

**HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING
of the
Suffolk County Legislature**

Capital Budget Minutes

A special meeting of the Health & Human Services Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee on Affordable Housing of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on **May 26, 2004**, at 11:30 A.M, to discuss the matter of the 2005-2007 Capital Budget.

Members Present:

Legislator Lynne Nowick - Vice-Chair/Health & Human Services

Legislator Jay Schneiderman - Chair/Ad Hoc on Affordable Housing Member/Health & Human Services

Legislator Brian Foley - Member/Health & Human Services

Legislator Daniel Losquadro - Member/Health & Human Services & Ad Hoc on Affordable Housing

Legislator Ricardo Montano - Member/Health & Human Services

Legislator Vivian Vilorio-Fisher - Vice-Chair/Ad Hoc on Affordable Housing & Member/Health & Human Services

Legislator Elie Mystal- Member/Health & Human Services & Ad Hoc on Affordable Housing

Members Not Present:

Legislator Paul Tonna - Chair/Health & Human Services

Legislator William Lindsay - Member/Ad Hoc on Affordable Housing

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Also in Attendance:

Legislator Cameron Alden - District #10

Legislator Peter O'Leary - District #3

Mea Knapp - Counsel to the Legislature

Jim Spero - Director/Budget Review Office

John Ortiz - Budget Review Office

Diane Dono - Budget Review Office

Linda Bay - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa

Dan Hickey - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa.

Alexandra Sullivan - Chief Deputy Clerk/SC Legislature

Iona Julius - Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature

Kevin LaValle - Aide to Legislator Losquadro

Nick Dispenziere - Aide to Legislator Nowick

Ben Zwirn - County Executive's Office/IR

Dr. Linda Mermelstein - Acting Commissioner/Dept of Health Services

Janet DeMarzo - Commissioner/Department of Social Services

Ed Hernandez - Deputy Commissioner/Department of Social Services

Roger Barbaro - Director/Housing Division-Dept of Social Services

Marion Zucker - Director/Affordable Housing

All Other Interested Parties

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Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 11:33 A.M.*)

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

We will start with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

Salutation

Okay. Legislator Tonna will not be here today and I will be chairing this hopefully short meeting.

Okay, we have a card, Michael Sacca.

Good morning.

MR. SACCA:

Good morning. Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning. I'd like to speak in general terms and it's pertaining to Southside Hospital.

I'm the Director of Public Affairs for Southside Hospital. I know that under consideration, the County was looking at bonding for the hospital. I would just like to indicate the hospital's position that the hospital was formed in 1911 and since that period of time we have been

serving the community of Suffolk County and it's been served 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The hospital is unique in its location where we serve a major portion of the indigent population and the mission of the hospital has always been no matter what the economic consideration is of anyone coming, we will serve that population.

I would just like to thank the Legislators for considering the proposal pertaining to putting into the Capital Budget a loan process whereby the hospital can do some expansion that's direly needed and also give us the capability of joining forces with the County in order to provide services and reinstitute the Bay Shore Family Health Center.

I would be delighted to answer any questions. And if there is any outstanding issues that I can't answer, I would just like the opportunity to come back and supply the Legislators with any type of information that you may need in order to address the issues.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Thank you, Mr. Sacca. And I think Legislator Alden has a question.

LEG. ALDEN:

Hi, Mike. Thanks for coming down. I think one of the biggest things that BRO has identified as a risk, and that is a risk factor, that if in the event Southside Hospital some time in the future would cease doing business or go bankrupt, that the County would be left with this 40 or \$50 million project with the obligation being picked up by the taxpayers.

MR. SACCA:

Let me address it in global terms and then I can supply you with specific information later on. In global terms, in 1911 and to date we have never failed on anything we owed anyone and we don't plan to do it in the future.

The other aspect to it is that I think it's almost impossible to guarantee but we can give you some assurances where there are funds that the hospital receives through the Bad Debt and Charity Pool through the State, that we can identify those funds and put those funds -- if, in fact, the hospital ever failed -- in order to cover those bonds that the County does secure. So logistically we have to work that out that it would be satisfactorily to the County so that you do have some assurances if we ever fail that that would happen. But the reality of it is that if we

fail, no matter if the County did the bonding or not, because of the population that we serve, there would have to be some type of mechanism in order to provide services to that community, so no matter what that hospital would have to survive.

LEG. ALDEN:

One other comment; it would be a question but I don't know if you have an answer to it. Emergency room visits are a lot more expensive than visits to our clinics, our health clinics. Since the Bay Shore Health Clinic has been closed, which is a number of years now, I don't know if you have any empirical data as far as how many more visits do you have coming in to the emergency room in that timeframe and how much that costs or an approximate cost per visit? I don't know if that would exist, if it does or doesn't, you know, that would be interesting I think for us to look at.

MR. SACCA:

I can address the global issue but I haven't looked at those specific numbers. The global issue is that the emergency room was designed to accommodate 30,000 visits, we now have exceeded 56,000 visits. I'm sure a portion of that has to equate to what --

LEG. ALDEN:

Fifty-six thousand one; I was there not this Sunday but the Sunday before that. I spent approximately four hours.

MR. SACCA:

It's growing also. I mean, we anticipate that by the time the expansion takes place we'll exceed 68,000 visits.

To answer your specific question, I'm sure a portion of those visits has something to do with the closing of Bay Shore Family Health Center. To quantify it, I can't do that right now but we will try to do that and get you the answer specifically, but you're absolutely right, it has a major impact as far as the cost associated with it.

LEG. ALDEN:

I didn't -- I wasn't totally idle the Sunday afternoon that I was in there and I did ask a few people that were coming in and were sitting around with me if there had been a Bay Shore Health Clinic available to them if they had gone to that but I really -- I don't have any empirical

data on it. I had some indication that that's possibly where they would have gone, but that's too informal of a study.

MR. SACCA:

Well, the marriage -- you know, we have been struggling with this for quite some time because when the clinic closed it left a void. There is definitely people that are not being served and that fell through the cracks because of that clinic being closed. So you're addressing people that shifted over to the Brentwood Family Health Center, you're talking about people that shifted to the emergency room and then you're talking about people that are not receiving any type of medical care at all because of that clinic being closed. So it definitely has an impact to that community and the longer it goes on the worse it will get.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thanks, Mike.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Foley?

