patchogue; Canaan Lake in Patchogue. So there were two separate applications and we recommended they be combined to, you know, for economies of scale, that if you're looking at removing aquatic invasive species in all those places, you should do it as one large project. So \$250,000 was the project amount and we'll be putting forward a resolution to the Legislature in December, after you get through the Operating Budget.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Any other questions? Thank you very much. Is there anyone in the audience who wishes to speak? Yes, Mr. Isles, come on up. And just before you begin to speak, Tom, I just -- Ben, can I just ask you for -- you heard the discussion about the farmland administrator?

MR. ZWIRN:

Right.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

And I just want to be, you know, give you the opportunity to state the case, you know, from the County Executive on that.

MR. ZWIRN:

My understanding is that I think historically it has been there; it has not been a filled position. Otherwise you have to add that money back to the General Fund and pay for it out of that.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

MR. ZWIRN:

And the Legislature has that option.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. But you understand our reluctance because we don't see that as a 477 function.

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes, I do.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. All right. Thank you. Mr. Isles, where did you go?

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Here I am.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

I thought you were miffed and left.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Not at all. Always defer to Mr. Zwirn. Thank you very much. I just have one comment to bring to

your attention on the Budget Review Office report that specifically relates to the Planning Division. The overall review is certainly fine. We have no quarrel with most of the points that are --

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Do you have the page on that, Tom, so I can find it easily?

DIRECTOR ISLES:

-- expressed. Yes, 244 according to Kevin.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

The only point I wanted to bring to your attention is regarding a position within the Planning Department that has been designated to assist with the oversight and administration of some of the Cornell Cooperative Extension functions. This is on the second page, which I guess is page 245.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm looking right at it.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

There's a first bullet under Cornell Cooperative Extension oversight that deals with the issue of a staff position to conduct this function.

This was a new function that was transferred to the Planning Department in this budget year to consolidate the -- not only the budgetary aspects of review of CCE vouchers and so forth, but also performance review and specifically having the Planning Department involved in review of programs in terms of have they achieved the objectives of the Legislature, of the Executive and so forth, the program efficiency and so forth.

What we found in operating that program this year is that we needed assistance to do that. And we did put into the 2008 budget request to the County Executive position of Contracts Technician to help us with that. It was not a skill we really had in the department. The County Executive has suggested a modification of that title to Assistant Economist, which I agree with. And we've actually moved ahead with that with the Executive Office in actually filling that position now since we have the need now and we'd like to continue that obviously in into next year as well.

But the way we were able to accomplish that this year was by earmarking a vacant position, which was originally a Senior Planner position that I downgraded to a Planner position upon the retirement of an employee. It is suggested that since we now have the Assistant Economist on board that we don't need to now create this extra position.

I understand that a little bit of this is kind of shifting around. And it's a little confusing even to me at times, but fundamentally what I would ask for is to maintain status quo in terms of the Planning Department positions, if we were to continue doing what we are doing and then do the additional functions with Cornell Cooperative Extension.

So therefore, I'd respectfully request that the position that was put into our budget and recommended by the County Executive in his budget of the position of Planner be retained and not be eliminated. This vacancy was created by a retirement; here again, I downgraded to a lower entry level or end position, saving some money. That would be the only, here again, relating to the Planning Division staffing would be to instead of eliminating that position keep that position in place. Certainly if I'm misunderstanding anything from Budget Review, certainly I'm open to any clarification of my position on that one.

The only other point I wanted to the make out to you too is that within the BRO review of the Planning Department budget there are comments relating to the Long Island Regional Planning

Board. Michael White is here today to address you on that, certainly to the extent that I can I'm certainly happy to do as well. And in addition, Tom Williams, from Cornell is also here today as the Executive Director, if there are any questions that certainly require his attention as well. And I thank you for your consideration.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Tom, we do have a question. But before we get to the question -- in fact there are a few questions.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Sure.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

I'd like Budget Review to comment on your recommendations.

MR. DUFFY:

In our report on page 245 it was our opinion that the Contracts Technician was the more appropriate title. We disagreed with the idea of having an Assistant Economist because we did not see how that related to the functions that the person would be doing. It was our understanding based upon conversations with Mr. Isles that the Planner position had been earmarked to an Assistant Economist and someone was moved to another department to fill that position. Based upon that, we felt that the recommended budget, which creates an additional Assistant Economist, that position was now unnecessary. That's why we recommended abolishing it.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. That's what I read in what you had said. Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yes, Director Isles, did you want to respond to that just very briefly? And then I have a question.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Thank you.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Certainly there's no intention to have two Assistant Economists and I would agree that. Just so long as in the shuffling of all the positions and the earmarks that the Planner position that we did earmark for this Assistant Economist is restored next year. Just keeping us status quo, not asking for anything in addition to what we've asked for.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

That's what's confusing me because Budget Review is saying that you're calling that Assistant Economist and you're calling it a planning -- a Planner position so which -- what's the title that you're using?

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Okay. We put in for the Contracts Technician for 2008.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

The County Executive in his budget has put in for an Assistant Economist, which is a slightly higher grade position and I agree with that position because it's someone who can do the work for Cornell

Cooperative Extension oversight, but also provide other assistance to the department relating to economic matters.

So, the request in the 2008 budget for a Contract Technician is now an Assistant Economist. We now have that Assistant Economist in 2007. How do we do that? We took one of our other vacant positions -- we have three vacant professional positions in the department, earmarked that in order to allow the Assistant Economist to start now because the work is here now and we need the help now. And I appreciate that from the Executive Office to then move forward.

So, the only point I wanted to make is, and hopefully I'm being clear, and my reading of the budget then is that the Assistant Economist would remain in position in 2008 just so we don't lose the position. We'd have to somehow -- since we earmarked the Planner position, we somehow have to get that back in my opinion in order to keep the Planning Department whole going into next year. And here again, I will be happy to go over this with Budget Review and the Budget Office in terms of just going through it line by line, which I haven't had a chance to do right now to make sure it's whole. But that's my understanding of it. I just wanted to get it on the record. And certainly I appreciate the opportunity to clarify it at this point, Mr. D'Amaro.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

No, I don't have a question.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

I do have another question about the Contract Technician. We know that there has been a problem throughout the County with contract agencies and the execution of contracts. And when I saw this, my reading was that it was a good idea to have a Contract Technician because of the MOU that was recently signed between the County and Cornell Cooperative Extension and that a Contract Technician would be the appropriate person to help to expedite those and perhaps shepherd them through the processes. Am I in correct in assuming that that would be the role of this person?

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Yes and I think that is correct. But I think the Assistant Economist can do that and also take on the broader review of the CCE matters as well. And then beyond that, whatever potential other assistance they can provide to the department is certainly -- that is something we do and it would tie into that. So in a certain way to me it seems like a little bit of a better fit because it has the contracts administration, it also has the -- somebody with the experience and education to do that performance evaluation to help the Planning Department with that and then to provide general professional support to the department.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

What's the difference in grade between the two positions?

MR. DUFFY:

The Contracts Technician is a grade 15. The Assistant Economist is a grade 21.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Right.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. It's only right in front of me.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Me, too.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Sorry. Okay. So we have a grade difference of six. And with the number of contracts that we have with Cornell Cooperative and the time that it takes to execute these contracts, you don't think that would keep a person busy full-time?

DIRECTOR ISLES:

I think it may very well. And in fact our experience this year is it's taken an extensive amount of time from our Deputy Director, Dan Gulizio, who's been doing the contract administration and this year perhaps it's a little bit different because there's been a total revamping of the MOA, the memorandum of agreement. There are I think and I can ask Dan to come up something like 19 separate contracts with Cornell.

So it is taking a tremendous amount of time. And it's taking time quite frankly away from projects that we've been mandated to do and functions we're mandated to do so it has been a real difficulty in a very small department. So the solutions have been very helpful to get us ahead of that. The Assistant Economist we do have is only on board a couple of weeks at this point. She is working full-time on this and I expect that will be the case for some time. And that may be the case going forward all the time, especially when you consider the performance review has to be done.

But as with the other Planning Department professional staff, there's a lot of cross pollination that goes on that, you know, Jim Bagg advises DeWitt Davies on his agriculture project as it relates to SEQRA, Andy Freleng weighs in on the regulatory matters. It's part of how we function as an interdisciplinary department. I would hope that she would be able -- the Economist would also be able contribute to the general functioning and well being of the office in that manner as well.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Any other questions? Thank you, Tom.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

I believe, Mr. White, is here --

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes, I saw him.

DIRECTOR ISLES:

-- would like speak to you. Okay. Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Mike, come on up. Thank you for coming.

MR. WHITE:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Can you share with us your comments on this?

MR. WHITE:

Absolutely. Thank you. And I welcome the opportunity to address the committee once again. I want to start off by saying I'm here to support the budget as proposed by the County Executive. I clearly believe that it represents appropriate incremental increase in supporting the Long Island Regional Planning Board and regional planning for Long Island. And we are also pursuing a similar incremental increase in Nassau County as well since we are working with both Counties.

I think the manner in which it's presented in the budget is also appropriate, but I specifically want to address some of the issues raised by the Budget Review Office. And I think it really requires clarification from what I've read.

First off, with respect to the references to resolution 636-2005, and the notion that there's somehow related a limitation on funding, I think is absolutely misguided since that resolution has no force and effect.

While this Legislature adopted that resolution, it only has force and effect if Nassau County had done the same. And we now they haven't done the same. So that resolution is not in play. A reference to any funding limitation with respect to that, again, I think should be removed as it is misguided.

Similarly with respect to the reference to resolution 1924-2007, which is a resolution that's presently pending before this committee and it's indeed tabled, and on that note I look forward to working with the committee and the full Legislature so we can address the concerns and ultimately move forward with legislation that will provide us a reasonable planning council status pursuant to the general municipal law.

However, indeed the same issue that I mentioned with respect to the 2005 resolution since that resolution is still tabled in committee may or may not pass, and I hope it does, a reference to limitation on funding pursuant to that resolution is similarly misguided in terms of this 2008 budget.

Finally -- and so what is correct, though, is the Budget Review Office states that we are indeed operating under 1965 ordinance established and adopted by both Counties. That's where we are today. And, of course, we're working to change that. But with that said, I, as a final note, must take exception to the notion that the Long Island Regional Planning Board does not have the authority to hire an Executive Director, because they did. I am indeed the Executive Director. I was appointed as such through a resolution of the Long Island Regional Planning Board. And by the way, I believe, Lee Koppelman, was the Executive Director of the Long Island Regional Planning Board for decades before me.

So I really want to provide that by way of clarification, but I think really most importantly end my message that I think that the way in, which the numbers are presented for further support in the 2008 budget for the Long Island Regional Planning Board is most appropriate and again represents an appropriate and fair incremental increase in support for the Long Island Regional Planning Board.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Any questions? Okay, I have a little question.

MR. WHITE:

Sure.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Because as you said we tabled the resolution. I'm trying to see which resolution's the right -- the number 36 -- no that's 1965. Well, we tabled one of the resolutions in my committee.

MR. WHITE:

1924-2007, I think.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

1924, correct. Now the way you're hired is the board hires the Director; correct?

MR. WHITE:

That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

And the remuneration comes from both Counties.

MR. WHITE:

Well, yes.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

But the check is cut by Suffolk.

MR. WHITE:

That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. How does --

MR. WHITE:

I am indeed an employee of Suffolk right now.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

MR. WHITE:

Rather than dividing me between two Counties, I'm employed by the County of Suffolk.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

When we do pass 1924, will that change?

MR. WHITE:

Ultimately when the resolution to provide for the Regional Planning Council is adopted and we are effectively re-charted as a Regional Planning Council pursuant to the general municipal law, the Regional Planning Board -- the Regional Planning Council at that time, I think, would more likely resemble a contract agency to both Counties in which case it will indeed at that time have its own payroll, its own enterprise in terms of employing people including the Executive Director.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

But at this point in time with your being an employee of Suffolk County, then I know that sometimes there are difficulties in one municipality putting money into the budget of another municipality. How does that work with -- Nassau puts money into the Suffolk County budget, they contribute to this council?

MR. WHITE:

Indeed the way it is working is that Suffolk is paying for some things, Nassau County is paying for other things. But indeed every dollar that we spend really goes through both comptrollers.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Any other questions? Michael -- oh, go ahead, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But the overall comment is that you're satisfied with the budget as recommended by the County Executive?

MR. WHITE:

That's correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And you certainly feel that the way you were hired was appropriate and proper and more importantly legal?

MR. WHITE:

Correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay.

MR. WHITE:

And I don't want to give a legal opinion, but I certainly believe it is, I hope it is since I've been doing the job for seven months.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you very much for coming and sharing your opinions.

MR. WHITE:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON VILORIA-FISHER:

There are no other questions? Is there anyone who's in the audience who wishes to make any comments about any of the different departments or divisions that we've discussed today? Okay, there being none, I make a motion to adjourn.

**(THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:36 PM)
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