

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE
ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A special joint meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee and the Environment, Planning & Agriculture 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 19, 2010 to discuss the matter of the Capital Budget.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Lynne C. Nowick, Chairwoman of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Wayne R. Horsley, member of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Tom Barraga, member of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Ricardo Montano, member of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Steven H. Stern, member of the Parks & Recreation Committee
Leg. Vivian Vilorio-Fisher, Chairwoman of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee
Leg. Lou D'Amaro, Vice Chair of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Presiding Officer William J. Lindsay
Leg. DuWayne Gregory, Fifteenth District
Gail Vizzini, Director of the Budget Review Office
Jill Moss, BRO
Laura Halloran, BRO
Craig Freas, BRO
Joe Muncey, BRO
Joe Montouri, Commissioner of the Parks Department
Michael White, Long Island Regional Planning Council
Carrie-Meek Gallagher, Commissioner Department of Environment & Energy
Tom Isles, Director of Planning
Dot Kerrigan, AME
Dale Moyer, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Carol Ghiorso-Hart, Vanderbilt Museum
Steve Tricaraco, Aide to County Executive
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro
Debbie Harris, Aide to Leg. Stern
William Broege, Historical Society
Jason Richberg, Aide to Leg. Gregory

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:35 PM

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

We'll start with the Pledge led by Legislator Barraga.

SALUTATION

All right, so we're going to start this meeting with the hearings for Parks. Commissioner, do you want to address the Committee or are you just happy with everything?

COMMISSIONER MONTUORI:

So far I'm very happy with the budget.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Okay, so somebody doesn't have the nerve to come up here. All right. Wallace Broege, where are you? Come on up.

MR. BROEGE:

Good afternoon. My name is Wally Broege. I'm the Director of the Suffolk County Historical Society. And I'm here to speak about the Operating Budget for 2011. I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak about the recommended budget and its impact on the Historical Society. This year the Society will receive in total \$265,000. 260,000 of that comes from the Hotel/motel tax.

In looking around at the assembled Legislators, I almost feel like I ought to begin with an apology because I'm coming to as many meetings as I can. And some of you -- Legislator Lindsay, for example, I've seen him up there every time. And he's been listening to the same thing. I've been trying very hard not to say different things but rather deliver a consistent message. I'll try and be brief.

I'm here to respectfully request that the Legislature consider adding \$25,000 to the Historical Society's budget for 2011 bringing our total funding to \$285,000. The Society's facing a deficit of about \$43,000 in 2011. And if I'm not able to come a little bit closer to balancing that budget, it's going to mean some severe impacts on our programming. I'm going to have to cut back the hours to four part-time staff members' work and eliminate two part-time staff positions. The result of that is going to be closing the museum and library an additional day a week and cutting back our exhibition and programming schedule.

If the \$25,000 is added to our budget, it will mean that I'll still have a deficit of \$18,000 but I believe that's a little bit more manageable. The deficit -- by the way this deficit didn't happen overnight. In recent years the Society's income has not been keeping up with its expenses. And we've been trying hard to make up the difference with fundraising and with grants. And all of that has become a lot more difficult, too. But each year our Board has been unwilling to cut successful programs and activities and, therefore, we've been trying to make up the difference with cash on hand basically in interest and dividends and equity from our endowment to balance the budgets.

And although we've done that, we've been able to control the deficits by spending carefully. Each year it's eaten a way a little bit more and a little bit more at the cash that we have available. And frankly we've used up all the available cash. We still have a small endowment. In all conscience I can't recommend to the Board of Directors to take money out of that endowment beyond equity, dividends and interest because I think you'd all agree it's a small endowment, about \$500,000. And if we begin removing the principal from that, we're just going to be in the middle of a downward

spiral. And it's not going to benefit any of us. Fortunately all the news isn't bad. We've got a wonderful exhibit program. Our public programs have been moving along very well and I'm very proud of them. We've got lots of exciting things coming in 2011.

I want to thank you all for giving me this opportunity to speak about our budget. I appreciate the Legislature's interest and its support. The Legislature within the areas that you've been able to help us has been very kind as has the Budget Review Office. Our budget -- you won't find a review of our budget in the Budget Review Office or in the Budget Review report. But if you have any questions, please feel free to ask them now or contact me at any point. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Does anybody have any questions? Okay, thank you.

MR. BROEGE:

You're welcome.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Carol Hart.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Good afternoon. I'm Carol Hart, Executive Director of the Vanderbilt Museum. I guess I'm here available to answer any questions about our budget for next year. The one comment I would make is that we have made some serious cuts over the last few years. We've cut about \$300,000 from our budget since 2008 largely through staff and personnel and reorganizing so that our security moved back inhouse eliminating or temporarily leaving open quite a few full-time positions and trying to be as efficient as we can.

We are anticipating that we need about \$200,000 next year in additional revenue beyond our earned revenue and the Hotel/Motel tax. We would like to know that it would be available from our endowment fund if necessary. We did have that in our budget. We have several initiatives that we hope will come to fruition in 2011 including our cell tower project. Right now as of an hour ago I do have a contract that's gone through the County Attorney's Office. It still has to be reviewed, again, by the cell tower company. But it seems like we're very close on that project. The revenue that might come from that next year has not been included in our budget. Hopefully there could potentially be significant money from that.

Our Star projector, the Goto replacement project, that contract also is within the County Attorney's Office. They have some negotiations left on that. If that moves through in the next month or so, that project could be on line by the end of next year. We have a catering contract with an outside caterer that would be an additional source of revenue. That contract is also being reviewed at the County Attorney's office. And we did just start as of last week an agreement with an outside retailer that's going to come in and help manage our shop. So those are all things that have taken a while to get going. But by next year one or two of them should start bringing in additional revenue. And if that were the case, potentially we wouldn't have to ask for some of that 200, 250,000 from the endowment. But I just want the Legislature to be aware that that is a shortfall that might be -- if some of these contracts don't come through quickly, might cause us some problems.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Carol, how much were you getting from the Hotel/Motel?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

This year we got about 693,00 to round up a little bit. And I think both BRO and County Exec figures about 705,000 for next year.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

The Goto projector, that's replacing another projector. You don't anticipate that bringing in additional revenue because it's new? Wouldn't it just be the same as what you have now?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

No, it would be far superior to what we have now. And in fact --

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

No, the projector would be. But it would bring in more revenue?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes. We anticipate new programming to go along with that. And just the fact that we would be able to promote a brand new -- the best planetarium in the east coast, we're expecting to generate significant revenue. Part of it, just logistics with the new digital technology we'll be able to turn around shows a lot more quickly. We won't need as much staff. We'll be able to run more shows. And we've been steadily moving a little bit of our audience due to the age of the equipment; the fact that it can't do what it did 30 or 40 years ago.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

When you say significant, how much more do you think it will bring in than the older projector?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yeah. In talking to other planetariums, when they've gotten new equipment in like that, certainly the first year we could expect to double -- yeah. That would go down, you know, that's because it's new. One would expect that to drop off, but hopefully we'll have an opportunity to engage an audience and keep that moving. Along with that we're getting other full dome video, hopefully maybe even sooner. So there's a whole different kind of audience. It's not just replacing what we've got now. It has capabilities far superior to what we have now.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

And the cell towers would bring in, what do you think?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

The cell towers annually on the order of maybe \$80,000. The agreement we're working on has an upfront of -- at different key points when a building permit is given, for example, 100,000, 50,000 another Certificate of Occupancy. So there be some upfront money on that, which, again, I know things take a lot longer than we always hope. But hopefully sometime in the next year the permits would come through so there would be some upfront money.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Does anybody have any questions? All, right. Catering. That's a new thing. You had it for a while. Now it's a new thing or --

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We do host weddings and other events. Right now people just rent the site. They hire any caterer that we want. We've been really investigating for many years the idea of having an inhouse on-site caterer. We are -- you know, working with the County Attorney with it. One particular caterer that does have a lot of experience and is local to the Vanderbilt, and they feel that they could, you know, potentially double our revenue from catering because, again, with an on-site caterer we'd be able to potentially double the number of events that we're doing now and we're excited about that.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

The on-site caterer, the facilities that you have there would not have to be updated for cooking or kitchen or any of that? That's all ready to go?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

No. The plans as the caterer is envisioning would necessitate putting in facilities in probably two or

three of our buildings. They are looking at putting a cafe in our planetarium that would require some changes. They are looking at our garage or our education center, making that a location for potentially a restaurant. So in order for them to be an on-site caterer, they will have to make some upgrades, but that would be part of their arrangements that they would make that investment at the Vanderbilt Museum.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

So if you were to do weddings there, that would probably be a pretty big investment because you'd need a pretty big kitchen?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It might be. But, again, that would be their investment. And they feel that it makes financial sense for them. And they've done some pretty interesting projections.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Does anybody else have any questions? Yes, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Hi, Carol. What's the consequence of not receiving the additional 200,000?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Well, I'm looking --

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'm sorry. You said that was included in your budget; your projected budget for 2011. Why is it --

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Our budget includes 250,000 from our endowment.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So you cover it with the endowment. And so when you crafted your budget for 2011, did your budget increase from 2010?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I think it's pretty close to what we had projected for 2010. Again, the 2010 budget was done back a year ago or so. At that time we thought the Goto projector would be in. 2011 is an increase -- a slight increase over what 2010 actual will be.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So was there a revenue fall off between 2010 and 2011? How are you coming up short on the 200,000?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Well, one of the things that this -- in 2010 we did get a \$110,000 from our endowment, which we have needed. And in fact projections for going to the end of the year, we may very well be 50 to \$78,000 shortfall this year. So we may well have to ask for some.

LEG. D'AMARO:

The 200,000 is in addition to another 110 that you project to take out in 2011? Because if I recall at the time we discussed the Hotel/Motel Tax, there was a consistent monthly amount being tapped from the endowment; is that correct?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

For 2011 we budgeted -- assume \$705,000 from the Motel tax and \$250,00 from the endowment. So the BRO recommends not taking any endowment money. So that's the money that we're looking at. It's that 200 -- and again maybe we could cut that to 200. But that's the money I'm

talking about.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So that would negate the need to take the hit against the endowment. That's what you're talking about; right?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I guess what I'm saying the recommendation -- because we want the endowment to grow. Ideally we wouldn't be pulling anything -- any of the interest, but I don't see and the Board doesn't see how we can function.

LEG. D'AMARO:

When we talked about the Hotel/Motel, if I recall, part of the plan at the time was to make a monthly withdrawal from the endowment, wasn't it? Wasn't that part of the discussion, do you recall?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yeah, I'm not --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, they took it this year. You took funds from the endowment this year.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yeah.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And wasn't that all part of supplementing what -- you had received a bulk of it from the Hotel/Motel Tax?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And then the balance of it was a monthly amount coming -- budgeted monthly amount coming out of the endowment.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We had hoped -- we knew it be would be necessary --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

-- to pull some money. But I think we decided in talking with BRO, talking with other people that we would do it as necessary; that in order to meet our financial obligations, that we would take money as necessary.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And this year the amount coming -- what's projected for 2011, rather, is a slight increase from the revenue generated by the Hotel/Motel Tax. But you don't want to continue with the other part of

the plan, which was to have the endowment on a monthly basis to meet some of your operating expenses.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We are -- we do need to tap some of the endowment because the Hotel/Motel alone is not enough to operate the museum.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, I understand that. Okay. All right.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Again, in other words -- three years ago we had \$1.2 million coming from our endowment every year.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Could I just ask you again if you could reiterate, what was the impact of -- there's no impact because, if necessary, you budgeted to take the 200 out of the endowment fund; right?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. But there's a chance with these other contracts that are coming down and being negotiated now, the cell tower, the Goto and the catering situation, there's a chance that you could make up some of that revenue.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. Okay. And so it was just my understanding that the Hotel/Motel tax was going to cover a large portion of your deficit. And I thought for lack of a better term the deal was that the endowment would cover the balance.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, that's necessary, I think.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. All right. Thanks, I appreciate it.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Stern.

LEG. STERN:

If I'm understanding correctly, that's exactly right. That what's your plan here is, to have Hotel/Motel pick up the in this case the majority of what those expenses would be and to have endowment cover the rest. The question is whether or not the endowment money is going to be sufficient to meet the shortfall. Is that right? Last year did you say that the number that you received from the endowment was 110,000?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We received a 110,000 so far in 2010. In 2009 we received 45,000.

LEG. STERN:

45,000 the year before. So far this year it's 110,000. Do we have any idea what the 110,000 is in terms of the pace of any income being earned on that endowment? Does the 110,000 exceed the

income earned on the endowment so far this year?

MS. VIZZINI:

Okay, based on the reports that we get from US Bank the estimated annual income for 2010 will probably be in the area of 277,000.

LEG. STERN:

So, so far they're short, right? 110,000 received so far is less than what the projected amount is going to be for the year?

MS. VIZZINI:

Right. But you have the policy decision that we make along the way as to whether to allow the endowment to grow --

LEG. STERN:

Sure.

MS. VIZZINI:

-- or we take fill the gap.

LEG. STERN:

Right. But so far -- I guess just to be clear, we have not -- the museum has not tapped into principal. In fact, it's -- that's not even close at this point. The amount that they received from the endowment is so far less -- far less than what the projected amount of income is going to be for the year.

MS. VIZZINI:

So far.

LEG. STERN:

So far. Okay. Have we received anything from the investment advisors as to -- so far as to what their investment plans are for next year? And do they have any kind of an estimate? Obviously it's an imperfect science, but do they have us on track for -- at the very least coming up with the same number next year based on how they have the monies invested?

MS. VIZZINI:

Well, the investment advisors as you know are bound by the parameters that the Legislature gives them. And it would be our recommendation that the new team have an opportunity to address the Parks Committee and speak with the Legislature in terms of what the threshold is for the investments in the endowment. That being said, they're basically in cash mutual funds and mutual funds with equities and fixed income.

LEG. STERN:

I guess my question is for next year they have not yet come forward with any kind of a plan -- any kind of a proposed plan for us to consider as far as investment strategy goes for next year?

MS. VIZZINI:

But, no, but I would concur that that's something -- a direction we need to go in.

LEG. STERN:

Okay. So, the amount, Carol, that you are suggesting, let's say it's a \$200,000 number, we have an important policy decision to make, as to whether or not to free up that money for that purpose. But it seems as though coming into the end of this year, if we don't make any changes, that that's a number that is there for us to consider because so far the museum has only received \$110,000 of a projected 200 plus thousand dollars.

MS. VIZZINI:
(Nodding head yes)

LEG. STERN:
Thank you.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:
Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:
Yes. I think Legislator Stern covered most of it. I just want to be clear. When you talk about the endowment and taking money from the endowment, are you talking about taking the interest earned on the principal or are you dipping into the principal?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:
No, we're not dipping. We're talking about interest earned.

LEG. MONTANO:
So it's strictly interest earned.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:
Yeah. At the low point -- we're down to almost 8.2, a little bit over. We're about 8.8 right now. So there's 600,000 above the principal.

LEG. MONTANO:
Right. So you're -- what you said earlier is that you're trying not to dip into the endowment; but I think what you really mean is you're trying to let it grow and not dip into the principal.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:
Yes.

LEG. MONTANO:
Because the principal is about -- you said 8.2, I remember, eight million. All right. So you're 600,000 above that today?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:
Yes, that's correct.

LEG. MONTANO:
Okay, thank you.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:
Legislator Horsley, did you have questions?

LEG. HORSLEY:
Yes, I did. Hi, Carol. I see that when you first started your discussions a second ago, you went from 200 to 250 very quickly. You kind of slid into the 250, like it was de minimus. Is it 250 what we're looking at or 200?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:
We have 250 -- is in our budget.

LEG. HORSLEY:
So it is 250.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

250 is in 2011 budget. And I've been, you know, talking to our trustees. If we received 50,000 more this year, we could probably do all right with 200,000 next year. If we're not allowed anymore disbursements this year, it will be 250 for next year. So I would say at this date, at this point in time, in looking at from now 'til the end of the year and next year, we need about \$250,000 additional income. If we don't get the 50,000 right now, we're going to be going into January 1st in a bad situation and need it pretty quickly. If we do get \$50,000 so that we can pay up everything now, we can probably get by with 200,000 next year.

LEG. HORSLEY:

So it'd be fair to say it's 250.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

It would be fair to say it's 250.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay, let's get it straight then.

The question I had also was, I had been talking to the College. I understand that they're about ready to come out with their report towards the end of this year. At least that's what they're projecting. Have you been assisting them in that venture of looking at the synergies between the College and the Vanderbilt, where are you with that, where is your board at what it, what are they thinking, what's going on with that future?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We continue to be very interested in doing some kind of partnership. We're working with them, we're having the College get back to us with some ideas. I know our president has made multiple inquiries and talked. And I don't think that the College has been ready to move along. I know they've had some changes, administrative change. So I assume that's the reason that we're anxious to get back at meetings with them.

LEG. HORSLEY:

So would you be aggressive in that pursuit? Because it sounds to me like they're going to come out with some sort of report fairly soon.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

We've been aggressively trying to get them back at the table. I know Noel Gish has.

LEG. HORSLEY:

And for a while there they were meeting fairly regularly and not so much anymore.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yeah. We've been trying.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Not for lack of trying.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. Because it could be beneficial to both parties. So you'll keep in touch?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

Yes, we will.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Yeah, Legislator Lindsay. Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Legislator Stern and I were just having sort of a side-bar. And I just want to be clear. The money that -- yeah, that's attorney talk. The money that you're requesting 250, are you requesting authorization to take that from the interest earned on the endowment? Or are you asking us to appropriate an additional?

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

I'm not asking for any appropriations. I'm asking that the money would come from the interest earned --

LEG. MONTANO:

Gotcha.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

-- on the Vanderbilt Museum's endowment.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Lindsay.

P.O. LINDSAY:

Carol, the income from the cell tower and from the caterer isn't included in your budget.

MS. GHIORSI-HART:

No, it's not included.

P.O. LINDSAY:

Okay. So if one of those was to come on line, you wouldn't need to take as much from the endowment.

MS. GHIORSI HART:

Exactly. I think, again, it's the goal, I think, of all us to see the endowment grow. But at the same time we have to keep the doors open.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Are there any other questions? Okay. Thank you, Carol.

Dale Moyer.

MR. MOYER:

Good afternoon, Legislator Viloría-Fisher and Committee members. I'm Dale Moyer, Associate Executive Director for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County.

I'd like to thank the Committee for your support of the CC Water Quality Projects. I'm here today to request a 3% increase in funding for four water quality projects we currently conduct, which was not included in the 2011 proposed operating budget. We requested this increasing to maintain program service levels after the funds of these projects were cut 10% in 2010.

These water quality projects include Agricultural Environmental Stewardship Program, the Alternative Management Strategy for Control of Insect Pest Program, the Pest Management Program for Suffolk County properties, and the restoration of Peconic Bay Scallop Population Project.

This 3% increase was approved by the Water Quality Review Committee in a July meeting. The Department of Environment and Energy who administers these funds has indicated to me that these additional funds for the 3% increase has been budgeted in their 2011 477 Water Quality Program.

In addition the Budget Review Office recommends a 3% increase for these four Cornell Cooperative Extension 477 programs. I respectfully request the legislation increase the funding for these four projects -- water quality projects for Cornell Cooperative Extension.

Thank you for your time and support throughout the year. And I will be glad to take any questions.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Hi, Dale. I only heard three programs. I have the Ag Steward Program, the Pest Management Program and the Bay Scallop. What did I miss?

MR. MOYER:

And the Alternative Management Strategy for Control of Insect Pests.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, I thought that was the Pest Management.

MR. MOYER:

No, that's different. That's the one -- the Alternative Management deals with the agricultural and horticultural pest. And the Pest Management Program is just for Suffolk County properties. Those are two different programs.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Okay. Thank you. Are there any other questions? Yes, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay, thank you. I missed the first one. What was the first one?

MR. MOYER:

The first program was the Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Program.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And what is the budget recommended for that program?

MR. MOYER:

For the Agriculture Environmental Stewardship Program?

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yes.

MS. VIZZINI:

260,786, Water Quality Funding.

MR. MOYER:

Right, it's 260,786.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. Can you give me -- BRO, I guess, Gail, the numbers for the other three if you have them?

MS. VIZZINI:

Well, the three funded through Water Quality. Is that what we're talking about? The Pest Management Program is 187,272 and the Peconic Bay Scallop population and fisheries is 320,441.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Those are the three funded through the Water Quality Funding. And the Alternative Management Strategy for bugs?

MR. MOYER:

Yeah, that's 130,000.

MS. VIZZINI:

Yeah, the fourth one is the Alternative Management Strategies for control of insect pests, which was the first number I gave you -- or I thought I gave you. 130,875.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And how long have each of these projects been ongoing?

MR. MOYER:

It depends on the project, but approximately four or five years, some of them. The Pest Management for Suffolk County properties has been going on for, I think, eight years.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And from the numbers that were just provided from the recommended budget, you're asking for a 3% increase in each of these four lines; right?

MR. MOYER:

That's correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. And, you know, I have to tell you that the thing that comes to my mind, especially in the budget problems that we're having right now, everyone's having, is how are you going to justify that? It's one thing to come up here and ask us for 3% more because Budget Review happens to think you need 3% more. But you're the expert. Can you tell me why we need to increase these programs? I mean, I need a justification.

MR. MOYER:

Okay. Last year we took a 10% cut in those four different projects. Working with the Department of Environment and Energy, we agreed to that 10%. We understand the situation with tax revenues and so forth so we agreed to that.

This year we had a discussion with them. We went to the Water Quality Review Committee and asked them for a 3% increase to compensate for some of that loss at 10% to meet some of our needs for the other than personnel services, instructions, supplies, equipment that will help us keep these programs at the level they are right now. To continue with that cut, it would hurt the programs and we would not be able to provide the same services we had in the past.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But the entire County government's experiencing that same problem. I was looking for something a little more specific. I mean if we don't increase these four lines by 3%, the projects will not be put out of existence.

MR. MOYER:

No.

LEG. D'AMARO:

But there is an impact.

MR. MOYER:

Right.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I want to understand what that impact is.

MR. MOYER:

Well, the impact is servicing less and working with less of the commercial people, providing less services to the County residents, growers and so forth. Because we just didn't have the instructions and supplies to do the work such as our pest management doing some of our pheromone trapping which we're trying to get the growers to adopt so they are using less pesticides, cause less problems with the ground water and surface waters. Those kinds of projects are going to occur less because we don't have the supplies to incur -- to purchase the supplies for those projects.

LEG. D'AMARO:

What about the Peconic Bay Scallop Restoration, how many years has that project been with Cornell?

MR. MOYER:

I think that started in 2005, but I'm not 100% sure when it started. I believe it was four or five. Got going -- I think this would be the fourth year that it's been rolling in terms of producing scallops and seeding the scallops in the Bay.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. And the increase you're looking for is about \$9,000 over the 320,000.

MR. MOYER:

That's correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Is that program successful?

MR. MOYER:

Yes. We have -- the last three years they have seeded hundreds of thousands of scallops. And the scallop industry is on the rebound. And we feel that that seeding has been a lot of credit to that rebound that has occurred. And hopefully in the next few years, next year or two, we'll see that population dramatically increase. And then obviously the long term goal is so that that natural population continues to grow and we don't have to reseed year after year after year.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I appreciate that. This is my last question on that same project. And if you didn't get the \$9,000 increase, how does that impact the success you're expecting for this project?

MR. MOYER:

Well, again, I think it's a matter of equipment and supplies and providing that. I can get you a better answer from Chris Smith and Emery Hasbrouck who are operating that program directly. And I could get that e-mailed to you if you'd had like this afternoon.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. I'll leave that up to you. Thank you.

MR. MOYER:

Okay, thank you.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Dale, before you step off, I have another question, just to clarify a little further because I've been very involved with the Ag Stewardship Program. Would you be able to tell us now or could you give us the information eventually how many farmers have voluntarily been working with the Stewardship Program? I know that each year that number has grown. Do you know what it's up to now?

MR. MOYER:

At various levels, there are over 300 participants. Over the last couple of years in terms of projects we're working on directly with growers, demonstration projects, projects that are adapting, there's been like a three or fourfold increase over the last three years. So we have about eighty participants that are really involved in best management practices.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, Dale. And when they got involved with those best management practices, I know that as a member of the Soil and Water District we see that there are a number of federal and state funds that are brought to the County to help those farmers to achieve their goals. Would you have any idea how much federal and state money we've been able to leverage through this program?

MR. MOYER:

Just this past year I think it was over \$800,000. But over the last three years it's been several million dollars that have gone into cost sharing to improve best management practices for producers.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

So what you're doing is you're working with volunteer farmers, who have volunteered to lower their use of pesticides and fertilizers. We've helped them to get grants from the federal and state governments to -- so that they can make the changes on their properties in order to make them -- make our water quality be improved and protect our water quality. And so we've added to our economy over a million dollars.

MR. MOYER:

That's correct. I mean our bottom goal is to improve the surface and groundwater of Suffolk County.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

But in the meantime we've incentivized farmers to join us in that effort.

MR. MOYER:

Right. We've done it in several ways. In terms of the practices that we are encouraging often can reduce their cost of fertilizer and pesticides. And they've also got the cost sharing from various projects including mixing and loading stations and various other best management practices.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

And when we get farmers on board, how much time do your workers and trainers and the technical people, how labor intensive is what they're doing?

MR. MOYER:

Well, a lot of the projects are very labor intensive. We're trying to demonstrate to the farmers and get them involved. And so we're working very closely with the farmers. And so we have three technicians that are working all summer long on the various projects with the various farmers to

help them adopt these practices that will hopefully lower the pesticide use and reduce the nitrogen from the long run.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So that's what that \$267,786 budget that you're doing, that particular program that's very labor intensive, that's bringing in -- has brought in over a million dollars, has helped to reduce our impact on our water quality and has been a boost to the agricultural industry as well.

MR. MOYER:

That's correct.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Dale.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Is there anybody else that would like to address the Committee for the Parks and Recreation? Tom, it looks like you're getting ready to -- okay, Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Thank you. Gail, I want to ask a couple of questions with reference to the Budget Review analysis as it pertains to Parks. I had a chance over the last couple of days to take a look at the analysis, which gives you an indication of how filling my life is --

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

My condolences, Legislator.

LEG. BARRAGA:

On page 223 under Parks, you talk about a bank service charge. You know, when things are so tight from a fiscal perspective, any loopholes that we can close that really shouldn't exist to begin with, I think we have an obligation to do so. You talk about a bank service charge as it pertains to the processing fee that a bank charges when an individual, a park patron uses a debit or credit card. As a result of the processing, we're losing -- taxpayers are losing about \$70,000 a year. And that's a convenience that we extend to people.

I mean, I guess up to a certain point they used to pay cash. And now they can use a debit or credit card. It's a convenience to them. But you're also giving them a float of 30 days. And my feeling is that somehow those individuals should be charged a little more to offset the processing fee which the County taxpayers are incurring. So, for example, if the fee was \$5 and we're getting back a 2% processing fee, we'll wind up with \$4.90, maybe we should charge approximately, you know, \$5.10 to someone who wants to use a credit card. But it seems that it's inappropriate in order to extend this convenience to these people, that the rest of the population should incur a \$70,000 loss. Your thoughts.

MS. VIZZINI:

That is exactly our recommendation, Legislator. It's taken the County a long time to get into the 21st century allowing credit cards to be used for civil service applications, for golf course reservations, for other things; but that they come with a cost. Even the college, you know, you pay your kid's tuition or the kid pays their tuition, there is a convenience fee. And this would be our recommendation that the Parks Department be permitted to charge this modest convenience fee for using a credit card.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR NOWICK:

Anybody else? Legislator Viloría-Fisher, do you want to take over the next Committee?

**(ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING & AGRICULTURE OPERATING BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
BEGAN AT 2:17 PM)**

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes. This is now the Committee on Environment, Land Acquisition. I believe that the one Commissioner who said that she wanted to address us is Carrie Meek-Gallagher. And you'll cover mine and Wayne's. Michael White, were you here to speak to the Environment Committee or Energy or just in general?

MR. WHITE:

Yes.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, that's right, that's part of my Committee, too. Sorry, right after Carrie.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Good afternoon. I just wanted to -- there was one issue that was raised in the BRO report that I wanted to respond to since it is the only significant change in our budget this year which is the proposed transfer of the Peconic Estuary Program to the Department of Environment and Energy. And I think perhaps it's just because when we had a chance to speak, I was busy, we were talking on a car phone and maybe I didn't give a clear explanation of the thought process behind it.

And so the first thing I want to let everyone know is that the Department of Health services is completely supportive of this transfer. In fact, we've had several discussion since August with the administration over how to ensure smooth transition. And while I guess this idea has been discussed many times since the departments -- my department was even being formulated, and since its creation really this year seemed to be the most logical year given the impacts of the Early Retirement Incentive Program on the Office of Ecology and the Division of Environmental Quality.

So it really came down to, I think, the idea of mission alignments, Department of Health Services' mission is really protecting public health, promoting public health and the Peconic Estuary program as one of 28 estuary programs of national significance under the -- the federal program is focussed on coming up with a comprehensive watershed base management plan for the estuary to reduce the impacts of pollution development, overuse, etcetera and so forth. And the Department of Environment and Energy's primary mission is to safeguard the natural resources of Suffolk County, create a centralized location for considering those impacts.

So it just seemed to make sense. And since I've been on board as the County's -- essentially the County Exec's chief environmental advisor from day one, I've already been asked to approve, review, sign off on before they would all PP contracts, capital program requests, resolutions, RFP waiver requests, public service announcements, you name it. So that part of the work is already being -- I'm already doing that. It's not like that that piece of it wouldn't be a new responsibility.

There's a lot of synergies between my department and the program office staff. The program office staff are all aware of this and fully supportive also of the transfer. And we have a number of water quality funded programs. There's been 16 projects to the tune of \$11 million for the past several years that are all complementary to the Peconic Estuary Program, some of them counting towards our required federal match.

I have programmatic staff that are already heavily involved in subcommittees and serving on those committees. I've been the County Exec's rep from day one on the policy committee which is three people: Me, DEC Region One Director and the EPA Region Two Administrator. So we make all the policy -- we are the voting members. We make all the policy decisions for the Peconic Estuary Program. I've also served as the County's rep -- County Exec's rep on the Management Committee. So, again, I've been heavily involved. My staff's heavily involved. I will be able to provide a 50%

admin support. I have a head clerk to help the program offer the staff, which is more administrative support than they have now.

And just to put it into context I know there was some concern possibly that administratively it would be a burden. We looked into that. And our Department already processes upwards of 2000 vouchers and claims on an annual basis. We actually do a lot of contract claim voucher processing work because of acquisitions, water quality contracts, redemption, auction, inventory, etcetera. So we have a good system set up. PP would generate maybe 70, 75 more vouchers a year or those types of things so it would be roughly at 3.75% incremental change in the workload. And we're getting obviously programmatic staff to support us. So I don't think administratively it would be a burden. We have the full support of training, transitioning, everything from the Health Department.

And I just wanted to let you know that -- because I know you see these budgets and you're not sure if the departments have been -- if everything that's recommended is coordinated with the departments. But I did want to let you know in this case this is a recommendation that has been coordinated with both departments and both departments are fully supportive of this transfer. And I'm happy to answer any other questions.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

I spoke with Dr. Tomarken yesterday regarding this. And he didn't seem to have an objection to it. I have a couple of concerns because I know that there's a lot of institutional knowledge in the Department of Health services and scientific knowledge. And I'm wondering if the same kind of level of scientific background is available with this move?

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Actually the three programmatic staff people who would be moved into the department are essentially the people that are left. There was a -- because of the Early Retirement Incentive Program, most of the senior staff or people who have been there since the beginning are no longer with Department of Health services. So there's one remaining person that does have that problematic knowledge. But the significant bulk are not. And as I said from -- since I brought on -- I have a senior environmental analyst, environmental analyst, a research technician, environmental projects coordinator who have been heavily involved in the Peconic Estuary Program and any of the 477 related projects since they've come on board in 2007.

So they've had three years to build up knowledge about the program. I have a -- they're younger so I anticipate that they will be around for a while. So my goal is to groom them and continue to train them and have them grow and gain in that knowledge and have them be the next 20 or 30 years of the Peconic Estuary Program support.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

I know that one of the hydro-geologists has retired. Is there any one else who is coming into that position?

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

I am not aware. I'd have to look and see in Health Services if that was one of the positions that was abolished or not in terms of the retirements.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

I'm speaking as a layperson after seeing these people come and speak before us and explain different programs to us. And I'm just curious as to keeping the science involved in the decision making.

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Right. The people that were most involved since I've been here, you know, since October 2006 in this capacity have actually been the program staff, the chief engineer, the division head of Environmental Quality. There is a boat operator and a chemist who were also funded through this

program. They would not be physically moved. They would still be working, you know, located in Health Services and supporting the additional work that they support in the Division of Environmental Quality. I'm not aware of a hydro-geologist having been significantly involved in the Peconic Estuary Program per se. Certainly we coordinate with them a lot with the Office of Cancer Awareness and all the environmental assessment, the MGP's, all those types of projects, less so on this side. A lot of the work through the Peconic is contracted out because it is -- you know, there is federal funding that comes with it.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And I've been a little concerned about the number of people who would be able to get programs through. You know, I had recently asked you about the PS, if it were held up because you have such a busy department. I was concerned about that because there was air time that had been set up. We need this kind of education, but these -- it just happened in passing that someone said we're -- you know, we're waiting for this to come across. Have those been released yet?

COMMISSIONER MEEK-GALLAGHER:

Yes. I actually received a message Wednesday and had approved them by Friday morning. So -- a request to look at them. So I am, you know, trying to be sensitive to the time limits of those things. Actually I think that this transfer will streamline things since I am already being asked to review and sign off on all these. You eliminate the level of the various units and divisions and layers at Health Services that it has to go through because they are a much larger department. They have a different focus and they do have more layers of bureaucracy than my department has.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Thank you, Carrie. Any other questions? Okay. Thank you for being here, Commissioner.

Mr. Isles, would you want to address the Committee? I thought you were coming up with Mr. White together. Planning questions or --

DIRECTOR ISLES:

Sure, we can. We're available if you have any questions. We have no rebuttal reaction to the BRO report. But we're here if you have questions.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, thank you. Michael White.

MR. WHITE:

Yes. I'm here to answer any questions or provide any information. I want to thank the County for its continued support of the Long Island Regional Planning Council. And we recognize that with the budget conditions as they are, we accept as everyone else in the County has cuts. But fortunately through the formation of the Council we have been able to pursue other monies. And I received foundation grants over the past year. And I'd like to announce also even most recently working with both counties we were able to bring in monies through the HUD Sustainable Communities Program. So that legislation formed as a council has proven to be effective in bringing some funds into the County. And we also look forward to working with both counties and Tom Isles' department with in-kind services as well.

So I'm here to answer any questions you might have about the work of the Council.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. And I do want to thank you. You and I recently had a conversation regarding the Food Policy Council that I'm putting together and the role that you're going to be playing in that council and our outreach to Nassau County. And going back to what Commissioner Meek-Gallagher was saying earlier, we're trying to streamline and consolidate and in looking at the Victory Garden Task Force and the Community Gardens Program that will be going forward with food policy, we're

actually connecting the dots between social justice issues, environmental issues and agricultural issues. So I thank you for your willingness to jump in and help us out.

MR. WHITE:

Absolutely. It's a great opportunity. I think it's great opportunity to bring both counties together on that issue as well. So I appreciate your leadership.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Any other questions for either Mr. Isles or Mr. White? Okay. Thank you very much. And I pass the baton to Legislator Horsley.

LEG. HORSLEY:

My committee's not today.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Not today? I thought you had the third part of the triangle.

LEG. HORSLEY:

No, I think I'm tomorrow.

CO-CHAIR VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. Well that being said is there anyone who -- let's look. Okay, tomorrow.

Thank you for being here. If there anyone else who wishes to address either one of our Committees? Or all three or none? Thank you.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 2:30 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**