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you, Michael, for the overview of the importance of both the hospital as well as the health center. And just to echo what Legislator Alden had mentioned, it's critically important that sooner than later we move ahead with working with the hospital, particularly to recreate the Bay Shore Health Center.

While there may not be readily available numbers today on the increase caused by the closure of Bay Shore and its consequential effect on the emergency room at Southside, what we can say is that the number of patients who were accessing the Bay Shore Health Center that I would say -- I would stand to be corrected, but close -- I think close to half of that number went north to access the Brentwood Health Center. In other words, there was an appreciable number of patients who, because they had to go to Brentwood were not -- elected not to go that distance. That's why -- so in other words, there's a whole pool of clients or patients who are not accessing our primary health care center in Brentwood because of the distance. And as Ted Jospe used to say, health center care is local care and local care is really whether in walking distance or a very short bike ride or a bus ride.

So one of the things that has been quantified I believe by the Health Department, perhaps they have the numbers today, but there's certainly a number of patient who were utilizing the Bay Shore Health Center who were not utilizing Brentwood because of distance issues, even though there is a bus route on Fifth Avenue and the like but there were problems. That's why it's important that we move forward with this process of eventually opening a new health center in the Bay Shore community. Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Schneiderman, did you have a question?

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah. I'm just trying to best understand the project here.

I understand the difficulty the hospital is having financially, I understand that the rates that would be available to you in borrowing are significantly higher than the rates that the County would have. And instead of you building a health clinic and the parking area, you're asking basically that we would build it and then rather than you build it and lease it to us, we build it and then we're paid back at I guess a lower rate; I have a concern, though, with that. I mean, I expect this hospital to be there for forever, but my concern is the property that it would sit on, I never heard of the County building a building that it owns on somebody else's land and what that might mean if something did happen with the hospital. Would that go to the next, you know, provider, whether it's a hospital or another entity? If the title of the land shifts would it eliminate our lease; how would that effect it?

MR. SACCA:

My understanding is that the campus the hospital sits on, that portion of property that we presently own is suitable in order to accommodate 25,000 square feet for the Bay Shore Family Health Center. We plan on borrowing money from the County through their bonds in order for us to build the building, us to own the building and the expansion of the emergency room plus the parking garage in order to accommodate those facilities on our property, and then to give the County a long-term lease and not make any revenue stream over and above what the cost is to us so that it becomes a marriage, it's not the County that owns the building but the hospital. We have the ability, in that particular instance, in order to transfer the property and the building to the County if at any time we fail to pay back the bonds, but the property and the building would be owned and the money would be borrowed by us and paid back by us and not by the County.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I get it, I'm just -- mechanistically, though, if that situation happened and the hospital was not able to pay us back, the mechanism by which that building and land would be transferred, unless you've had kind of a preapproved subdivision, may prove difficult.

MR. SACCA:

We would agree to do that with the property that the Bay Shore Family Health Center sits on. Our mission is to provide service to the community. We're not -- we're a not-for-profit, we're not there to make a revenue stream coming out of it, we're there to provide service to the community. So we are the closest thing to a quasi-government as anyone else in doing business as a not-for-profit agency or a hospital that we have been in existence since 1911. So what we're looking for is that ability to have the resources in order to build something that provides services to the community and have a joint effort with the County to just give us access to those funds.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

I certainly understand the important roles the hospitals play. We may in the future, if we do go down this road, see other hospitals coming in trying to use the County's favorable borrowing rates; we'll have to decide I guess on a case by case basis. It just is going to lead to some interesting questions ahead. Also, as the County's debt increases, it's likely that the amount of -- the interest rate that we'll get on our notes will probably go up a little bit, so for other projects we might pay a little bit higher in interest because we've increased our level indebtedness. But those are just financial considerations that, you know, the Legislature will have to wrestle with.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Mystal.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Good morning, Mr. Sacca. I want to shift gear on you for a minute and I will ask you to do a little research for me also and also for BRO. A couple of months back I broached the subject of having what we would call a hospital district, the whole County would be a hospital district, you know, like they do in Florida. This summer I'm going to try to explore that, you know, and get some more detail. Do you know of any place that does that for Capital Project, this is not for the

operating budget of any hospital but for the Capital Budget and especially what you're talking about for a hospital and our health needs in Suffolk County. Do you know of any place where they do that or do you have any knowledge of that?

MR. SACCA:

The only thing I know is that the process that you're addressing right now has been done twice before, I believe in the 70's and in the 80's, through the Suffolk County Health Facilities Commission. They went through the process of having hospitals be able to use the bonding power of the County and I believe it was '84 or '87 and I believe it was either '76, but I'm not positive on the dates but I know it was in the 70's and in the 80's. So this here does not set a precedent of what transpired. I think the process that the County used previously was to establish the Suffolk County Health Facilities Commission which has been approved by the Legislators and that is the body that will report to the Legislators of their findings, you know, and I think that that is the only thing that I'm aware of that transpired before.

As far as other districts where they combine hospitals together like that, I'm not familiar with it but we certainly would be delighted to look at it and see if there's something out there.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Thank you.

MR. SACCA:

You're welcome.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Alden, you had a question?

LEG. ALDEN:

More towards BRO. The Health Facilities Corporation; is that more similar towards Dormitory Authority or would it be directly impacting Suffolk County's capital?

MR. SPERO:

I believe -- the Health Facilities Corporation I don't believe has the authority to issue debt. This would be County debt, the deal would have to be structured in such a way that there would be contracts between the County and the hospital for the leasing of the facilities and to repay the

bond. So this would be a unique situation, a special situation which I presume in the County's official statements which we issue in anticipation of an upcoming bond issuance, this would be spelled out in those official statements so investors would know that this \$40 million is really a loan to the hospital and is going to be -- let's say, two-thirds of it will be repaid to the County through the hospital.

LEG. ALDEN:

That would be a separate issue then.

MR. SPERO:

Right. But it's a question I would certainly ask Bond Counsel and/or the County's fiscal advisor just to be sure if they think this would have any impact, but it should be minimal.

LEG. ALDEN:

Do you sit on the Health Facilities --

MR. SPERO:

John Ortiz has been attending the meetings.

LEG. ALDEN:

John Ortiz, okay. But this would be a separate issue of debt, right?

MR. SPERO:

Well, it could be combined with an overall -- in the County's semiannual debt issuances, but I think we would want to spell out in the official statement that the Southside -- that this is a loan to Southside Hospital and the details of that loan and how the bonds would be issued and the loans would be repaid.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Jim, just to clear it in my mind, the Health Facilities Agency, that's a bonding corporation set up for --

MR. SPERO:

No, it's a review agency.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Review agency. Okay. Thank you.

MR. SPERO:

It's a committee.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

It can't issue debt. Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

Jim, just so I'm clear, the Health Facilities, is it agency or commission; which one is it?

MR. SPERO:

Committee.

MR. ORTIZ:

Commission.

MR. SPERO:

Commission? Oh, Commission.

LEG. MONTANO:

Just so I understand this, we're not actually building this, what we're doing is we're allowing the hospital to borrow the money using the County's credit rating --

MR. SPERO:

The County's credit rating, right.

LEG. MONTANO:

-- because of the lower interest rate. And they're going to collateralize the loan by the property that they own and what they're building on it.

MR. SPERO:

(Shook head yes).

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay, thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Yes, certainly; Counsel would like to ask a question.

MS. KNAPP:

Just to clarify the record on this, these questions have come up in the past and we -- the County, as you may know, retained Bond Counsel very recently, new Bond Counsel. And Mr. Smith, who is the attorney we will be dealing with directly, asked for documents which I provided to him last week, and I have had a telephone call from him which I haven't been able to return because Budget Review has been involved in the Capital Budget. But it's my expectation that early next week that Budget Review and myself will just have preliminary discussions with him about this very issue and about how Bond Counsel views this proposal so that we'll be able to answer Legislators questions with some specificity in the future.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay, so we haven't gotten to those issues at this point; at least we haven't clarified them.

MR. SPERO:

Right.

LEG. MONTANO:

Mr. Sacca, with respect to what you said earlier about the 58,000 visits I think to the emergency room, I know that we can't say how many would be diverted to a health center, but I just want to get an idea of how many do you think would be classified as non-emergency in terms of those visits that should actually go to a health center; is there any way of quantifying that figure?

MR. SACCA:

I don't have that information with me; we certainly can get the information for you, we have the capability of doing that. You know, the emergency rooms are set up where you have what they call fast track and on the fast track it's not emergent type of situations, but we certainly can get you a range of what those numbers are.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Thank you, Mr. Sacca.

LEG. MONTANO:

Thank you.

MR. SACCA:

Thank you very much.

LEG. ALDEN:

Two weeks ago on Sunday I was the only emergency in there, I was bleeding a lot and I had to wait on line.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

But you had time to talk to everybody.

LEG. ALDEN:

I had time to talk to them, you know, because I wanted to see what their emergency was.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

We do not have any other cards. Are there any Commissioners that want to come up to address the committee? Good morning.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

Hi. Thank you. I'm Dr. Linda Mermelstein, Acting Health Commissioner. I'm going to keep my comments relatively brief.

The first thing I wanted to say was just thank you to the Budget Review Office and to the County Executive for your support of our Capital Projects. I really had comments on two; one was the construction of the County Health Facility and the parking facility at Southside Hospital, and I'd be happy to just give you a little bit of an overview about it. But we appreciate that the issue was considered and we understand the concerns that have been raised. Just so you know, from

the standpoint of the Health Department, our main interest is in being able to reopen the Bay Shore Health Center and to provide needed services to the residents in that area. And so we understand the fiscal constraints that we're under and we'll work, continue to work with the Space Committee to find a suitable space for the health center.

I have been hearing the comments about the Health Facilities Commission. I just wanted to clarify that the Health Facilities Commission was put into place, the members were voted by the Legislature, we have been meeting throughout 2004. This is a commission that was reactivated, as Mr. Sacca said, in the 70's and the 80's it was active and had given I think about 12 loans to various institutions.

We have been reviewing the proposal from Southside Hospital. The commission has also received a proposal and requests for applications for proposal from a couple of the other hospitals in the County and my understanding is that the Health Facilities Commission will review the proposals and make a recommendation to the Legislature and then the Legislature would ultimately, through the Capital Budget Program, follow through with giving out loans if it so chooses. So I just wanted to give an overview of that process.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Montano.

LEG. MONTANO:

I just want to be clear, Doctor, are we talking about --

MS. MAHONEY:

Can you use the microphone, please?

LEG. MONTANO:

I'm sorry. Are we talking about giving out loans or loan guarantees, because there's a difference in my mind with respect to how that works. We're not actually lending the money.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

I believe that the Health Facilities Commission, at least the local -- the law that addresses that, allows the commission to both recommend loans or loan guarantees, I think it's either one. And in the case of Southside Hospital, they have requested a loan, not specifically a loan guarantee.

LEG. MONTANO:

Okay, thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

It seems the more we get answers the more confused we get with this. Jim, how is this loan or loan guarantee structured as opposed to the ones that had been structured in the 80's; do you know a comparison of how those worked, were they successful? What's the difference -- or if the Commissioner knows the difference; whoever can answer that.

MR. SPERO:

I really don't know the difference. Don't forget, this --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

More similarities.

MR. SPERO:

-- this structure we're talking about, the details have really yet to be worked out so the guarantees the County will be seeking will be put into the contracts that are ultimately written between the County and the hospital. So at that time, that will be the subject I'm sure of some negotiation back and forth as to just what those guarantees -- what shape they might take. But I can't speak on the specifics of the other previous loans that were made, actually I think they were back in the 70's, so it's been quite a while since the County has last attempted to do this.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Jim, how would each of those these look in a budget, in a Capital Budget; if it were a loan guarantee or a loan, how would that look in the budget, in the budget line?

MR. SPERO:

It would look no different than any other Capital Project, it would be -- if the Legislature wishes to proceed with this project, we need to include about \$40 million in the upcoming 2005 --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Whether it's a loan or a loan guarantee?

MR. SPERO:

That's on the revenue end, the County would see the revenue coming in in its Operating Budget, but we still need a County bond authorization. And ultimately, any bonds the County issued would be full faith and credit bonds which would be guaranteed --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

And it encumbers our budget.

MR. SPERO:

Would be guaranteed by our Property Tax Levy.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Uh-huh.

MR. SPERO:

The revenue stream coming in would be guaranteed by the contracts that are established between the County and the hospital and those revenues would come into the County Operating Budget and would offset the cost of the debt service that we have to budget, so we budget the revenue on the one side and the debt service would be budgeted on the expenditure side.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So, however, those -- that structured, it would look the same on our budget line.

MR. SPERO:

That's right.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay, thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Did you have question, Legislator Schneiderman?

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah. So Jim, assuming we can do this which, you know, I still would like to see Bond Counsel opinion that the County can guarantee or make a loan to a not-for-profit or whatever it might be. What you're saying is that from a budgetary standpoint this is neutral, that although we're going to borrow this money the revenue we're going to get is going to cover that debt service and so there won't be any tax increase as a consequence of doing this.

MR. SPERO:

Well, the County will be -- the health center portion and I think it's one-third of the parking garage would be the County's responsibility, the hospital would repay the County for the debt relating to the emergency room and the two-thirds of the parking garage.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

So it's not entirely neutral.

MR. SPERO:

That's correct. So it's a synergy between the County and the hospital, so the hospital gets the benefit of receiving the County as the issuer of the debt, low cost debt, and the County will get the benefit of having the health center located next to the hospital on the hospital grounds.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Have you looked into whether this level of indebtedness would effect the interest rates on County borrowing for other projects?

MR. SPERO:

My inclination is to say --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Is it big enough?

MR. SPERO:

-- it may not impact the County's -- the County has a good credit rating, but I would certainly run that question past our fiscal adviser and Bond Counsel.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Jim -- and I might be all off by this -- if the County is doing this for a health center, is there a reimbursement then? No, no reimbursement, okay.

MR. SPERO:

There's no State aid.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Okay. Legislator Foley?

LEG. FOLEY:

The proposed Capital Program, this is to place it into the Capital Program, it doesn't mandate that we move forward with the project. What we need to do is put it into what I would call the blueprint of the Capital Program and Budget, and that way the process can unfold where the commission can do its due diligence, particularly with the incoming Commissioner, they would then submit it to us for our review and our ultimate decision. But the key point is we need to keep it, place it in or keep it in the Capital Program so the process can unfold in order for us to be able to make some final determinations on whether we want to go this approach or modify the approach.

The only other -- two other points I would raise, Madam Chair, is number one, actually not only will there not be a direct impact on the tax levy for the County, but we would actually, another way of looking at it, make a little money from it from the administrative fee that would be levied -- correct me if I'm wrong -- the administrative fee that we levied to the hospital for using our bond rating, so actually there would be some money coming in. But as -- this is not the Budget Committee, this is the Health Services Committee. From a Health Services point of view, this is a unique and exciting approach where you have a model of health care delivery where a health center would be directly adjacent to the emergency room. And what we have been told over a series of decades is that one of the primary reasons for a health center is that it also helps to reduce the number of those who go to the emergency room. We're here, we have a unique opportunity and a protocol would be developed between the Health Department and the hospital on those instances where if someone did go to the emergency room and they would be, let's say, more effectively treated at the health center, they wouldn't have to catch a bus to get to the health center, they could actually take a short walk from the emergency room of the

hospital on the same campus to the health center, that's never been a drive before in this County and I dare say in the metropolitan, New York area.

So that's why this is really -- for those of us who have been following these things over a matter of years, it's a new approach, it's an exciting approach. At the same time, there are some real serious financial fiscal issues that need to be addressed, but since we are the Health Services Committee, I would not want people to lose what I believe is the primary reason why this committee, and I as the past Chair of it, were very, very enthusiastic about it because it's a different delivery of health care than we've had in the past and I think it's a very interesting way to go about it.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I agree with you, it's an exciting prospect, but I'm very, very concerned by the remarks made by the Budget Review Office in their review of this. I'm concerned that this may not be the time yet. The Budget Review Office states that Southside Hospital owes the County \$1,215,730 from excess medical payments due to incorrect billings.

It stated in a bullet before that that the hospital has a poor credit rating which restricts them from borrowing this amount. There has not yet been a financial feasibility study, it is currently being conducted by DASNY. The County's Space Management Steering Committee hasn't made the approval on this yet. It seems to me that we have a lot of very, very serious issues that have to be addressed, have to be clarified. Legislator Schneiderman thought that you had said this would be revenue neutral when you said we were talking about two different ledgers, but you didn't say that one would cover the other one completely, so it's not revenue neutral. We definitely need a health center, the Bay Shore Health Center, but I really am worried about incurring indebtedness that -- on which we may not be able to guarantee that the other partner is in the position to pay their part of the indebtedness or, you know, we might not be able to recover what we're investing. So we really need to make sure -- the Space Committee apparently is still looking for other pieces of property in Islip. This is a beautiful model, it's a wonderful model, but I'm very concerned about the financial impact that might come out of it and I really think we need to hear some very, very serious answers to this before we put this in the budget.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Alden; was it you?

LEG. ALDEN:

Yeah.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Just one short thing. I think, you know, we somewhat may be missing the point I think, I'm going to echo what Mr. Foley said. What we need to do is to put this in the Capital Budget and then iron out all the different questions that you have, Legislator Viloría-Fisher. I think everybody has questions, but I think we need to put it into the hopper, we need to put it into the budget so we can at least get some answers. If it's not in the blueprint then we won't get any answers. Thank you.

LEG. ALDEN:

I think we have to make a clear statement to the people of Suffolk County that we stand for preventive type of help and that we're also going to provide what they need when they are in trouble; and let's face it, when people are sick they're in trouble. And if the County is not going to stand by those people, we're going to turn our backs like we have for the past three years, there is a segment of the society out there and it's not just my district, it's Legislator Montano's District, it's Legislator Carpenter's district and it could affect basically all of us. There's been no Bay Shore Health Clinic, some of those people that went to that Bay Shore Health Clinic, they're sick and they're still at home; some of them went to the hospital, some of them went up to Brentwood which could over tax the ability for Brentwood to supply the people in its immediate vicinity of health services.

So by us having a facility and we all agree that we should have had that facility, it was closed not due to our actions but there was a contamination in the area, it was closed basically in spite of our actions. So I think that what we've got to do -- we're not appropriating money right now for this project, what we're doing is we're saying and we're making a clear statement that we want to provide health care for the people in Suffolk County, and this is what we stand for as a Legislative body.

There's been some problems in this -- whatever you want to call it, the Steering Committee. I just recently became a member of that and for the past three, four, five years I've been supplying names and addresses and it seems that every time I come up with an address or anybody comes up with an address there's something wrong with it or, you know, whatever happens through the normal process, the owner sells it or develops the property. So that's not a real good avenue to be sitting here and thinking that we're going to provide health services to people and think that we're going to come up with something in that Steering Committee because we don't have anything on the table and there's no prospects really in there for developing something in a short time frame; and when I'm saying short time frame, I mean, maybe it's laughable but within the next couple of years. So if we're going to wait to go and identify something that we can go and buy and then build a health center on it and then start providing services, we're looking at just to find a piece of property probably another three years because it's taken three years right now and we still haven't identified anything except Southside's piece.

The second part of it, to answer a little bit of your question, is it revenue neutral? No, it's not. We're going to build a health center and that's going to cost the County whether we build it on Southside Hospital or whether it's built down the road, wherever it's built it's going to cost us money. And that's just something that we have to say that we're dedicated to the fact of providing health services, we're not going to leave our most vulnerable people out there by themselves to suffer and I think we have to make that a clear statement. Are there problems that we have to consider? Absolutely. May this project never go forward? It might not, we might not -- we might find some other kind of solution to it, but to leave it out of the budget and turn our backs on people, I don't think we can do that.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

I think you hit it right on the head, Legislator Alden, we can't leave those people out there.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

I completely agree.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Yes.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Because you were responding to my question, if I may just jump in.

You know that this is very, very important to me, taking care of the most vulnerable people. I just want to make sure that as we move forward we're very, very careful that we're not strapping ourselves into a fiscal situation where we will have a problem, so we have to move very, very carefully on this and be certain that our partner is in the position to fulfill their end of the bargain --

LEG. ALDEN:

I agree a hundred percent.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

-- and protect ourselves as we move forward in this.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Montano, did you have a question?

LEG. MONTANO:

Yes, I did. But actually, I just want to echo at this point the comments made by Legislator Alden because they're well put. But I also just want to say, you know, the first five months of my service here I spent at the Brentwood Family Health Center, I have firsthand knowledge of, you know, the conditions and the community that uses the health center. We will get to those fiscal issues later and I'm sure that we will deal with them responsibly, but right now I agree with the comments made by Legislators Foley and Alden, that we really need to put this in the budget so that we continue with this process and not kill it.

There's been no health center there since 2001 and, you know, I mean, I can attest to the fact that at least in my part of the district which this center is going to cover, we couldn't find space in the community because there just wasn't anything available. So we have to look at this alternative, I think that this is an excellent project, I think it's got a lot of possibilities. But having said that, I think we do need to put it back in the budget so we can move forward. We may not get to the point where we actually spend the money, but I don't think we can kill it right now.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Thank you. Thank you, Commissioner.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

Thank you. I'm sorry, I have actually one other comment on one of the Capital Projects. It's 1109, Forensic Sciences Medical and Legislative Investigated Consolidated Lab. Thank you for considering this and we understand it wasn't funded because it was thought to be premature, and that's fine. I just wanted to ask that in the future, at the time when it is the right time to put it through, that you would support that. Thank you very much.

LEG. FOLEY:

Madam Chair?

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Yes, Legislator Foley.

LEG. FOLEY:

Before the Acting Commissioner leaves. This is probably your last official committee meeting as the Acting Commissioner.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

Yes.

LEG. FOLEY:

And again, similar to what we had said at the last regular committee meeting, I want to thank you for your service as the Acting Commissioner. You were put in a very challenging situation, a lot of things going on within the Health Department, new initiatives such as the one we just debated, and I think you've handled yourself extremely well. I just want to thank you for your professionalism and for your help with us as a committee are and, from me as one Legislator, for the time that you've devoted to your position. Thank you.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

Thank you very much.

Applause

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Thank you, Commissioner.

ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:

It's really been a privilege and it's been a total pleasure.

Thank you for all of your support.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Thank you. Commissioner DeMarzo, you look like you're ready and waiting.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Good afternoon. I have appeared before this committee and other committees of the County Legislature on this project over the last year and a half. I have a package going out which many of you who have sat on the committees where we've discussed the Tier II Shelter have seen a similar version, we keep updating it because there are subtle changes.

Last year for the first time the Capital Budget included a funding for Capital Program 6011 which was to authorize the construction of a Tier II Shelter. We earlier this year received approval from the Legislature to appropriate the first phase of that which was \$1.7 million in planning and design and supervision which we are working with the Department of Public Works on presently. The budget, as presented to the Legislature and as modified by earlier resolution as proposed by the County Executive, moves the \$1.5 million in land acquisition over to 2005 which, based upon the current calendar, looks like a more realistic time frame for the moneys for acquisition of properties.

I'm here today to say that, you know, the process for the planning and design is moving forward, we're optimistic that we will be able to identify a site to bring to the Legislature next year at the point when we need to appropriate the land acquisition money and it's our hope that we would also be able to start the construction next year. So I'm asking for your continued support of the Capital Project to build the Tier II Shelter. If you have any questions --

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Alden has a quick question.

LEG. ALDEN:

Janet, do you see an increase in us having to provide services due to some of these nursing

homes and the adult homes -- not nursing homes so much as the adult homes closing? I have noticed that even in my district there's like two or three of them that have gone out of business and across Suffolk County there's an increasing number; are we being burdened with the relocation and the providing of services now?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Well, we're not the first -- we're not the agency that has direct interaction, it really is more of a State Department of Health and an adult -- for the adult care homes that are going out. We have -- we don't have empirical data but we've been working with Mental Health and the adult care community. Basically we've lost 500 adult care beds in Suffolk County and it has had a significant impact on the placement of those people. We have seen -- I mean, I can only make inferences in that we have seen a significant growth in our single homeless population. The number of -- we have seen about a 56% increase of number of singles requiring emergency shelter by the Department of Social Services. While the adult care -- while the adult home has a responsibility to provide placement for all the individuals in their facilities, some of them being moved out of County facilities, there is some belief -- while we don't have empirical data because you really can't trace the people -- that some of them end up in situations which don't work out for them and they move into the emergency shelter situation. We have talked to Mental Health, it's really hard to track these people but we have seen a significant increase, a 56% increase in our single homeless.

LEG. ALDEN:

I've had a liking to what happened in the 70's when New York State decided in their ultimate wisdom that they were going to close down all the hospitals and they just took those people and put them into the downtown areas and really created, I think, a whole homeless population that still lingers in Suffolk County, and now it looks like almost a parallel type of action. New York State has gotten tough with adult homes and I've gotten three or four complaints where the people have been made homeless because of the shutting down of the adult homes. So I'm glad that, you know, you agree with that analysis and I'm very saddened, though, that another burden is being shifted on to us by New York State.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I mean, the Legislature's Human Services Committee has had presentations by the various entities involved in this, the adult home operators as well as the Mental Health Division of the Health Department and, you know, it is being called a crisis here in Suffolk County. It is -- you know, a lot of the mental health providers or adult home providers will tell you that the

transitions from the psychiatric hospitals were into many of these adult care homes and the mental health associations are trying to get together to create different kinds of congregate care facilities or SRO's for these people to transition to, but it is in the short-term essentially a crisis.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Legislator Viloría-Fisher, you had a question?

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Yes. Hi, Janet, thank you for being here. Last year when we looked at this program, this Capital Program, we discussed a couple of things that had -- about which we had just become aware and one of them was that Brookhaven Town was not continuing its contract with HELP Suffolk; what's the status of that at this point?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The agreement that was entered into between the County and HELP and Brookhaven was a long-term lease and the lease is scheduled to expire, to the best of my knowledge, in September of '05. At that point there was a resolution authorizing this by the County Legislature which authorizes the County to give this property to Brookhaven for further use. The whole issue is being looked at, I know there are discussions occurring at various levels. I think that -- to the best of my knowledge, there is no final decision. I know there's a lot of discussion, I know the Legislature has a roll in this process, the County Executive is very concerned about the possible closing, it is 76 beds or 76 families it accommodates. So it's up in the air, it is an active issue and it is September of '05 before final action is going occur.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. And the second issue which we discussed last year, and I was wondering what the status of that is right now, is finding sites; where are we with that?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Siting a facility for homeless or for DSS provided services is one of the most difficult challenges we face. Part of the planning, design and supervision process will be site identification. There is an RFP being developed by the Department of Public Works and one of the aspects of that RFP

will be for them to assist in the site identification. It is our hope that we can come up with a list of properties and try to rank them. We have tried internally with the Department of Real Estate to identify properties, but we believe that at this point the best avenue is to put it in the RFP and to get commercial professionals to help us identify sites so that, you know -- we're hopeful that, you know, the expertise of the professional organization will give us a longer list of sites that we had not been able to identify ourselves.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you. Just one last question. We read in Newsday yesterday an article wherein the Feds have not increased the level at which we could provide Section 8 Housing and the cost that we can pay; how is that going to impact our homeless situation or our sheltering situation here in Suffolk County?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

My belief and the belief of the representatives from CDC who does a lot of Section 8 programs throughout the County believes that it will impact us. You know, they have to figure out how they live within this cap Section 8. We do believe there will be problems in the ability of people to meet the higher level, the lack of new vouchers. I can't tell you exactly but, yes, I do think it will impact the ability of people to secure housing which when they can't it becomes an emergency housing problem.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Janet, how can we address this? A couple of years ago we discussed -- when I was Chair of Social Services we talked about seeking ways that would allow us in Suffolk County to pay higher rent because in the long run it's much cheaper rather than putting people in emergency housing in motels, and I believe we were trying to get New York State to allow us some flexibility in that. With this issue now, with this cap on Section 8, are we going to try to continue to seek that kind of flexibility from New York State?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

We actually saw a change in State regulations last year which allowed the department to try to structure our shelter allowance in such a way to more actually reflect the market conditions here in Suffolk County. And we have started a Shelter Supplement Program in March which allows us

in certain situations to avoid homelessness for people or to help people meet increased rents, that flexibility. But the bottom line is there's just not enough housing. I mean, you so often hear the interconnection between affordable housing and rental housing and, you know, I know that the homeless are a different group from the work force and so forth, but when the trickle down occurs it really is the homeless population that grows. So it really comes down to affordable housing and affordable rental housing, the availability is part of the problem as well as the ability to pay, and the ability to pay we have tried to address with the Shelter Supplement Program that we established which I could provide --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Now, is that reimbursed, the Shelter Supplement?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The State has, you know, authorized additional State monies up to their appropriated amount. We are participating on a six month pilot process, a six month pilot program to see if it really addresses some of the homelessness and avoids eviction in certain situations. New York State is participating in it but they have capped it at their appropriation level, but we don't actually know when they get there so that's why we have a --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay. So if we have a family that needs Section 8 Housing and now the cap for that Section 8 Housing is -- I don't remember the figure, let's say \$1,200 a month as just a figure, we find a place for them to live that's \$1,400 a month; so we can only pay Section 8 Housing up to \$1,200 a month under Section 8 and then the supplemental covers the other 200?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I'm not confident of that. I would ask members of my staff to come forward who could probably walk you through that. I'm not confident --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Do you know what, since we're talking about the Capital Project today, we can wait until the regular meeting to address that. Okay?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

I would be more than happy to present that at the next committee meeting if those are questions the Human Services Committee would like to hear.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Since it was in the news yesterday I wanted to ask how we could address it, but I didn't want it to become, you know, a big discussion.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Because not every -- you know, not everyone on Section 8, in fact many of them aren't on Public Assistance.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

On TNAF.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

So I don't know, I don't know if it will cause them to move over.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

As everything I say in Social Services, it's not an easy answer to provide quickly.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Thank you, Janet.

ACTING CHAIR SCHNEIDERMAN:

Legislator Mystal has a question.

LEG. MYSTAL:

My question, Commissioner, my question was partly asked by Legislator Viloría-Fisher, I just want to take it a little bit -- a step further in terms of land acquisition we were talking about. I know you are getting some professional help to help you identify a site, I'm more concerned about the political fight that's going to ensue.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Me, too.

LEG. MYSTAL:

You know me, I go right to it, you know; there's no use messing around with you because basically what we're talking about, one of the two shelters. And I don't care if we get the best possible professional help that identify, you know, where you could put them, the question is can we handle it, are we going to have a big political fight as to where we want to put it? Because Legislator Losquadro is going to say, "I don't want it in my district," and Legislator Alden is going to say, "I don't want it in my district," and I don't want it --

LEG. ALDEN:

I've got them in my district.

LEG. MYSTAL:

But I'm just saying, you know, right now, in view of that fact, how do you anticipate how long it would take; do you have any anticipation that what's going to happen in terms of land acquisition for us to build the space, short of building it in some kind of County-owned property in Yaphank or somewhere like that. Mr. O'Leary's district.

LEG. O'LEARY:

What?

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

You know --

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Nothing.

LEG. MYSTAL:

Nothing, go back, go back.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Actually, do you have a shelter in your district? He said yes and I have a shelter in my district

also.

LEG. MYSTAL:

I have plenty of shelters, I'm talking about the Tier II Shelter they're talking about.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

The Tier II Shelter, you know --

LEG. MYSTAL:

I have a bunch of scattered shelters in my district, the Tier II Shelter is a different story; it's a horse of a different color and you know that, Janet.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Yes, I understand that. Not ducking the question, but that's why I feel that we need to really look at the whole host of properties that may be appropriate because we need to consider both the geographical, the support services that are available in the area as well as the politics. You know, I quite frankly know that the politics is really an issue that is going to be dealt with more in the political policy making forum. But for politics, I think we could find sites that would support the shelter --

LEG. MYSTAL:

No.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

-- and would be appropriate, it's the politics that define the inappropriateness and appropriateness. And I just hope that we as administrators and policy makers can find our way through the political maze for a solution, and I know it's not easy and I know that we have dealt with this as a County in a number of sittings of governmental services that aren't welcomed in many communities.

LEG. MYSTAL:

If we had a simple dictatorship, you know, {Caribbeans}, I mean, we could find a site tomorrow, you know, we could find 17 sites tomorrow, but unfortunately -- fortunately we live in a democracy.

LEG. ALDEN:

You said unfortunately.

LEG. MYSTAL:

There are certain policy that needs a dictatorship because I think that's what we're going to need, basically you need somebody to make a decision and say, "We're going to put it there, I don't care what anybody says or who says it, we're going to put it there, period, end of story." But --

LEG. ALDEN:

You're not advocating a violent overthrow of the United States Government, though, with that kind of statement, right?

LEG. MYSTAL:

Oh, please, Alden, please, come on, grow up; no, I'm not.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Are there any other questions? Thank you, Commissioner. Thank you for coming down.

COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:

Thank you very much.

VICE-CHAIR NOWICK:

Is there anyone else that has anything to discuss with the committee? Well, this committee is also a Capital Program for Ad Hoc committee for Affordable Housing, does anybody have anything to discuss -- that would be a Capital Budget, there really wouldn't be that much --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

There is a capital item that's put in the County Executive's budget for housing projects for infrastructure. Marion, did you want to discuss this at all?

MS. ZUCKER:

I was just here in case anyone had any questions about it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

No, it's funded -- I think, what five million a year or something or 15 million a year?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Five for three years.

MS. ZUCKER:

6411.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, we do have some questions.

LEG. LINDSAY:

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CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, I will Chair this section. Marion, you want us to start with the questions or do you want to say anything first? Let me start with just a comment that --

MS. ZUCKER:

Do you want me to address the need for affordable housing?

LEG. ALDEN:

No, no.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

No, no, I don't think so. I will say the current Affordable Housing Program does not permit these types of Capital Projects, though there is a bill that's been laid on the table that would restructure that Work Force Housing Program to be able to be used for infrastructure.

MS. ZUCKER:

That's absolutely correct.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So that has to happen for this money before, but hopefully there will be plenty of support for that.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's your resolution?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I wanted my name on it, right now I think the only name on it is the County Executive's. But we worked it -- this is a resolution that came out of the Work Force Housing Commission that I sit on.

MS. ZUCKER:

Yes. It's IR 1503, it's going to be before your committee, Alden, next week before Ways & Means, there will be a public hearing on it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It's not before Ways & Means I don't believe, it's been reassigned to the Housing Committee.

MS. ZUCKER:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And we're looking for the date for it, I believe it will be the Monday following the traditional committee week --

MS. ZUCKER:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

-- because I haven't been able to find another time where people can make it. I could do it on the Friday; is Friday better?

LEG. MYSTAL:

Friday is better.

LEG. NOWICK:

Which Friday?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The Friday following committee week.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

What day is that?

MS. ZUCKER:

Is it possible to do it right after the Ways & Means Committee meeting?

LEG. ALDEN:

Ways & Means never ends.

MS. ZUCKER:

And the only reason --

LEG. ALDEN:

You can do it before it if you want.

MS. ZUCKER:

The only reason I ask is that I have people lined up to attend that session.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I could possibly do it on the Friday; are you saying do it on a Thursday?

MS. ZUCKER:

Do it on Tuesday.

LEG. ALDEN:

Do it while Ways & Means and you'll have a section of Ways & Means because they've already scheduled, they've already scheduled people to come down.

LEG. MYSTAL:

A lot of people on the Ad Hoc Committee are also on Ways & Means.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. If we could do it immediately following Ways & Means?

LEG. ALDEN:

No, you do it -- we'll either do it as a part of it or, you know --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Do it as a joint session?

LEG. ALDEN:

Yeah, as an accommodation.

MS. ZUCKER:

That would be great if that's possible.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I will try.

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

Jay is not on Ways & Means.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'm not.

LEG. ALDEN:

Ways & Means will be long.

LEG. NOWICK:

Well, we'll do it first then.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Yeah, it will be a short meeting, maybe we can do it first, get it --

LEG. MYSTAL:

Yeah, get it over with and that's it.

LEG. ALDEN:

The Chairman of Ways & Means will be very accommodating.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's you?

LEG. ALDEN:

That's me.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, I will try to do that; that's Tuesday?

MS. ZUCKER:

Tuesday at 9:30.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Nine thirty, June 1st? Okay.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's when the people are scheduled to come in, I thought it was in Ways & Means.

MS. ZUCKER:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay.

MS. ZUCKER:

Anyway, the changes to the law do allow -- do propose an expansion to the program that would allow the County's funds to also be used for infrastructure improvements.

The theory behind this is to provide as many stimulants as possible to the development of work force housing in the County. The current program only allows the funds to be used for land acquisition and sometimes this isn't an -- it's not that it's not appropriate, it's sometimes difficult to get into a site and buy it and this just gives us another way to get subsidy dollars into a

development and stimulate the development of affordable housing.

LEG. ALDEN:

I have a question.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, question, Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Out of the old program, there's two projects that have been either completed or --

MS. ZUCKER:

The completed move in on Millenium Hills will be in mid June of this year and move in on Sunnybrook is in August.

LEG. ALDEN:

Anything in the pipeline or have you identified any other parcels that could, you know, fit the bill?

MS. ZUCKER:

It has been a struggle. You know, I always thought my job was hard and then I'm listening to Janet try to site a Tier II Shelter which I don't envy her that. I do have a number of projects in the pipeline, I don't have applications on them but they're very serious conversations and the Work Force Housing Commission has asked for sites to be identified throughout the County and some of those will be coming through that process as well. So I do expect to see projects by the end of the year -- not projects, proposed developments by the end of the year.

LEG. ALDEN:

Because normally we would sit back and wait for a 501-C3 to come to us, right, with their project and/or development?

MS. ZUCKER:

No. Since that never happened, Cameron, I've been a little bit more proactive.

LEG. ALDEN:

Good.

MS. ZUCKER:

I've been knocking on people's doors, I try to meet with anybody and everybody that I can to get something moving.

LEG. ALDEN:

I mean, it might sound weird --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

If I may. We have a list of -- we have been asking the towns, the commission has been asking the towns for sites also and how many do we have, 250 sites that they've suggested?

MS. ZUCKER:

There's roughly 255 parcels which together form roughly 45 sites for housing.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. Because once in a while in the classified ads you see, you know, a subdivision or somebody's got a subdivision ready to go with permits and things like that. And I'm not saying that we should -- you know, whether it's a high end or a low end, whether we should jump on things like that, but I think almost --

MS. ZUCKER:

If you see something like that, please call me. I mean, I have been reaching out to land owners, reaching out to developers, you know, and where the rubber hits the road is really the zoning process. People may be willing to do it, then we need to get the towns on board to get the appropriate zonings so we can deliver houses in order to price that work for our work force.

LEG. ALDEN:

Zoning after we buy it because if it's before we buy it we pay a hundred times more than what it would be worth if -- because we're asking for cluster zoning, we're asking for a lot of, you know, like relaxations on density and things like that.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's a complex issue.

MS. ZUCKER:

Yeah, it's complex because you don't want to buy a piece of land unless you're sure it's going to work for force housing and --

LEG. ALDEN:

If it doesn't then we throw it into open space preservation or we put horses on it or grow corn, so we have a lot of uses for property here.

LEG. NOWICK:

Have you gotten answers from the towns with suggestions?

MS. ZUCKER:

Yes, we have. And what I'd want to say just for information purposes, I did the same thing, I reached out to every town a year and a half ago and asked them for sites, I got response from one town. And in this regard --

LEG. NOWICK:

Just one town?

MS. ZUCKER:

Just one town came back to me with an answer.

LEG. NOWICK:

Which one?

MS. ZUCKER:

It was Islip.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. So --

MS. ZUCKER:

And they had some really good sites.

LEG. NOWICK:

And that's it, so that's your answer, we don't have any --

LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:

No, no, no, no, no, let me --

LEG. NOWICK:

Oh.

MS. ZUCKER:

Let me finish. I'm sorry. In this case where the commission actually went out and asked for sites with kind of the strength of the commission and the strength of the County Exec behind it, we got this response from many more towns, we got responses from five towns and a number of villages, but together we have a lot more sites.

LEG. NOWICK:

I wonder if each of us Legislators could get a copy of the responses that relate to our own towns in our own districts.

MS. ZUCKER:

I'd ask you to just bear with us. I can't speak on behalf of the commission, I'm only staff to the commission, but I know that there is a review process going on. The sites have not even been shared with all of the commission members, they have come in to the commission, they have been steered to the sites, the -- I mean steered to the staff, the staff is now doing the planning review of all of those sites. And our fear is if the sites do get released out in public there will be an unnecessary uproar; until we're sure we have something to talk about, I'd rather they be kept secret.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's why you need Mystal's dictatorship.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. Well, maybe as soon as you can we can know it.

MS. ZUCKER:

Excuse me?

LEG. NOWICK:

I assume you got the request for an answer by the Supervisors of the towns?

MS. ZUCKER:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

So as soon as you can, I think it would be a good thing for us to know.

MS. ZUCKER:

Oh, absolutely. I mean, clearly before we move something forward in anyone's district we'd always be in touch with you.

LEG. NOWICK:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Other questions? Thank you, Marion.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, we're adjourned. Thank you.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 12:41 P.M.*)

Legislator Lynne Nowick
Vice-Chair, Health & Human
Services Committee

Legislator Jay Schneiderman
Chairman, Ad Hoc Committee
on Affordable Housing

{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically.