

**JOINT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY COMMITTEE and GOVERNMENT
OPERATIONS, PERSONNEL, HOUSING & CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE**

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Operating Budget Minutes

A special joint meeting of the Economic Development & Energy Committee and the Government Operations, Personnel, Housing & Consumer Protection Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Carcappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on October 24, 2012.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Wayne R. Horsley, Chairman, Economic Development & Energy
Legislator Thomas Cilmi, member, Economic Development & Energy and Government Operations, Personnel & Consumer Protection
Legislator DuWayne Gregory, member, Economic Development & Energy
Legislator Lynne C. Nowick, member, Economic Development & Energy
Legislator Robert Calarco, Chairman, Government Operations, Personnel & Consumer Protection
Legislator Kate Browning, member, Government Operations, Personnel & Consumer Protection

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Legislator John M. Kennedy, Jr., Twelfth Legislative District
Legislator Kara Hahn, Fifth Legislative District
Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Seventeenth Legislative District
Legislator Steven H. Stern, Sixteenth Legislative District
Joanne Minieri, Commissioner/Economic Development
Carolyn Fahey, Economic Development
Charles Gardner, Director/Government Affairs
Michael Murtha, Murtha Construction
Vito A. Minei, Cornell Cooperative Extension
Kevin Casey, IBEW
Michael Watt, LIGRA
Michael Towers, SC Electrical Contractors
Jack Morrell, SC Electrical Contractors

(ALSO IN ATTENDANCE continued on next page)

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(Continued - ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:)

Dennis Cohen, County Attorney
Mario Mattera, Plumbers Local 200
Michael Rice
Justin Paul, Tran-Star Executive
Tom Melito, Performance Management Team
Sam Chu, Commissioner/Labor Department
Robert Meguin, Commissioner/Consumer Affairs
Louise Montez
Kevin Rooney, Oil Heat Institute
Jack Morrell
Fred Pollert, County Executive Budget Office
Connie Corso, County Executive Budget Office
Dennis Cohen, County Attorney
Errol Toulon, Jr., Assistant Deputy County Executive/Public Safety
Terrence Pearsall, Chief of Staff
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

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THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:30 PM

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Okay, we're going to get started with today's Public Hearing. This is the Government Operations and Economic Development joint Public Hearing. If we can all stand for the Pledge of Allegiance led by my Co-Chair Legislator Horsley.

SALUTATION

We're going to go a little out of order for today's Public Hearings in an interest of trying to move this Committee along. We have another Public Hearing coming up at 2:30. So we're going to start by offering an opportunity for the County Executive's Office to come up. And Mr. Melito, if he's here -- and I know Commissioner Chu from the Department of Labor and also Commissioner Meguin from Consumer Affairs, if you want to come forward, I think you're going to give us a presentation today about the proposal to merge the two Departments.

MR. MELITO:

Right.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

So, if you would.

MR. MELITO:

Okay, thank you very much. Again, thanks for the opportunity to come here and talk to you guys. The County Executive has asked me to give an overview of three projects, one of which we covered yesterday so we're just going to go through two today.

With me here are, as you noted, are a number of people. I don't know if we need to get that on the record, but Dennis Cohen, County Attorney, should be here shortly. We have the Budget people standing by; Sammy Chu, Dr. Tulong and Louise Montez is here as well.

I just have about ten slides, quite frankly. It just takes a couple of minutes to run through them. I certainly would appreciate an opportunity just to run through the slides in toto and then we'd be happy to answer any questions that anybody might have.

You know, just to set the stage, and I know we've sort of covered this and I'll go through it really quickly, and to recap some of our overarching multiyear objectives, Performance Management, you know, is working on a large panoply of projects to do a number of different things, but all focussed on trying to help make Suffolk County government accessible and constituent friendly; to develop a program of evidence based decision making. The core of that would be our technology backbone, which we talked a little bit about yesterday; provide an organizational management and training platforms, which is a big piece of our core mission. And institute LEAN principles, implement performance metrics.

All the projects being discussed -- or both projects being discussed today represent opportunities to effectuate these types of objectives. So, how we got here, in light of some of the significant staffing reductions and the uncertain budgetary revenue circumstances, we've been asked to shepherd a couple of early projects in through the first phases of operation, if you will.

So the following slides will announce our goals and objectives for these projects. And each of them will require -- which is something that, you know, we need to be aware of ongoing analysis, direct communications, performance assessment and ongoing reporting. In other words, these are all works in projects that represent significant challenges and we hope to turn those challenges into opportunities.

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So, we want to get started with -- the two projects that we're going to talk about is TAPVA, Traffic and Parking Violations Agency, and its operational plan. And our goal there is to develop a state of the art, secure and effective operation for receiving, processing, adjudicating and administering traffic violations. And also we want to talk about the consolidation of Department of Labor and Consumer Affairs, also known as LLC. And we hope to add administrative strength to Consumer Affairs while expanding capacity of both departments.

So just before we get started, to give you a little bit of background on the TAPVA, we have done a lot of education or educating of ourselves over the last several months. What we found is it's a complex clerical, administrative and judicial operation. And so we've read through through lots of documentation. We've gone through the Vehicle and Traffic Law. We've gone through the handbooks. There are other periodicals that we've gotten hold of. We've met with many, many people who have experience in this area. We met with Mr. Mark Montgomery, who oversaw the Traffic and Parking Violations Bureau for New York City. We met with Nassau County several times. We've met with Dave Rich and Judge Marks. We've observed their operation. We've discussed operating issues. We've discussed learning curves that they have run into over the course of the ten years of developing their system. We've met in South Hampton with Renee {Brothwe} several times. We've also observed their operations. She's been very supportive of our learning about this. We've gone to Riverhead's Court and we've met with the District Court here several times as well.

One of the big areas we focused on is that of technology. Technology is a very big part of any successful operation for a violations agency. And we've also set up an internal working group. And in that working group includes the Police Department, the Sheriffs Department, the District Court and many others.

So, we've been working very collaboratively with municipalities around to learn from their experiences. And what we found is the success of a TAPVA operation really is the result of a complex and unique mix of population, number of transactions, the transaction mix, skills, physical layout and almost above all technology and software.

Noteworthy is that each entity that we've spoken to, including New York City and all of the others, said that they really -- their systems evolved over a period of time as they've gained experience in running these operations. Literally it took Nassau County ten years to get to a point where they felt they had a static organization and they kind of knew what we were doing. We hope to obviously be doing that much more quickly. So as a result, we've tried to build in as much flexibility into our plan to allow for our own learning curve and so that our own collective experience will greatly impact how this operation evolves.

So what are the four tenets of operations of a TAPVA? Well, first of all, we start with staffing. You have location. You have technology, as we've said. And then you have the ability to provide constituent services. So from a staffing point of view, we want to say from the outset that we will be working with Suffolk County staff. Any hires will come from the preferred list where titles are appropriate. And County staff will be hired as volume experience dictates in early operations. We've actually created a budget plan that's very flexible with regard to staffing. And so that, you know, there may be a situation where we're working initially with some part-time County workers. And then those will move into full-time. But we really need to gain some operating experience to make a judicious and a reasonable decision on how to staff it from a full point of view. The last thing you want to do is hire too many staff at first, not be able to use them effectively, etcetera. So the message is that we want to, you know, build as we can. We're going to use County employees. And we've already begun work on that plan.

As far as location, we are looking to build it in the Dennison Building. We have been working on a very strong plan to address not only the facility and operating needs and the flows of how people

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work and operate within a TAPVA, but also address security. It will involve separate entrances for employees and the public, like any good organization would under the circumstance. An added benefit is that we feel this is a great opportunity to enhance security in the Dennison Building at the same time. Security in the Dennison Building has been something that we have talked about from -- over the last several months.

From a technology point of view, we have issued an RFP. We are, I think, expecting responses within the next two weeks. We visited, as I mentioned, other TAPVA's to find out how their technology works, what they liked about their technology, what they didn't like about it. And what we did find is that the systems themselves, once they're in and operating actually provide a lot of information and inform the processing that has to go through. So -- because software has each step -- they created the interfaces with New York State and all the other agencies that we need to interface with.

Foremost we want this facility and this operation to be constituent friendly as possible. We are looking to address any number of payment options including online payments to reduce the need for residents to come into the facility itself. Plea bargaining will be part of the process as it with every TAPVA in New York State. The plea bargaining gives us an opportunity to move people in more quickly and to adjudicate quote unquote justice more effectively and more swiftly. As we all know that's why the plea bargaining process has evolved the way it has so that we can get people justice more quickly and most quickly.

In terms of public safety, the TAPVA among other things, will promote public safety by allowing us to increase the number of Police Officers on the street by -- and they do that -- it does that by reducing the time necessary for Police Officers to be testifying in court and in hearings. Obviously the plea bargaining process allows you to have fewer trials. And that's good news. Will provide needed security improvements, as I mentioned, to the Dennison Building. And we also hope to be strengthening the awareness of our Red Light Camera Safety Program through public service announcements and public education material, which will be distributed within the TAPVA.

Obviously the TAPVA will promote revenue. And it will do that by enabling us to capture more of the divided revenue between the State and the County; will be supporting an act of collections program to gather uncollected fines. We are -- we have several options available to us on that and we're looking into those as we speak. And we also are allowed and enabled by New York State Law to capture an administrative fee, which allows, among other agencies, but TAPVA's in particular, allows the organization or the municipality to recapture administrative costs associated with putting the TAPVA together and operating it.

As I mentioned, the TAPVA is a very complex operation. And just to give you a sense -- I'm not going to go through you every element on the slide, but, you know, we broke the slide up into two areas: Processing and constituent interaction. Just to give you a sense, I mean, if I give you the whole list, it'd be like three pages, but there's calendar scheduling. We have to enter tickets, deposit money, balance computer records and bank deposits, balance the ledgers with monthly reports to Albany, file all of the tickets, all dispositions that get satisfied then have to be transmitted to Albany. And they keep track of those as well; close out dismissed tickets and things of that nature; very processing oriented.

From a constituent interaction point of view, we'll be working a lot with constituents. People will be coming up to the window, be asking questions. We'll be answering phone calls. We have to provide all the cashiering functions, conferencing with prosecutors, provision of hearings and trial, payment options, security screenings and interaction with other agencies, just to name a few of the types of things that we'll do on a day-to-day basis.

So the next steps for a TAPVA would be to -- we hope for approval by 11/7 to begin the build out

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with the maximum security enhancements. We are going to begin scheduling the calendar January 1st of 2013 -- yeah -- - 2013. We'll be able to use the District Court facility through at least February 15th for those early clerical people to work on putting the calendar together. Usually there's about four or so month lag on doing that; hiring obviously of staff and training to begin -- for staff to begin on 1/1/13. And then the operation by statute has to start on 4/1/2013.

So now moving onto Consumer Affairs and Labor --

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Tom, if I can interrupt you right there.

MR. MELITO:

Sure.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

What I think is probably best to do right now, I'm just going to open it up to comments or questions from my colleagues regarding the Traffic and Parking Violation Bureau, specifically since they're really two separate issues and we'll handle them in two separate times.

So, does anybody have any questions for Mr. Melito? Lynne? Legislator Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yes. And I apologize. I walked in a little late and you might have gone over this, but I was just -- I'm curious about a few things. Once this is set up, how many -- what would you call -- Administrative Judge or what would you call the person sitting --

MR. MELITO:

They're called JHO's; judicial Hearing Officers.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. How many Judicial Hearing Officers would be there at one time? In other words, how many rooms would be opened at one time?

MR. MELITO:

Probably up to about six, we believe.

LEG. NOWICK:

And would it be open every day?

MR. MELITO:

The TAPVA at this point we're looking at five days a week, yes. And one evening during the week.

LEG. NOWICK:

Oh. The J --

MR. MELITO:

-- HO. Judicial Hearing Officers.

LEG. NOWICK:

The JHO, they will be attorneys only?

MR. MELITO:

To be honest with you, they are selected by the District Court. The District Court controls that process. They have a list of JHO's that they use. So we'll be getting those through the District

Court.

LEG. NOWICK:

Do you know if they are --

MR. MELITO:

So if they -- if they have to be --

LEG. NOWICK:

Do you know if they are attorneys only or --

MR. MELITO:

Honestly I'm not sure. I think they are. We can find out.

LEG. NOWICK:

I think the County Attorney's behind you.

MR. MELITO:

Oh, wonderful.

MR. COHEN:

They're actually mainly going to be retired Judges that are chosen by the Administrative Judge.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. And the staff that will be working, would they be staff from -- well, we went into this.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Go ahead.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah. Just to clear it up, I know the question has been asked before. There's going to be plenty of staff, I'm sure, clerks, etcetera. Will they be AME employees? Will they be the employees that have been laid off in the past?

MR. MELITO:

Yes. As I mentioned, you may have stepped in late. To the extent that the titles match up, we'll clearly be using the list; the preferred list.

LEG. NOWICK:

Well, the titles -- the titles --

MR. MELITO:

We're working on that list right now, but clerk typist will be in there. Senior clerk typist, bilingual clerk typist. And to the extent that those are being used, yes, those clearly will come right off the preferred list. But these will be County employees, yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

And I'm not sure, do you have any count about how many of the laid off employees fall into those categories?

MR. MELITO:

No, I don't. But I think, you know, we're looking at approximately 18 clerical people or so to staff this operation. Eighteen to twenty-two; something like that.

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LEG. NOWICK:

What would be the total number of people staffing this? Putting the JHO's aside?

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, do we have a number on the actual -- 28.

LEG. NOWICK:

Twenty-eight. And we already know that 18 of them could be taken from the list of laid-off employees?

MR. MELITO:

Theoretically, yes. We have not confirmed the mix of titles at this point in time, but, yes, theoretically, yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Theoretically. And the other ten we're not sure what those titles are yet?

MR. MELITO:

Correct.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. And last question. How do you see this working -- actually it's not the last question. How do you see this working in that -- will -- I found there's a lot of wasted time waiting for the day to start. People are told to be there at 9:30 and there's a long waste of time waiting because obviously you have to wait for a police officer. Will this be run a little bit more --

MR. MELITO:

Effectively? Efficiently?

LEG. NOWICK:

Efficiently?

MR. MELITO:

Yes. I mean, obviously our goal is to do that. And the other point you mention waiting for the Police Officers, you know through the plea bargaining process, you minimize the need to have hearings. And so that's really the drain on the Police Officer's time, is coming here for an actual hearing so --

LEG. NOWICK:

So a plea bargain can be done even if the Police Officer isn't there.

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

In other words, the calendar call would start at 9:30. You're shaking your head.

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

So that would save a lot of time.

MR. MELITO:

Yes, absolutely.

LEG. NOWICK:

And last question, and forgive me if I don't -- I'm not sure I understand the whole thing. Right now there's a State Traffic Violations Bureau.

MR. MELITO:

There's a DMV which is not exactly the same entity as a TAPVA, yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

So who would go to the County one as opposed to the State?

MR. MELITO:

The State one stops operating on April 1st.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. And those people, they're state employees.

MR. MELITO:

Correct.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. Thank you.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for the presentation, Tom. Just a couple of quick questions. First of all, is there a legal distinction between a bureau and an agency?

MR. MELITO:

I'm going to defer to --

LEG. CILMI:

I know that may seem --

MR. MELITO:

-- County Attorney on that one.

LEG. CILMI:

-- minor, but I just want to make sure that there's --

MR. COHEN:

I'm not sure.

LEG. CILMI:

You're not. Okay. That's fine.

MR. COHEN:

I can look into that. Is there something specific, though, that --

LEG. CILMI:

No, I was just worried that -- you know, my concern is that, you know, we've always talked about a Traffic Violations Bureau. And now I'm seeing Traffic and Parking Violations Agency. And I didn't know if the fact that it was an agency, you know, gives us certain latitude that maybe a bureau wouldn't or vice versa.

MR. COHEN:

It's just an entity that was -- that was set up through State legislation.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. That's fine.

MR. COHEN:

So I'm not sure whether there's a distinction, but, you know, we're bound by State law --

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MR. COHEN:

-- regardless.

LEG. CILMI:

Can either of you speak to the parking aspect of this, you know, in relation to the moving violation aspect of it? We give out a certain number of tickets now for parking violations as opposed to moving violations. And does this -- will this give us the ability to somehow issue more parking tickets or --

MR. MELITO:

We always have the ability to issue more parking tickets. It gives us the ability to process those parking tickets more quickly, more effectively. Parking, you know -- New York -- New York? Suffolk County doesn't really give out -- if you look at the rest of the organization -- the other Towns on Long Island, they give out a lot of parking tickets.

LEG. CILMI:

Right.

MR. MELITO:

We don't write a lot of parking tickets, but we could write more. We don't -- you know, it hasn't been a focus of Suffolk County quite frankly.

LEG. CILMI:

Do we expect that it will be now?

MR. MELITO:

Yeah -- yes, it can certainly be part of it, absolutely. Yes, we've spoken with the Police Department. They've talked to us a lot about the issues associated with doing parking tickets. Right now, you know, depending on where it's written, they get returned elsewhere. We would be able to focus now with our own operation to Suffolk County parking tickets.

LEG. CILMI:

And is it possible to issue parking tickets -- is it possible for somebody other than a sworn police

officer to issue parking tickets?

MR. MELITO:

Yes, yes, that happens all the time with Public Safety Officers, for example. Yes.

LEG. CILMI:

What about in Suffolk County given their agreements with the Police?

MR. MELITO:

I don't have an answer to that one.

LEG. CILMI:

Would it be possible based on our contractual agreements, Dennis, for us to have others issue parking tickets?

MR. COHEN:

You mean other Suffolk County employees?

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah.

MR. COHEN:

I mean, I'd have to check to see what -- what other employees would be eligible, you know, through their job specs to do that. I'm not sure if -- if we have any, other than the -- you know, the Police or the Deputy Sheriffs. You know, Park Police in the various parks can certainly issue tickets in those parks. I'm not sure outside of those groups, though, what other employees are, you know -- through their specification, their job specs can issue them.

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah. The reason I ask is that obviously we have scarce resources when it comes down come to sworn officers. And I suppose it's -- I suppose it's possible that Officers may forego writing parking tickets because they're just, you know, they're being pulled in multiple other directions that more directly impact public safety. But sometimes issues relative to illegal parking do impact quality of life. So to the extent that we could less expensively and more effectively control parking and gain some revenue from it, you know, that might be something worth exploring.

The last question I had was with regard to -- to piggy back off of Legislator Nowick's question, if a traffic ticket is issued on a State -- say, the Southern State Parkway by a State Trooper, does that come to the -- to TAPVA or does that go right to the State?

MR. MELITO:

No, that would come --

LEG. CILMI:

That will also come to the T --

MR. MELITO:

That will come to us, yes.

LEG. CILMI:

All right. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Thank you. Legislator Horsley.

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CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Hey, Tom, and thank you for doing the presentation today. As always, you're clear, concise and understandable.

Let me just -- I got a couple of quick questions. First of all, when you said that there's going to be X amount that'll come off the preference list of employees -- and by the way, I applaud the County Executive for the decision to go to the preference list to fill those positions. That makes sense for our County employees. And pass back my thank you's for that.

MR. MELITO:

I will.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Because that was a decision that was a good one. The -- beyond those numbers that are on the preference list for the -- for these clerks, are there also -- will you then be going to the State list afterwards? Because I'm sure there must be people that have been left off on the State list as well. Is that how -- is that the process?

MR. MELITO:

You're referring to the employees from the DMV who --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Yeah.

MR. MELITO:

-- processed these before?

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Yeah. If they are laid off, would that be the preference? Is that how that's going to work?

MR. MELITO:

Well, let's put it this way: They're always open to applying to -- applying for those positions. We've been told by the State that all those people have been reassigned.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

But in other words --

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Recognize --

MR. MELITO:

Sure.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I think Civil Service Law will dictate this.

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

That you gotta go to the State --

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

-- the State list after --

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

You complete the preference list.

MR. MELITO:

Yep.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay, I just wanted to get that down.

MR. MELITO:

Yep.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

The -- also one of the titles that I see is on the list in the Budget are account clerks. Will they also be coming from -- I don't know if we've laid any account clerks off, but I mean, is that -- but that certainly seems like a Civil Service type position.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, absolutely. Off the top of my head, I don't know if that's on the preferred list quite -- so.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I don't either. I'm not sure. I didn't see any. I don't recall any.

MR. MELITO:

Right. But all the titles, you know --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

But then they would go to the State list after that.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah. I mean suffice it to say, we are sure that we have enough titles to staff the TAPVA, yeah.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. Yeah, but I -- I'm looking for that you're going to be using -- utilizing the State list. And --

MR. MELITO:

Sure.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

-- you have a procedure that -- good.

One of the questions that I would have, and I don't know who even does this, and I'm sure maybe Sammy has a better idea, training for these employees, since we've never done this before, and it seems to be there's not a lot of history anywhere in running a County-operated TVB, how are we

training them? Where are we going to get people to train them? Unless, Sam, you're doing that?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Well --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Which I would enjoy.

MR. MELITO:

Let me just jump -- the first thing is -- one of the big things that we found is that the software and the vendors of the software provide significant amount of training.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

So it's going to be like an online course?

MR. MELITO:

Yeah. Well, no, they actually come in and they show you -- because the software has all been designed to go step by step through a process that's evolved over, you know, years.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Oh, so the people you purchase the software from will actually --

MR. MELITO:

Typically they --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

-- do the training on how to use --

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

-- their software?

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely. Typically. And then I'll defer to Sammy on anything else.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Because all the thank you's and all that kind of stuff, all that --

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Well, I was just going to add, you know, having gone through this process with the proposed consolidation for our Department, you know, Civil Service specs will address qualifications for those individuals in terms -- in terms of training for specific tasks. I think it'll largely depends -- I can only speak generically -- it'll largely depend on software --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Will they have -- because it just seems so new for -- I'm just wondering who's out there. But you've looked at it is what I'm asking, yes.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

I haven't, but I'm just speaking generically to the training and just to my knowledge of going through the process of Civil Service. When identifying the specs, the proper specs for those positions, it'll -- it'll certainly be part of the process to make sure that those Civil Service specs meet

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the -- you know, those individuals are being qualified and able to do the work that's going to be asked of them. In terms of tasks, specific training, I can't speak to that but I think Tom just did, so.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Right. Okay. I understand what you're saying. But, Sam, advice for you is maybe to take a look at that before we get too far down the road on who's going to be doing that type of training and, you know, you're going to --

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Well, we'll gladly assist in whatever we can.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Because I'm not sure there's many people out there with the exact -- the exact capability that you're looking for without having some sort of training.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Again, we'll gladly assist in whatever way we're asked to.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. Tom, I've got a question that maybe Fred might be able to help me with. There seems to be -- as you know, we're doing the Budget right now. We're going through the whole process and we're looking at revenue as well as expenditures and the like. I'm a little confused as to the first year's revenue of projections from the TVB. I understand there's, what, like about 2.8 million is going to be coming in from the Red Light Cameras. But over and above that, I've been getting -- I've been getting comments from -- there's not going to be any to five million and -- as far as revenue from the TVB the first year. So I wanted to say what do we put into the Budget? Where do we -- you know, give us some advice, Fred.

MR. POLLERT:

With respect to the TVB revenues, clearly it's an operation that we haven't had yet; therefore, there is a lot of noise in the revenue estimates. We are forecasting that TVB will generate about \$7.4 million worth of revenues the first year. The actual derivation of that is a trade-off of the number of cases which are going to be adjudicated together with the number of cases which may be plead down and would also include an administrative charge for Suffolk County.

The projected first year operations as was originally forecast will show a slight projected net operating shortfall of about \$2.8 million. It's our hope and expectation, because we sent over to the Legislature a conservative Operating Budget, that the first year of operations will actually break even. Included in an assumption of that sort would be that we have a seamless type of transition from the State of New York and can process with the same efficiency level that the State of New York has been processing violations and pleas and doing the adjudications.

So when the TVB was originally forecast with all the estimates, there was an initial startup costs that continues to carry forward in the 2013 Operating Budget. But, again, it is a conservative Operating Budget. And, you know, we are hopeful that the first year of operations will, in fact, break even.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay, so that's the official word from the Administration, that -- break even.

MR. POLLERT:

That's the -- well, what I'm speaking for is the Budget Office. When we put together the Budget forecast, we did not want to, you know, increase the revenue level too high. We were conservative with the --

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CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

No, you didn't do that.

MR. POLLERT:

No, we did not do that, nor do we do that across, like, the board, we did not want to be projecting a surplus, transferring the surplus to the Police Department and have a revenue shortfall in the Police Department. So we were conservative in our revenue forecast because the TVB will be adjudicating tickets in the western Towns, net surpluses will eventually flow through not to the General Fund but to the Police District to reimburse the District for the expense of operations of writing the tickets in the patrols and so on and so forth.

If we have been overly exuberant in the revenue forecast, my concern were -- be that if the revenues did not show up as forecast, we could wind up with a shortfall in the Police District.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I can't imagine that your revenue forecast is overly exuberant. I would think that, if anything, it might be the other way around.

MR. POLLERT:

It is a conservative forecast. We do hope to be able to break even in year one right from the get go. Going forward we are forecasting for the 2014 -- 2014 Operating Budget, a net surplus of about ten-plus million dollars.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. I just wanted to get you on the record because there's numbers floating about and I wanted to see where you're at Fred. Thank you. Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. I know that one of the issues I brought up at the last General Meeting was about the Public Safety issue with the new TVB and what kind of security guards we're using. Was it going to be Dreamland? Are we going to have to use -- and I believe the last meeting there was talk that they use court officers in the courts. So what plan do we have for security? And I'm also thinking about the existing security guards that we have. I don't know if any of them have, you know, gun permits, if they have that Peace Officer status. Do we know if any of our existing County employees do have -- you know, have qualified for Peace Officer status to be eligible for that position. So, if you could kind of give me a little bit of info on that, that'd be great.

MR. TOULON:

Currently from DPW --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

If you could just identify yourself for the record, please.

MR. TOULON:

Sure. Dr. Errol Toulon, Jr., Assistant Deputy County Executive for Public Safety.

The current security staff that the County employees are 16 -- they've only received 16 hours of training from New York State. That's 8 hours of classroom and 8 hours of OTJ. So with the -- with the Traffic Violations and Parking Bureau, or agency, you have to look at the type of components and necessary skills, enter-personal communications, have they been trained to use a magnatom and X-ray machine, are they trained in restraint techniques, are they trained in search techniques? Their observation skills, we're going to have -- we had estimated between 300 to 350 people per day. They can only detain. They cannot arrest. So, I've been trying to put together with DPW some of our cost estimate of retraining them.

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Now through New York State they can receive 47.5 hour certification to be an armed security guard. But, you know, a cost factor has to be put in. And the biggest consideration is District Court. What is going to make the J chosen prosecutors feel secure to come to work? Because that's the biggest thing that we've been told. Not only has motorists or pedestrians have come in to TVB's that have spit on employees, that have punched glass -- so we want to make sure that they feel comfortable and secure. Because we were told that if they do not feel secure, they will not come to work.

LEG. BROWNING:

Well, that's happening at DSS Centers with our current security guards. So, I think, that they're very aware of -- believe me, there's been many issues at DSS Centers with the security guards. So I'm just curious, I mean, what -- you know, would it be that difficult if there was security guards that we currently have if there was an interest to get that additional training or even possible looking at maybe using Deputy Sheriffs? Could we do that until we could get some trained up?

MR. TOULON:

Currently we're looking possibly at not only a retraining but maybe a mix of using certain positions where we can use the current staff that's employed by the County and sworn officers. But that hasn't been determined yet because I'm still waiting to try and get all of the facts and data together so I can present to the County Executive.

LEG. BROWNING:

Well, like I say, I see that, you know, you want to get things -- it's not up right now -- I guess, you know, we have between now and April. So, I think it's -- you know, it would be definitely something we should be getting addressed ASAP.

MR. TOULON:

Yes, ma'am.

LEG. BROWNING:

Thanks.

MR. TOULON:

Okay.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Thank you. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. I know this process is continually evolving and changing. I see there is yet another change. And then we met Friday and now we're -- we've instituted the parking part of this where that wasn't a part of it before from my understanding.

MR. MELITO:

Well, no. Parking was always a function that would be handled by a traffic and parking violations agency. It is not a big piece. It isn't a big piece because we -- Suffolk County does not issue lots of parking tickets. But, I mean, if the -- the capability of doing it is inherent in the legislation for a TAPVA.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, maybe I misunderstood you.

MR. MELITO:

Oh, maybe you're thinking about the fact that most of the parking tickets are issued by Towns and adjudicated in the Towns?

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LEG. GREGORY:

Right. I think when we met Friday to kind of get a briefing on what's going on, my recollection of that conversation was that you had looked at various models, Nassau being one, Southampton, I think New York City and others. And you were looking to really take the DMV model, their second floor model, whatever that means, and I'm not being critical.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, yeah. No, no.

LEG. GREGORY:

I'm just regurgitating the words that were said. Because I guess they were more similar to what we're looking to institute and Nassau wasn't because they have a large portion of parking.

MR. MELITO:

That statement is correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. All right. I'm not --

MR. MELITO:

But it's a different -- it's a different thing, yeah.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- okay, I'm not going crazy. All right.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, they have it because Nassau County has agreements with the -- there are only three Towns obviously in Nassau County.

LEG. GREGORY:

Right.

MR. MELITO:

They have agreements with those three towns to adjudicate parking tickets that under the jurisdiction of those Towns. They do that in the Nassau County TAPVA. We are not doing that. That's correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Oh, okay. All right.

MR. MELITO:

So that's what you're saying. That is correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Right, right, okay.

MR. MELITO:

Yes. But we as a TAPVA can prosecute our own parking tickets, which there aren't many. And Legislator Cilmi brought up, you know, maybe that's an opportunity to expand that part of that operation.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Because when I saw that, I saw the name change. That kind of in my mind thought are we -- is it more than just something that was already delineated --

MR. MELITO:

No, no.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- in the original legislation.

MR. MELITO:

No.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah. Quite frankly, it's just lining up the actual name with what was in the legislation.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, okay, all right. I wasn't sure. And I'll just reiterate my concerns I expressed at that meeting about the collections. I know --

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- we can make projections. And you addressed it. My concern is because of the structure -- you know, if someone comes in, they have a ticket for \$75, they may get two points on their license and we negotiate with them, say even if you pay \$100, you get no points, there's really nothing -- yeah, it's an incentive for that person, but we're not detaining those people until they pay.

MR. MELITO:

Right.

LEG. GREGORY:

And we're not suggesting that we do. I don't think we can do that. How do we get that payment? Because you read stories all the time, people are getting multiple DWI's and multiple license suspensions, etcetera, etcetera. It's just -- I think the collections piece of this is really difficult to capture. So I would like us to really kind of work that out as best we can --

MR. MELITO:

Definitely.

LEG. GREGORY:

So that we can realize revenue that we should.

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely. And we are looking at that. And we're the -- one of the things that you do have available is default judgements; issuing default judgements.

LEG. GREGORY:

Right.

MR. MELITO:

So we're working with the County Attorney's Office as we speak to develop that procedure. And that will be part of this process. Once you can do that, you have a lot more power over collecting those monies. And we're also going to make a -- have a program for collections specifically.

LEG. GREGORY:

Great, great.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, yeah. Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

I know Nassau, they have instituted an amnesty program. And we don't want that.

MR. MELITO:

Correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

So --

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely.

LEG. GREGORY:

So I'm glad you guys are on the ball. Good job.

MR. MELITO:

Thank you. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Thanks. I just want to readdress the Budget question, the numbers again, just very quickly. Maybe Fred can --

MR. MELITO:

Sure.

LEG. CILMI:

-- come back up. Hey, Fred. So, we're now -- the revenue from the Red Light Cameras is now going to be handled in the TVB; correct?

MR. POLLERT:

That is right, yes.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MR. POLLERT:

We included both of the operations which we consider to be bureaus in the broader agency.

LEG. CILMI:

How much are we expecting to collect this year from Red Light Camera revenue in 2012?

MR. POLLERT:

Let me retrieve a copy of the budget. According to Robert Lipp \$9 million.

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LEG. CILMI:

Nine million?

MR. POLLERT:

Yeah.

MS. VIZZINI:

No, it's 29 and-a-half million. It's 22 million in the Red Light Camera fines themselves and the additional administrative fees and fines, add another 8 million. It comes to 29.5.

LEG. CILMI:

Is that revenue minus expenses or is that --

MS. VIZZINI:

No, that's the gross revenue from the Red Light Camera portion.

LEG. CILMI:

The gross. What about the net?

MR. MELITO:

I'm just going to jump in.

MR. LIPP:

The nine million was from 2012. We're talking now about 2013.

MR. MELITO:

Approximately 44, 45 percent this year.

LEG. CILMI:

I'm sorry. Robert, you said the nine million was from 2012?

MR. LIPP:

Yes.

LEG. CILMI:

And is that a net number? Is that --

MR. LIPP:

That's the revenue alone in 2012, is nine million. The 29 million is 2013.

LEG. CILMI:

Wait a minute. Again, I thought I was asking a simple question. So our gross revenue absent expenses this year we expect to only be \$9 million?

MR. LIPP:

We're just talking -- the question, as I understood, was what is this year. There's no Traffic Violations Bureau this year.

LEG. CILMI:

No, forget about the Traffic Violations Bureau for a second.

MR. LIPP:

Right, Red Light.

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LEG. CILMI:

Last -- let's say 2011, that should be a number that's easier to get to, 2011, what was our net on Red Light Cameras?

MR. LIPP:

I don't have the net in front of me. The gross was 12 -- 12 million.

LEG. CILMI:

Gross doesn't really help me.

MR. LIPP:

Okay, I'll get back to you.

LEG. CILMI:

What is the gross? I'm sorry.

MR. LIPP:

Twelve point -- on page 312 of our report, 12.9 million.

LEG. CILMI:

That was the gross. Okay. And, Fred, can you comment, then, on what possibly the net might be in 2011 based on a 12.9 gross?

MR. POLLERT:

Hold on two minutes because we have to look up -- we have to look it up in the Operating Budget. Part of the reason that there's a little bit of a disconnect here is we transfer the operations to a different fund this year. So we have to look it up somewhere else in the Budget. So while Connie's going to dig out the numbers, I'll be happy to answer any other questions that you may have.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. Well, the question I have really stems from that answer. And I guess -- let me ask the question before you get the answer. We're expecting in future years, not in 2013, but in subsequent years to net \$10 million from the Traffic Violations.

MR. POLLERT:

Just on the Traffic Violations. Not the Red Light Cameras.

LEG. CILMI:

Not the Red Light Cameras.

MR. POLLERT:

That's correct.

LEG. CILMI:

But I thought we were considering it altogether?

MR. POLLERT:

We are, but we were talking about the first year's operating cost just in Traffic Violations. On a consolidated basis for -- for 2013, there will be a surplus coming out of a consolidated TVB and Red Light Camera group. So we're not losing money on the consolidated operations. We're only losing money on the TVB the first year. Hopefully that won't be the case, but we are generating net revenues coming out of this consolidated department and we are transferring -- \$12 million? How much are we transferring out?

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CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Tom, I think if you look at the BRO Report, the numbers get pretty clear.

MR. POLLERT:

We're transferring \$16.3 million as a positive fund balance.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Fred, if I can interrupt you just one moment. Tom, if you look at the BRO report on page 212, they've got it broken down what the -- their estimated revenues are. Total in 2013 for the Red Light Cameras is about twenty nine five. On the -- on page 213 they had the estimated costs for 2013. For the Red Light Camera is 10.2 so it comes out to be about 19.3 to our benefit at the end of the day. They've also got their TVB running at about 7.5 in revenues in. And about 10.3 in cost factor for '13 so we're in the hole on that one. I think they put it about 2.5, 2.6. But all said and told we come out about seventeen on top.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Is that about right, Budget Review? As per your report? Am I reading the numbers right?

MR. LIPP:

Correct.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Okay. So I think I helped make that a little clearer for everybody.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. So -- just so that we're all in agreement, then, the -- the budgetary negative three something that we're -- that we budgeted for in 2013 for TVB does not take into consideration Red Light Camera revenue.

MR. POLLERT:

That is correct.

LEG. CILMI:

And although we're budgeting for three something, you're thinking it might end up to be a wash.

MR. POLLERT:

Yes.

LEG. CILMI:

All right. And in subsequent years, in 2014, ten million approximately is from TV -- Traffic Violations alone. And there will be additional revenue from Red Light Cameras.

MR. POLLERT:

That's exactly correct.

LEG. CILMI:

Very good. I just wanted to clarify. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Okay. I got Legislator D'Amaro next. And I remind my colleagues we have a very full agenda. We have another public hearing at 3:30 so if we can try to keep our questions as quickly as possible.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yes, 2:30.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

2:30, excuse me.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I'm going to defer to Legislator Gregory.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Okay, Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

I literally just had a quick question. Out of the -- well, it was really for Fred, I guess. Since we were talking about Red Light Camera revenues, of the revenues that we projected, how much of that have we actually collected? Do you have an idea? You don't have to answer now, if you could find out later. I just want --

MR. POLLERT:

Yes, I will.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

All done? Legislator D'Amaro, do you have any questions?

LEG. D'AMARO:

No, I think they've all been answered. The way I would state it is that for the startup year of 2013 by combining the two units, the Red Light Camera's just going to subsidize, to some extent, the startup costs of the Traffic Bureau. And then going forward we're hoping that they're both in the black. That's pretty much it.

MR. POLLERT:

Absolutely.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, okay.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Based on the very conservative estimates by the County Executive's Office.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah, well, I just find it interesting that we put in the Budget a loss of 2.8 million but we hope and pray that we break even. I just think that's -- we've been playing for six years and nothing seems to be getting any better but --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Mr. D'Amaro, I share the same question. That's in the back of my mind, too.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Fred, I appreciate the fact that you're being conservative in the Budget estimate. And I think that's absolutely the way to go given all the uncertainties and we won't go into everything from, you know, the national economy on down to how we're staffing this thing. So I understand that but -- and it's

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nice to see your optimism, that hopefully it'll break even. And I'm sure with Mr. Melito in charge it probably will. So, I look forward to that.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Great. Thank you very much. If we don't have any other questions on this particular topic, Mr. Melito, if you would, let's move onto the the consolidation of Labor and Consumer Affairs.

MR. MELITO:

Okay. Consolidation of Consumer Affairs and Labor, also known as LLC, the current state of Consumer Affairs and Labor is such that reduced staffing levels have impacted opportunities for revenue generation and enforcement. And this has also forced an uneconomic deployment of staff, i.e. we have inspectors in the office holding hearings as opposed to being out in the field and doing inspections.

Consumer Affairs currently uses a relatively antiquated system. There's definitely a need for technological enhancements. And we also feel that consolidation obviously provides a better physical location for serving the public.

So, basically what we're hoping to achieve with the consolidation is clearly one of the management tenants that you always learn about when you learn about management is to have like functions in similar areas under one span of control to the extent that you can. So that would help us provide a single point of contact for both industry and job seekers, better utilization of skilled staff, leveraging of combined technology skill sets. Labor has a technology group within it; will also be facilitated by the federated approach that we talked about yesterday.

We want to be able to provide a consistent, more comprehensive information system for our constituents. Basically a better interface because we're going to be more centralized. We're going to have cross-pollination of ideas, management that's going to be overseeing the whole operation. And that will be able to help us provide a better interface with the community and other constituents; a fair consistent understandable regulatory environment that protects the public and the consumer and legitimate business owners; job training and matching to support the needs, again, both facilitated by better communication; again based on the conversations we've had in the past; communications, breaking down silos. These are familiar themes and these are things that we're working to forge ahead on.

Sammy Chu is here to answer any specific questions on any of these. But we also hope to gain financially through the merger. By merging the financial units, personnel will be able to work more cohesively and coordinatedly for grants and compliance issues. The closure of the poorly functioning Consumer Affairs building has already resulted in a projected savings in operations cost of \$50,000. And we're hoping to achieve by the end of 2013 about \$500,000 of additional revenues. And we're going to be doing that through better enforcement and operations, more effective issuance of licenses, more effective fine generation, as Legislator Gregory is not here, as better collection capabilities and basically more economic use of staff.

So that's basically the three slides I have on that. We'll open it up to questions for Sammy and or I or anybody else that can answer those questions.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Commissioner Chu, did you want to add anything before we go to the questions portion here?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

I know we're in an interest of time here so I just want to offer up that I know this still has to go the -- there's a resolution that's actually going to come up for the Committee to consider, that I will be glad to meet with any of the Legislators and certainly offer to go over this in deeper detail and

the Committee.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

I think we'll have you to the Committee to give us a presentation. Legislator Cilmi?

LEG. CILMI:

Just very quickly, how are we handling Weights and Measures? What are we doing with them? We have two Commissioners right now. What happens with the second Commissioner after we merge?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

I can speak to the two Commissioners. Two Commissioners are better than one, isn't it? The intent of the Administration --

LEG. CILMI:

Not when you're scrounging for millions of dollars of revenue, it's not.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Agreed. Commissioner Meguin came on, I think, in March? In March. And showing the data and performance of the Department, you can see that just from a -- just from a change in the Commissioner position, there was a trend, although certainly not the trend that we need to get to, because there is still serious deficiencies at the existing Department that need to be addressed. The intent of the Administration, it is my understanding, is in the newly formed Department to appoint Commissioner Meguin to the Chief Deputy Commissioner position in the newly formed department; and in which capacity Commissioner Meguin will continue to serve largely in a similar capacity he serves now.

LEG. CILMI:

Is there also a Weights and Measures person? Because I think that's statutorily required.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

That was reviewed thoroughly. But I will defer to the County Attorney on that question.

MR. COHEN:

Yes. Pursuant to the Agriculture and Markets Law, the Director of Weights and Measures can be the Commissioner of the Consumer Affairs. So, I believe the intent in this case would be for the Commissioner to be the Director.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. That's what I was looking for. Thanks.

MR. COHEN:

Okay.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yes, thank you. I get the benefit of actually being in the same building as you two guys. So so far I know it's worked physically and the geography seems to have worked pretty well. I like the idea of the enhanced enforcement in collection. We've had some conversations about that before. There's no point in having a penalty or fine system in place for merchants who don't comply, if ultimately all it is is just a piece of paper floating around there. Ultimately we have to be vigorous with it. And that's what changes behavior.

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There was a place I wanted to go with this besides just the enforcement of the collection piece. I know what it is. And this is specifically on the Consumer Affairs' side. But, Commissioner, I guess, it would be relevant for you, too. One of my constituents was here yesterday, Kevin Buyer, who -- gasoline station operators. He's only about a half a mile away from here, right down Vets Highway. He was very involved last year in the fall, if you remember, Bob, about the licensing changes that we had talked about in ultimate combination, if you will.

Yesterday he came to us and he talked about the increased tank inspection fee that's in the 2013 Recommended Budget. And it occurred to me that as much as you two guys are merging function, there's still another piece out there that we ultimately should be able to speak to: The people we regulate. You know, it's that hole tipping point concept that a merchant who's subject to licensing fine -- or licensing and fees, from a whole range of governmental oversight at some point just raises his hands up in the air and he says "there's no point in me putting the key in the door anymore. The hell with it. I'll go operate, you know, a hot dog rig or something."

So specifically when it comes the stuff with the Health Department, and tank fees, I'm going to ask you speak with them. Because from my perspective, my constituent doesn't want to know about multiple different County offices. They want to know the one place where they go to take care of what they have to do in order to be legitimate. Otherwise they get out of the business; or worse they run under the radar. So in the process of you harmonizing your two offices, you in particular, can connect with them in the Health Department, I would appreciate it. All right.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

I'd just like to speak quickly to the principle, that since, you know, I think we both heard about this issue last couple of days, but just speaking to the principle, I just want to say I'm very proud of the Labor Department and our ability just in the past several months to be able to better synergize with other sister departments. I know a person here today is Commissioner Minieri. Just in a short term, we've been to very much cohesively move in the same direction with the Department of Economic Development as well as the County IDA. And I'm glad to report that after few months those three agencies are very much working to leverage each others resources to make sure that, to your point, when a business walks through anyone's door, that we're all in a position to provide and be aware of the services and considerations for those particular businesses. And I think that's a big portion of this. I think in a time where we have economic distress for a lot businesses, it is an important principle and we would take it very much closely to heart that we need to consider that businesses don't want to hear about this agency or "this is not my department." So the principle will very much be followed through.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Good. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Thank you. Do we have any other Legislators who have any questions on this topic? I have -- Legislator D'Amaro seems he's out of the room. Here he is.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Sorry. Is it my turn? Is it my turn?

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So, what is the number of employees in the Department of Labor right now?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

As of today 140 acting employees.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. And, Commissioner, what are the number of employees in Consumer Affairs?

COMMISSIONER MEGUIN:

Roughly 30 total people including myself.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, what's the exact number?

COMMISSIONER MEGUIN:

Well, when you say number of people, we have one person --

LEG. D'AMARO:

How many employees are on the payroll; are we paying?

COMMISSIONER MEGUIN:

30, sir.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. It's not roughly 30; it's 30.

COMMISSIONER MEGUIN:

That's correct sir.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Because I thought I heard you say roughly 30. Okay. So after the merger, what would be the number of employees at the Department of Labor not including the Consumer Affairs? You know, the Division.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Not including? So, so I'll answer as best I can. There's 140 existing Labor Department employees. There's 30 existing Consumer Affairs employees. So that will -- all those employees will remain in there -- will remain employed. Certainly this calls for repurposing of certain positions. The Budget calls for creation of -- I mean -- in the Consumer Affairs function but you're interested in the Labor Department functions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. So the point I'm making is that the number of employees is staying the same.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

The number of employees in the Labor Department functions will be remaining the same. The Budget calls for seven new positions, one new full-time position and six part-time positions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

In the Department of Labor?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

In the consolidated department.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So --

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COMMISSIONER CHU:

Doing -- performing Consumer Affairs functions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So you want to bring Consumer Affairs up to, then, 37 individuals?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

That's correct. I should add that, you know, there are synergies between some functions. So that's one of the intents --

LEG. D'AMARO:

Sure.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

To make the distinction is not entirely correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Well, at the end of the day, though, you'll have 140 plus 37 employees if the Budget's enacted as recommended by the County Executive.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Correct.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So, that's plus seven employees going into 2013.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Correct. One full-time and six part-time.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. So the target here or the purpose -- the underlying primary purpose behind the consolidation is not so much cost savings; it's more about generating revenue.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

It's using existing personnel more effectively. Yes, increasing revenue as a symptom of providing better service to the two sets of constituents being the consumers as well as the industries that we have been designated to regulate.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right. So, in other words, by having -- let's say some of the administrative functions normally performed by Consumer Affairs as a separate unit today be performed in the Department of Labor by other employees, it will free up your inspectors and personnel more out in the field and doing inspections and what they're primary functions should be.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Very much so. Just as the life blood of Consumer Affairs and the functions they perform is the investigator function, which right now are performing many functions. And unfortunately not performing certain functions that they should be because of the constraints on their time.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Right.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

And this calls for better use of their time.

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LEG. D'AMARO:

And, Commissioner, have you -- have you put an estimated number on the increase in revenue you expect from accomplishing these efficiencies?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

The 2013 Budget after -- calls for 10%, roughly \$500,000 in additional revenue based upon existing Consumer Affairs' functions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

So if the functions all stay as is, you anticipate roughly 500,000 more in revenue being generated?

COMMISSIONER CHU:

Yes, for the existing functions.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Yeah. And that also has an impact and just more enforcing our laws and stepping up enforcement, so to speak. It's not even about the dollars and cents necessarily.

COMMISSIONER CHU:

It's enforcement, collections, you know, better ability to perform hearings. Yes, all those things.

LEG. D'AMARO:

All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate it.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

No problem. Thank you. Is there any other questions? Okay. We're going to move on. Thank you Mr. Chu for your presentation. Thank you, Tom, always for your insightful presentations and we'll see you in a few weeks to deal with the Committee. Did you have another question for Mr. Melito before he goes back? Legislator Hahn.

LEG. HAHN:

Is anyone going to address the movement of self insurance to the Law Department?

MR. MELITO:

We can. I'm not prepared to do that today. We can come back and do that, certainly, sure. You mean, Risk Management to the Attorney's Office?

LEG. HAHN:

Yes.

MR. MELITO:

Yes, we can certainly schedule to do that, yeah.

LEG. HAHN:

Because I thought that would be under this Committee. And we certainly need to know the justification for that and --

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Sure. Is there anybody from the County Executive's Office? Maybe our County Attorney?

MR. MELITO:

I can speak to it generally.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

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Yeah, maybe if you just -- I know you don't really have the specifics, but maybe if you could give Legislator Hahn a quick run down; a very quick down.

MR. MELITO:

In short, we've taken a look at the Risk Management. It's very hard for me to stand in one place when I'm talking. We've gone through the Risk Management function. And the Risk Management function, as you probably know, is very regulatory oriented. They're legal oriented. There's a lot of procedures associated with doing things properly. And it's very complex. And so we took a look at that. And currently there really is no functional benefit or reason for it to be located under Civil Service.

LEG. HAHN:

I agree.

MR. MELITO:

Good. And the County Attorney's Office -- our County Attorney is familiar with Risk Management and Workers' Comp in particular.

LEG. HAHN:

I want to ask because there's a -- this is actually kind of confusing because there's a bill to move it. But it's in the Budget to move it. You have a bill --

MR. MELITO:

Yeah.

LEG. HAHN:

-- that was laid on the table to move Risk Management?

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Legislator Hahn, it's the typical procedure; there's a resolution that follows up and makes the budget --

LEG. HAHN:

Right. So I'm trying to figure out when the most -- you know, because this could be a long conversation now. There was an article that kind of piqued my interest in Newsday on September 14th about Nassau paying too much for its Workers' Compensation. I don't know if you saw that.

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, of course.

LEG. HAHN:

It piqued my interest. I got a hold of -- an audit from 2006 by Ernst & Young. I have a whole slew of questions. Now, I don't know if we want to go through them now but I want to -- what I kind of want to understand is, in the Budget, and maybe even Fred needs to come up for this, we have \$32 million budgeted for Workers' Compensation costs?

MR. MELITO:

Okay.

LEG. HAHN:

I want to know what does that cover? Like what are we going to spend \$32 million on? Is that just medical expenses?

MR. MELITO:

I can tell you that -- not having worked on the --

LEG. HAHN:

Right.

MR. MELITO:

But 70% of all Workers' Compensation costs resolve around 207 c's, which are Peace -- Police Officer disabilities.

LEG. HAHN:

Seventy percent?

MR. MELITO:

Seventy percent.

LEG. HAHN:

Is this? Of the 32 million?

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. HAHN:

Now is that for medical expenses?

MR. MELITO:

It's both because --

LEG. HAHN:

Or is that for indemnity --

MR. MELITO:

207 c's -- see here's where we start getting into -- you know, we've been working to put together a plan with Risk Management to address a number of these issues. One of the reasons we wanted to put it on the County Attorney's Office is because 207 c process is very complicated, very expensive but --

LEG. HAHN:

What made you decide to move it to Law and not to use a third party administrator? Because I've have looked -- I've noticed that a lot of other Counties -- again, they're not our size. So maybe part of the reason to bring it into the Law Department is that, you know, we have existing workers and --

MR. MELITO:

Well, you can still use a third party administrator for specific functions. Almost everybody in a large organization with Workers' Comp uses third party administrators for some piece of that. And so one of the things you would do --

LEG. HAHN:

Right now what do we use a third party administrator for?

MR. MELITO:

We don't have a third party administrator.

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LEG. HAHN:

Nothing. So who does, like, the investigations?

MR. MELITO:

We have staff -- we have people in the Risk Management staff and in the Workers' Comp area. So you can operate in that way but we felt that we need --

LEG. HAHN:

Do you know how many open cases we have right now?

MR. MELITO:

Oh, God, I don't remember off the top of my head. It's a bunch. 5,000?

LEG. HAHN:

Do you know what departments they're from?

MR. MELITO:

Seventy percent is from the Police Department and --

LEG. HAHN:

Are from the Police, okay. But of the -- do you know -- and how many of them are lost time cases?

MR. MELITO:

I don't have those numbers. That's why I said, if you wanted to get into that, we have information on that. Workers' Comp is very complicated and it doesn't --

LEG. HAHN:

It's very complicated and I'm very glad that this is happening.

MR. MELITO:

Okay.

LEG. HAHN:

But I also want to make sure that we're not just moving what we're doing now to Law.

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely not. It's one of our initiatives for Performance Management. And we've been working with Barry Paul. We've been working with the Risk Management group. Yeah, okay. No, that is one of our initiatives quite frankly. And we've been working with the -- Barry Paul from Performance Management as well as with the Risk Management people. They've been very cooperative. We're in the process of putting together a plan for next year on how we're going to address these issues. We believe we can reduce the cost for Workers' Comp significantly; certainly over the next two years.

LEG. HAHN:

Do we have a handle on what our -- of open cases, what the life time liabilities are? Like, do we know -- are we operating as a Pay As You Go model?

MR. POLLERT:

Yes, we are operating as a Pay As You Go model. Workmen's Compensation, again, is fairly complex. With respect to the \$32 million, that primarily relates to medical claims and direct medical costs payouts for individuals including those that have long term type of disabilities that are receiving annual or monthly payments for the Workmen's Compensation case.

LEG. HAHN:

Where are indemnity costs reflected?

MR. POLLERT:

That would be in the \$32 million. The last time is reflected in a subobject called 123 under the personnel accounts. So what we do is, funds are -- when someone's out on Workmen's Compensation, they transfer from the permanent salary line to a subobject called Workmen's Compensation-Disability.

LEG. HAHN:

After the 39 weeks?

MR. POLLERT:

Yes. So, you know, perhaps a separate conversation would be worthwhile so that we can put together the full --

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Legislator Hahn, we are running 15 minutes passed schedule here and I have a number of cards.

LEG. HAHN:

Maybe we can do this: Can we -- can we have a special discussion about this issue at the next Government Ops Committee in time for that bill? I have a feeling we're going to, like, let this happen in the Budget, but I think it warrants, you know, a fuller discussion the way we discussed the other pieces. And I feel like we're getting rushed now but --

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

We can do that at that time. And I know we have a public hearing on that bill as well.

Legislator Nowick, you had a question on the issue?

LEG. NOWICK:

Yes. Tom?

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

Just quickly. I was just curious. And you guys do a lot -- I know you do a lot of work. And I wasn't sure -- had the Performance Management Team ever done -- and this is a little off on a tangent -- a review on the Foley Nursing Home to see if that could be run a little bit more efficiently before being sold?

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

And there was nothing that could be done to make that more efficient; to make it more like a proprietary nursing home and run a little bit more efficiently?

MR. MELITO:

Yeah. We were not involved in the Foley Home Analysis.

LEG. NOWICK:

So Performance Management has nothing to do with going over those plans just to see if there could

be more --

MR. MELITO:

Not in this particular case. And, you know, a note that we really didn't get started 'til April sometime. So I don't know when those discussions started. But, no, we have not been part of that.

LEG. NOWICK:

Would that have been something you would have done if you were in -- if you were there before -- would that be something that would fall into the category of the Performance Management Team to look into different --

MR. MELITO:

To look at effectiveness and efficiency of operations in general is a function that we hope to get to more, quite frankly. To do an analysis on an organization as large as the Foley Nursing Home, for example, probably would have required a significant effort with extra resources quite honestly. I mean, for 25 years I was a consultant and, you know, for public sector organizations. And those are the kinds of things we did. And we would have, you know, a lot more staff available to us that would focus 100% day after day on doing something like. That's a major significant management consulting type of project. So conceptually --

LEG. NOWICK:

And I do agree with you. And, you know, I noticed this along the way -- and, of course, you had just started in April. And along the way, I can't help thinking that it would never hurt for the public sector in a case like the Foley Nursing Home to reach out to administrators of proprietary nursing homes and have meetings as to what they're doing that makes their home successful and what we could learn from them. And I know it's too late for the nursing home, but I'm just throwing it out at you because there will be things now with the Management Team you will be looking into. And although we keep it within government sometimes, sometimes the experts -- I hate to say it -- are out of government and it's a good way to reach across the aisle.

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely.

LEG. NOWICK:

So, just for the future.

MR. MELITO:

Absolutely.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Thank you, Legislator Nowick. Legislator D'Amaro, did you have something you wanted to add quickly on Mr. Melito -- or can we move on?

LEG. D'AMARO:

I just had a quick question.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Sure.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I just wanted to -- just so I can do my homework on this Risk Management question, it's now in the Department of Civil Service.

MR. MELITO:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Where was it prior to that?

MR. MELITO:

Yeah, I believe it was under the Comptroller's Office.

LEG. D'AMARO:

And do you know when it was moved from Comptroller to Civil Service?

MR. MELITO:

According to Fred, 15, 20 years ago.

LEG. D'AMARO:

It was moved from the Comptroller to Civil service 20 years ago?

MR. PERNICE:

I think it was 2001.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Who said that? 2001. All right. Has Risk Management ever been under the auspice of the County Attorney's Office?

MR. MELITO:

Not to my knowledge.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay. All right. And, Fred, I have with one more question, if you would.

MR. POLLERT:

Yes.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Only because while you're here, it saves a phone call. At one point the prior County Executive had proposed moving Risk Management to the County Attorney's Office in a Budget, I believe. Do you recall that?

MR. POLLERT:

Yes. And I believe it was moved by the Legislature to the Civil Service Department. Then I think it was under --

LEG. D'AMARO:

We kept it where it was in effect. Do you remember what Recommended Budget that was?

MR. POLLERT:

No, I don't.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Could you find that out for me?

MR. POLLERT:

Yes.

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LEG. D'AMARO:

Okay, just send me an e-mail.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

I think it's all in the Budget Review Report, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

Oh, all right. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

They did a pretty bang up job.

MR. PERNICE:

Yeah, it was 2007.

LEG. D'AMARO:

There you go. All right. 2007. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR CALARCO:

Okay. What I'm going to do is turn it over to my Co-Chair Legislator Horsley who's going to pick up the Economic Development end of today's agenda.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENERGY OPERATING BUDGET MEETING

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay, thank you very much, Legislator. And good job on those public hearings.

Let me invite Commissioner Minieri up here. And maybe see if we have any questions for her. I have a lot of cards, yes. And Miss Fahey.

I guess we'll just start off saying what do you think of the Budget and you guys happy with what's going on in the Economic Development world that we should know relating to the Budget?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Good afternoon everyone. Yes, I reviewed, of course, the Recommended County Executive's Budget for Economic Development and Planning. And I believe -- you know, I believe it provides adequate resources for us to achieve all of our goals.

I would like to at least -- I'd like to report some good news because everyone, I think, was aware we had our annual auction yesterday. And I'd like to just share the results which were, frankly, outstanding. We brought in gross revenues of about \$4.4 million. I think it was one of the most successful auctions the County has had in a number of years despite the economic situation. And I will tell you that we sold 113 properties. Only about four properties remained unsold. And there were some really wonderful comments being made about the efficiency of the auction this year. We used technology that gave people the ability to go on line and see the property and get information before they got to the auction.

So I would really like -- I'd like to acknowledge Wayne Thompson in Real Estate and his team for a really terrific and outstanding event yesterday; and also acknowledge the IT Department for assisting them in some of the state of the art technology that allowed this event to go very successfully.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

We like the money.

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COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Yeah, it was a wonderful result; surely it was. And it's well in excess of the costs that were on the books for -- for the maintenance of those parcels by the County.

LEG. CILMI:

Mr. Chair, may I ask a question specific to that issue before we get too far afield of it?

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Would you mind, Miss Minieri?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Not at all.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay, great.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

So \$4.4 million. Is that -- do we budget for that revenue?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

No. My understanding is that it's not reasonably estimate-able during the budget season. I don't know exactly -- that's an accounting term, by the way. But it's not reasonably estimate-able because during the year they don't know exactly which parcels will go for auction. You know, as you are probably well aware, it takes a number of years before parcels are at the stage where they can be auctioned off. So, you know, at this point during the budget process there is no estimate being made for the auction on an annual basis.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. So is that -- Budget Review, do you concur with that? Do we have -- do we have to now consider that in amending next year's budget proposal?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Can I add something before -- I'm sorry, Gail, I don't mean to --

MS. VIZZINI:

Go ahead.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Yeah, I just want to be clear also that as you're aware, there are costs related to carrying these properties, too.

LEG. CILMI:

Sure.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

So the gross revenues would be net. I'm sorry, Gail.

MS. VIZZINI:

Yeah. From a technical point of view, there is a revenue code 1051, gain of sale from tax acquired properties and the Adopted Budget had \$8.7 million. The estimate in the 2013 Recommended is considerably less. It's about 664,000. But Joanne is absolutely correct. On a gross basis, even if

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they did bring in the 4.2, we would have to confer with you in terms of what the County -- costs the County has to recoup. And then we would be better able to tell whether the \$664,000 estimate is accurate.

LEG. CILMI:

So the Adopted 2012 had eight point something?

MS. VIZZINI:

(Nodding head in the affirmative)

LEG. CILMI:

Is that gross or --

MS. VIZZINI:

That was what we expected to bring in.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MS. VIZZINI:

When we do the '13 Budget, we do an estimate for the current year. That's considerably less.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. So now let me just ask my question again: In light of that information, if the -- if the 2012 budget anticipated \$8 million of revenue and we received four from this auction -- did we do any other auctions? We didn't do any other auctions this year, right?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

No. Yeah, but I believe that estimate is from other -- other opportunities like, for example, 2013 Budget of 660 is specifically for a sale of the parcel of land. I don't believe the auction parcels are specifically estimated in the Budget. There are other land sales that go in that are part of that revenue number.

LEG. CILMI:

Yes, true? Not true? Joanne, let me ask you another question while they're --

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

We can follow up. We can crystalize that but --

LEG. CILMI:

Yeah.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

It's okay.

LEG. CILMI:

Let me just ask you one other question while they're working on their answer to that. You said there are 113 properties sold. Each to a separate buyer or were there fewer buyers who bought multiple pieces of property?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

I don't have that detail available, but I'll get back to you on that.

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LEG. CILMI:

That would be terrific.

Back to you, Gail.

MS. VIZZINI:

And the question is?

LEG. CILMI:

The question is, if the Budget expected about eight something million dollars in 2012, and we received four from this auction, were there other sales that supplement that \$8 million? And if not, do we have to now account for four million additional dollars in next year's Budget?

MS. VIZZINI:

The 2013 has already accounted for the fact that the 8.7 did not materialize. The revenue code is -- it's referred to as the gain from the sale, meaning we have to net out what Joanne mentioned earlier, which is the County has to recoup our costs. So whatever is left over after that would be the 2012 estimate.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. You said the 2013 Budget proposal already took into account --

MS. VIZZINI:

The difference between the 8.7 that was adopted --

LEG. CILMI:

Right.

MS. VIZZINI:

And the fact that that estimate is less than, you know -- is only 664,000. That's -- you know --

LEG. CILMI:

I see. So while we may expect to receive revenue exceeding 600 and whatever thousand dollars next year, it's net of the \$4 million difference in 2012's numbers basically; right? Did I lose you? I'm sorry.

MS. VIZZINI:

They made their estimate based on, you know, knowing that 8.7 was not going to come in.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay. That's fine. That answers my question. Thanks. Great job on this. Really good work.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

One more case, Legislator, of over estimating revenues last year. That's what it boiled down to.

LEG. CILMI:

You said it.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. Yes, I'm sorry, yes, Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Just before we move on, I know, Joanne, that you said that there were four parcels -- there were 113 that were auctioned; four didn't. Do you have an idea of those four parcels, what they are?

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Because I know -- I think there was a number of four -- I think one was in my District, two were in Kate's, and then I think maybe one in Doc's that we've tried to auction off, I think in three auctions now. And I'm just curious if those are those same parcels. I'm sure you don't have the information out, but if you could just follow up for me on that?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Yes, absolutely.

LEG. GREGORY:

All right. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. All righty. Commissioner, what else would you like to address with us? Anything else you'd like to say? Positions, how are we doing on -- you're a happy camper?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

We have a lot going on. You know, the consolidation of the Economic Development and Planning Department is going extremely well. As you noted in the Budget, we're taking on a couple more responsibilities related to the Cornell contracts. And we're excited. We have a team, that I think would be quite responsive to that responsibility. The -- you know, we're expecting closing of the Yaphank land sale at the end of November; again, a huge transaction and a very successful one for the County.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I heard the other day from the proprietor that they had mailed a check; is that true? Check's in the mail?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

I hope so.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I had heard that. I mean --

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

My understanding is it should be closing by the end, so.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Oh, it hasn't closed then?

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

No, it has not yet closed.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I guess she was talking --

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

But I think it's scheduled to close.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. Maybe that's what she was saying.

COMMISSIONER MINEI:

Yes. And we're looking into a number of different opportunities for the Economic Development Department to create some value for the County and we'll be looking at the -- the open space

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opportunities. We'll be looking at the transfer of development rights. Again, I'm reviewing those programs right now internally and we'll be excited to come up with the program to get some feedback on and to look at the assets that the County has that could be sold or back on the tax rolls.

Also doing a big inventory of the land, which is huge project, but we're going to understand every little parcel we have. We have a lot of land but a lot of that land is being utilized for one thing or another. So we're going through that literally parcel by parcel. It's going to be a terrific data base. We'll have a nice clean understanding of all of our lands so we're excited about that.

And we're working very closely with companies and the City -- not the city -- listen to me -- the State, to work very closely with companies to make sure that we're attentive to their needs to keep them here in Suffolk County to help them grow their businesses. And we're very much on the frontline in a number of different specific activities now. So, we're excited about that.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Let me just add that -- and I'm glad you're attentive because that is all important. I hear today on the radio that the Islanders are going to Brooklyn. And, boy, we don't want that to happen in Suffolk County.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

For sure.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Not the Islanders, but any other future -- any other big businesses that we have here.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Understandable, yes.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Anything else you'd like to add at this point in time? Let me just say quickly, Commissioner Chu mentioned before about the synergies of the -- of your Departments working together with Labor and been meshing well. And I congratulate you on that. That's all good news. And that's the direction -- we all want to be pulling in the same -- same direction. And so thank you very much for, you know, your work this year. You're doing a good job. And keep the Legislature up-to-date and in your plans so, you know, we can be partners as well so that we can all move forward.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

Yes, I will. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Anything else you want to add? I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off, folks.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

No. I can answer any question that you have right now.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

No, I think we're good. We have a whole host of cards to go through. So, thank you very much for being here.

COMMISSIONER MINIERI:

All right. Thank you.

PUBLIC PORTION

All right. I'm going to -- I've got several cards here under the Public Portion. You'll be -- you'll have three minutes. The first is -- first card is from Professor Rooney from the Oil Heat Institute.

MR. ROONEY:

You're only using that title, Mr. Chairman, because you came and spoke to my graduate classmen.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

It was fun. I enjoyed it.

MR. ROONEY:

It was. Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Kevin Rooney and I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Oil Heat Institute of Long Island, a trade association representing the interest of the full service heating oil industry in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Since I now have over 30 years experience of working cooperatively with the Department of Consumer Affairs, I think I am somewhat qualified to discuss their operational activities.

The operations of Consumer Affairs combines three distinct and separate functions. One, it administers and oversees the licensing appropriate to a variety of trades to ensure that the work being performed by plumbers, electricians, home improvement and other contractors is done so only by those who have met specific technical performance and testing criteria.

Two, it has a statutory function under the State Agriculture and Markets Law to administer the weights and measures portion of such law to ensure that scales, meters and other devices of volume metric measurement are calibrated correctly, are appropriately sealed and are accurate.

And, lastly, the Department has a broad dual role in its regulatory and oversight functions to assist and protect not only the consuming public against the predatory practices of unscrupulous and unethical vendors of goods and services, but also to protect law abiding businesses from the same anti-competitive threat. For sometime through a variety of commissioners, acting or otherwise, Consumer Affairs has been a less than optimally effective entity of County government. And I hope you appreciate my political correctness. Legitimate businesses want and need this Department of County government to be a strong, vibrant and visible presence in the community to deter unscrupulous behavior, to punish those who engage in such activity; and by so doing protect the consuming public. Thus my industry association strongly supports the proposed merger of the Departments of Labor and Consumer Affairs.

Unbalanced we feel that there are clearly economies of scale. There are synergies of both purpose and mission. And there are potential efficiency enhancements to be derived from a unified management structure. Therefore, I strongly encourage your positive action regarding this proposed departmental merger. And I'd be pleased to answer any questions if you have them.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Kevin.

MR. ROONEY:

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

We do appreciate your comments and that was terrific.

Okay, Charles Gardner from the Long Island Chapter of National Electricians Contracting Association. Charlie, good to see you again.

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MR. GARDNER:

Yes, Charles Gardner. I'm the Director of Government Affairs for the Long Island Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association. But I think I'm here more from my perspective as a former County employee. Back in 1972 when Suffolk County initiated occupational licensing, it was within the purview of the Department of Labor. And in 1974 it was transferred to the Department of Consumer Affairs. I was a part of that transfer back then. And I spent a good deal of my remaining time with the County; a little bit more even than Kevin Rooney with the Department of Consumer Affairs. And I think that -- I know that my association and myself personally applaud this initiative. And we strongly support speaking from the Consumer Affairs' point of view the merger.

I agree with Kevin, in the past couple of years -- and by the way, I have high praise for our current Commissioner Bob Meguin. He's been there for a very short time. Commissioner Sammy Chu mentioned that he has been able to turn things around and he has. And I can say that just in the very recent past, there has been more outreach to industry than in the last four years combined. So, we strongly look forward to continued cooperation. As Kevin said, legitimate businesses want a strong, effective Consumer Affairs. They want enforcement and need it. The two main customers of Consumer Affairs are our residents, our consumers and also the businesses, especially those that are licensed.

What has really fallen down in the past couple of years is the outreach. There have been no meetings with any trade associations that I'm aware of in the past several years by anyone from Consumer Affairs. That used to be a regular routine occurrence. Trade associations are aware -- most of the information resides on just what's going on within those associations. They have the experience and knowledge and they can transmit that to County officials. But they can't if there's no communications. And that communication has been effectively zero for quite sometime now.

I'm very pleased that the current proposal allows the County Executive to appoint the Commissioner of Labor, Licensing; and Consumer Affairs to be Director of Weights and Measures. That always has been an option within the State law for Nassau/Suffolk Counties. And that person should be serving in that position at the pleasure of the County Executive. It should not be a Civil Service title. People say why? Because the Director of Weights and Measures and all the different municipalities, they take their direction and their policy setting from the State Director of Weights and Measures. And whomever that Director might be, that's who the Director in Albany communicates with on a one-to-one basis. So it does not make any sense to have a Commissioner here -- a Director of Weights and Measures here responding to Albany. All of that information should flow to the County Commissioners. So, again, I applaud that proposal.

Field work has been -- no fault of the Commissioner, but field work and proactive activities has been reduced significantly. The Department has really contracted in upon itself because of the every day activities; the hundreds and hundreds of licenses that are up for renewal, suspension, revocation, voluntary suspensions. All that work goes on. And regardless of how many employees we have -- we have 30 right now in Consumer Affairs, 28 effective because of physical problems. All that work continues to go on. We need the additional resources of the Labor Department.

So, again, on behalf of the Association of National Electrical Contractors and also myself personally, I applaud the proposal and hope to see that go through. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Charlie, thank you very much for your comments today. And high praise to you. High praise. Thank you.

Michael Murtha from Murtha Construction.

MR. MURTHA:

Okay, thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Michael, you're always welcomed. And how's our standards these days? Are we following them --

MR. MURTHA:

Yes, we are.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

-- out there in the field?

MR. MURTHA:

Yes, we are.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Nice going. Congratulations. And thank you very much for all the help you gave us last year.

MR. MURTHA:

My pleasure. Thank you.

I'm Mike Murtha, President of Murtha Construction. Also a -- I first got licensed in the mid-eighties with Suffolk County Department of Consumer Affairs. I'm also a 25-year member of NARI. It's National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

It's been frustrating over the years, and especially in Suffolk County where legitimate contractors are being undercut by unlicensed contractors with no insurance. And they're not paying into the system either by licensing or also taxes that we collect and move along through payroll taxes and that sort of thing.

I believe that the merger of these two entities would be a terrific thing. Because I believe under the leadership of Sammy Chu that if we put real teeth into this industry, the revenue being generated could be incredible. I know that the City of Long Beach and also the Village of Freeport are a couple of areas that if you're not licensed in there, you pay dearly and you pay the penalty. As a result it's a very well governed situation.

So, I'll keep it short and brief. I do believe that you should support this and I certainly do as well. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Murtha.

All right, Vito Minei, Cornell Cooperative Extension.

MR. MINEI:

Good afternoon. I am Vito Minei, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. And I have a couple of objectives. I hope to get through in three minutes.

As our presentation's passed out, you'll see our four-part -- our Mission Statement on the top. I just want to quickly review the material I went through and presentation to the full Legislature two weeks ago. And on that table, if I could, you'll see our six major programs that are in our core appropriation. And they're broken out with the four that were -- had County appropriations in 2012. And those that were totally de-funded in 2012. Therefore, as you move from left to right, you can say how evident our problem is.

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Last year the County Executive called for a 5% cut. Unfortunately with the total de-funding, we received a 12% cut; therefore, as you move forward, this County Executive, Mr. Bellone and his administration, tried to restore two of our programs. Unfortunately in trying to reallocate the money from the -- just the four programs that were appropriated, we come up \$194,000 short. And what we're asking for is that you consider increasing our budget by 194,000. If you do agree to that, all you're really doing is bringing us up to a comparable level with other major contract agencies that have been receiving 5% cuts across the board.

Also, I want to bring to your attention, not on the table, is the 35% cut to the 477 project ITM. Now, that's a project that we've been working with you for several years on County property. So, if you want to cut \$35,000, we really need some guidance from you on where you want the direction of that program to go, because that's a big cut. It comes in. You reinstate it. You cut it again. So, we really need some guidance on whether or not you want that program to go forward.

If I may, I'd like to really redirect your attention to the -- to the second page and the reason that I'm here today. I understand after being around County government for 40 years, the crafting of a budget is more than a math exercise. I know you have to really align it with the priorities. And I just want to note something: In reading the BRO Report, the Budget Review Office's Report, that Cornell Cooperative Extension is the contract agency of more than 350 that merits its own singular evaluation in the BRO Report. I believe that's an indication of the interest of the County to sustaining our program and hopefully it's also an indication of the priority. I know the County Executive and his Administration has made it clear that funding the Cooperative Extension Program is a priority. And we want to thank him for that.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank Gail Vizzini and the staff of BRO for their fair and accurate assessment of our budget situation. If I could quickly, with regard to economic development, a priority issue for the County Executive, he's created a department, he's moved our programs over and we're very pleased for that. And those of you in western Suffolk, sometimes you don't relate to our programs. But you might have missed it yesterday. The State Comptroller was down here. And he was in western Suffolk. He was at White Post Farms in Melville. And he discussed the importance of agriculture throughout Suffolk County. And especially the first line of his report talks about landscaping and also all the work that's done with ornamentals throughout Suffolk County in every one of our ten Towns; similarly with marine programs. They're in every bayment around Suffolk County and we do work with almost all your areas and all your businesses and residents. And just something that kind of misses people's attention is our 4H Program. I'm on the Governor's Long Island Regional Economic Development Council and all the Presidents --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Vito, start wrapping it up; okay? Thank you.

MR. MINEI:

I'm going to finish it up with this last point. Thank you. All Presidents of all the Colleges in Long Island talk about the need for having highly educated students, but they're not interested by the time they get to college in science, technology, engineering and math. And that's something we're doing and stressing with 4H.

So, again, I just -- I just want to thank you. And hopefully in terms of crafting the Budget, either in terms of equilibrating major contract agencies or setting priorities, I believe Cooperative Extension meets those parameters. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Vito. We appreciate you being here today.

All right. The next speaker up is Kevin Casey from IBEW. Hello, Kevin. It's always a pleasure.

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MR. CASEY:

Good afternoon. For the record, my name is Kevin Casey. I'm the Suffolk County business agent for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 25. My counterpart, Charlie Gardner, spoke on behalf of NECA on the labor side with Local 25.

Good afternoon, members of the Legislature. I'd like to say a few things regarding the merger of the Department of Consumer Affairs and the Department of Labor. I believe we must continue to encourage consolidation of small levels of government. This helps us better manage a more streamlined bureaucracy, making it more cost effective and efficient. Efficiency is what we need to strive for when operating dollars are limited. This could be classified as a more pragmatic approach. However, there is a more logical and practical approach. And that is to recognize that the two Departments would so mirror and complement each other, should be joined together.

This approach concentrates on the effectiveness of the merger. The natural course of things would lend you to move in this direction. The two agencies, Consumer Affairs and the Department of Labor, are mutually joined through the duties they share on a daily basis. A current example of that is what is happening on the Marriott Hotel project in Central Islip, where both the Licensing Division of Consumer Affairs and the Investigative Unit of the Department of Labor, will be scrutinizing the activities of out-of-state contractors on this job.

This is simply one of hundreds and hundreds of cases in which the two agencies join forces in their daily battle to protect the interest of all Suffolk County residents. The combining of the two agencies just makes good common sense. The new Department will be more efficient, more effective and will perform its duties with a greater sense of purpose.

We at Local 25 agree with the proposal to consolidate these two levels of government. In the long run all residents of Suffolk County will be better served by their County government. We urge the Legislators to act positively on this initiative.

Thank you for your attention. Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Kevin. We appreciate you being here today.

All right, Michael Watt. Michael, it's always a pleasure.

MR. WATT:

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you for this opportunity to address you today. My name is Michael Watt. I'm the Executive Director of the Long Island Gasoline Retail Association, a trade association with over 500 members, many of whom conduct their business in Suffolk County.

We are here to express our support for the consolidation of the Labor and Consumer Affairs Department. We embrace any measure that makes government more efficient and effective as the private sectors had to do over the past few years. I'd like to echo the comments of Legislator Kennedy and Charlie Gardner earlier regarding the need for more and better communication between industry and government. I'd also like to thank Legislator Kennedy for his sensitivities in that regard and for understanding what our independent business operators are up against when it comes to operating a business in Suffolk County.

We do have concerns when we hear references to Consumer Affairs as a revenue generator. We understand Consumer Affairs' mission is to protect the consumer and legitimate businesses; more and more, though, I hear horror stories, members calling me. One of my members, not in Suffolk County, to be fair, was fined \$500 because the fire extinguishers in his facility, which were working, were not painted the correct shade of red. And a \$500 fine for an independent business operator

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can be very onerous. And, as Legislator Kennedy alluded to earlier, can become very discouraging.

So with that in mind and with -- what we'd like to ask is that the industry be consulted whenever actions are under consideration that would impact our industry. We understand Suffolk County has its concerns and issues. And we want to be a part of the process that results in a solution that works for all. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Michael, thank you very much. And just quickly, what exactly is that correct shade of red?

MR. WATT:

That's a good question.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Fire engine red, is that --

MR. WATT:

Whatever -- I don't know. I'd have to find out for you. Now you got me curious.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. I was just -- that is -- certainly not Suffolk.

MR. WATT:

Well, I'm glad it wasn't. I wish I was kidding, but I'm not. It's a true story.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

That is -- yeah, that's --

LEG. NOWICK:

Did he get a warning?

MR. WATT:

That's when you know they're looking for --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

No warning?

MR. WATT:

No warning. And there used to be. It used to be, "listen, you have a problem. I'll be back in a couple of weeks. Fix it. And if you don't fix it -- "

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

"Your extinguisher is off color."

MR. WATT:

Right. Off color.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

There you go.

MR. WATT:

Yeah. Very frustrating. Thank you.

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CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

That sounds like good government. All right.

Jack Morrell? Jack's gone? Jack Morell? Anybody? Okay. Mario Mattera. It's good to see you, Mario.

MR. MATTERA:

Always a pleasure. Hi, everybody. Thank you, Mr. Presiding Officer and all Legislators for letting me speak today. My name is Mario Mattera. I'm the business agent with Plumbers Local 200 and I am a member of the Plumbing Licensing Board and very proud of it. And I thank you very much for voting me in at that time, all you Legislators.

It was unanimous, by the way. I just wanted to let you know that. (Laughter)

I would like to speak on this very important merger -- proposed merger with two great divisions, Department of Labor and Consumers Affairs. I'm going to speak from the heart in a lot of ways.

I'm out there all the time. I'm out on projects. I see what's happening. And I thank Kate Browning also. One time she was there when she saw the out-of-state workers come into our area, taxpayers' monies at Bellport Village. You know, Kate came out, saw that. We had a contractor out from West Virginia that came up here. And all that money was a million dollar project; all the money went back down. We did whatever we had to do with this Board. And we finally put in place a law that now we could go after non-licensed plumbers; before you go after the licensed plumbers, not the non-licensed.

We've done in the last three years since -- I feel that we've been on the board, especially with projects like that, is that we didn't have enforcement -- enough enforcement. Now with this merger, this is going to protect us, protect the consumer, protect the license holder.

The other problem we have is the license holder is actually selling his license today. It's a major problem. I have it right over in my Local 25. Kevin Casey was saying about the electrical license holder. And the guy was out of New Jersey, the contractor. The plumbing license is a local Consumers' Affair license holder. He sold his license the first time to a guy out of New Jersey. Then that guy -- because I was all over him, bailed, and the second guy was out of Brooklyn. And what happens is they put a -- list on Craig's List. They put -- "we're looking for a license holder." And guess what? This one person obviously needed the money and he sold his license.

So we need this enforcement. We need it. And I'm going to commend, you know, the -- County Executive Bellone for putting this forward, Commissioner Sammy Chu, Commissioner of Consumers Affair Bob Meguin, also. And Bob has been great since he's been on board for -- you know, being a great listener and for making sure that we're going to put things in force and going after these problems. You know, we're given all kinds of reliefs -- IDA reliefs for taxes.

Okay. We're all -- we want to invite these contractors and builders to come in. But we want to make sure it's going to be with local people. Local jobs for local people, our license holders. There's approximately 960 plumbing licenses, \$400 every two years. But still we need these local jobs. We need to make sure that these license holders are holding to the law -- letter of the law. And we need enforcement.

Just to give a heads-up, too, with OSHA, OSHA on Long Island has one investigator. One investigator for that. We can't have that with this. We need to have --- make sure this enforcement goes through. Please pass this through the Committee. Please get it -- let's get it going right away to the full Legislators and get this done right away. I'd appreciate that very much. (Time Sounded) Wow, look at that, right on time.

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But one last thing. This has nothing to do with anything. Look what just happened today also, guys. This Board does a lot. Not what happened with Nassau County. We lost the Islanders today to Brooklyn. Everybody on this board -- we could have had those Islanders here in Suffolk. You know what? Nassau didn't get it done. But you know what? We can't have this. Because right now we just lost so much. So, please, in the future, we need growth. Without growth we're in trouble. And you guys can get it done because I know it. Thank you.

LEG. CILMI:

Mario, I want you to know that I wrote to Charles Wang twice with no response.

MR. MATTERA:

And you know what, Tom? I heard that also today from one of (inaudible) from All Systems. I know all about it. And I thank you, Tom, for that. Thank you very much.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Hang on, Mario. Legislator Gregory has some questions.

LEG. GREGORY:

Hi, Mario.

MR. MATTERA:

Hey.

LEG. GREGORY:

Just on the selling of the license, how does that happen?

MR. MATTERA:

It's amazing. It happens actually even with Local 25. What's happening today, you know, things are bad out there. I have this one contractor. It was 132-room hotel at the Marriott by Ducks Stadium. The contractor -- and I'm going to tell you something -- that has the license out on that job -- and I commend Islip because -- the Plumbing License Board pulled his license because they found out -- and this is what needs to be done. You need to have financials. With our Board, I'd really like to make sure that happens. You need to own 51% of the company. And when you bring in that contractor, that contractor needs the support. His financials. In other words, he did have those ten plumbers on board and that he's doing -- so what's happening is he can't show it.

So as soon he can't show those financials, what does that tell you? He sold his license. In other words, that's a million dollar project for me, plumbing-wise. We lost the job to a company out of Brooklyn. All those workers. He was supposed to have Nassau and Suffolk County residents do that job with IDA.

LEG. GREGORY:

I guess what I'm confused at is just the license itself. I'm just not all that familiar. I know that you have to have a placard or sticker or whatever it is --

MR. MATTERA:

It's not that. In other words, that plumbing contractor is supposed to have his people on his payroll --

LEG. GREGORY:

Right.

MR. MATTERA:

-- perform the work.

LEG. GREGORY:

Right, right.

MR. MATTERA:

He's not doing that. The contractor out of Brooklyn has his people. And all the contractor did was -- for like to 5 to \$10,000 sold his license so this way he could perform work -- the Brooklyn guy could perform work in Islip.

LEG. GREGORY:

Wow.

MR. MATTERA:

It's horrible.

LEG. GREGORY:

Wow.

MR. MATTERA:

You know what? You know what? Right away I'm the big bad guy. No, local jobs for local people. If they're -- you know what? Bipartisan. If there was a non-union contractor on that job and they know it was all those people, I'd walk away. Because guess what? I didn't do my job and we weren't competitive. But to be honest with you, I will do whatever I have to do to make sure that money's staying here and it's not going out of State or out of Town.

LEG. GREGORY:

Right. Okay.

MR. MATTERA:

All right?

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Mario.

MR. MATTERA:

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Mario, just quickly --

MR. MATTERA:

Wow.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

The comment that you made, this is a -- this was an IDA job?

MR. MATTERA:

Say that -- I'm sorry, say that --

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

This was an IDA sponsored --

MR. MATTERA:

Yes, yes.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Suffolk IDA?

MR. MATTERA:

No, it was actually Islip IDA.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Islip IDA, okay.

MR. MATTERA:

Yes, it was Islip IDA.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Okay. Thank you.

MR. MATTERA:

Thanks.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Oh, I'm sorry. Mario, we're back again. Kate Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

No, no. Mine was real quick.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

I heard IDA and I get lost. Kate?

LEG. BROWNING:

No. On the transfer of licenses -- because I've had actually a couple of incidents in my District with contractors. And it turns out that, you know, it was a father/son operation. The father's no longer alive. The son has now taken up the license, but he's not doing the right thing. So, you know, I know this is really not a budget issue, but that's -- that's something that, I think, needs to be resolved, too, because it doesn't make anybody look good. So how does that work? I mean, if the son is picking up the father's license?

MR. MATTERA:

That's not going to happen. What happens is we -- right away, if the -- that person is deceased, the son just can't pick up the license. You will get a letter from Consumers Affairs stating that -- in other words, the license is revoked. It's not, you know --

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

MR. MATTERA:

So, you know, he's going to have to come back in and retest. He just can't go and piggyback off his father's license.

LEG. BROWNING:

Now if the father is still alive, just not working the business --

MR. MATTERA:

Oh, no.

LEG. BROWNING:

And just pass it off --

MR. MATTERA:

If the father's -- okay. If the father is still alive --

LEG. BROWNING:

Right.

MR. MATTERA:

-- and he still has his insurances and still has his license and he's paying his \$400 every two years, no, he can work under his father's license as long -- if he's in business. As long as he's in business with -- you know, obviously there has to be some kind of same name, the same business.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yeah.

MR. MATTERA:

He can be an officer of the business.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

MR. MATTERA:

And he probably is.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay.

MR. MATTERA:

Why, was there a violation? Was there a violation?

LEG. BROWNING:

It's happened in my District where the son is now operating the business, not the father. And pretty much there's been issues.

MR. MATTERA:

Well, the father -- father's responsible. He's going to be responsible under that license and he will get a violation.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Thanks.

MR. MATTERA:

Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Again, thank you very much, Mario.

Michael -- I think it's Rice. P-i-c-e or R-i-c-e? No. Okay. Justin Paul. Justin Paul. That's all the cards that I have. Would anyone like to be heard? Yes, sir, please.

MR. TOWERS:

I had a card. I don't know -- it might have gotten lost or something.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

What's your name, sir, and I'll take a look.

MR. TOWERS:

Towers. Michael Towers. It's not Rice, though. It's Towers. So, anyway.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Mr. Towers, welcome, though.

MR. TOWERS:

My name is Michael Towers. I'm actually -- I've finished my fourth term as President of Suffolk County Electrical Contractors Association. We're an association with generally smaller contractors, you know, a lot of mom and pops, but some larger contractors as well; electrical contractors.

I'm also a member of the Electrical Licensing Board, you know, for the County as well. We all know that -- and understand that -- like, we all want enforcement. You know, I concur with many of my colleagues here. And I think that whatever we can do to better enforce licensure and protect the consumer would be a positive thing. And, you know, whatever action that we can take to do that would be good. But I think that we should take some things into consideration. And I hope that you would while you're considering this process.

In 1974, the decision was made to separate the Department of Labor from Consumer Affairs. And I would like to suggest that in this process, of this possible merger, we consider the reasons for that. You know, there were some reasons why that took place then and I think that that should be looked at.

When you review the Mission Statements, as stated by both Departments, it seems that they may conflict in their function if merged. We should really consider the functions of each Department and their role to this constituent, consumers and also license holders. Obviously fiscal responsibility is at the forefront of all of our minds, especially when considering the taxpayer. However, we need to consider what the constituents, consumers and license holders may be losing in the merger of these Departments.

In conclusion -- and we're not saying that anything will be lost. But we're saying that it should be looked at. And you know these -- this -- this whole process and proposal became very new to us recently. And we're looking at it. And, you know, we suggest that we take a hard look at the repercussions of this and make sure that things are put in place to make sure it does not hurt the contractor and obviously the consumer. So, you know, while we all see that this is a positive thing, and it may be very positive, it may be the right thing to do, I think that we should -- we should consider, you know, looking further and making sure that it'll be the right thing in all ways.

So I would suggest and I would ask that you would involve all of the trade associations to help with the decision and the possible merger so that we can talk and, you know, maybe, you know, talk about some potential issues, some problems or some more positive stuff. Okay? Thank you.

CO-CHAIR HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Towers. Sorry about the card business.

All right. Would anyone else like to be heard? Anyone like to be heard? Okay, well, after an hour past our deadline here, I will make a motion to close the Economic Development, Energy and Government Operations, Personnel, Housing and Consumer Protection Public Hearing. No wonder why we didn't get through with it all. Okay, second by Legislator Browning. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? So moved. Thank you very much.

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THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 3:31 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY