

**HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**Of the**  
**Suffolk County Legislature**

**Minutes**

A regular meeting of the Health & Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York,  
On **February 9, 2004**.

**Members Present:**

Legislator Paul Tonna - Chairman

Legislator Brian Foley

Legislator Daniel Losquadro

Legislator Ricardo Montano

Legislator Jay Schneiderman

Legislator Vivian Vloria-Fisher

**Also in Attendance:**

Mea Knapp - Counsel to the Legislature

Ilona Julius - Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature

Ron Cohen - Aide to Legislator Tonna

Linda Bay - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa

Dan Hickey - Aide to Presiding Officer Caracappa

Kevin LaValle - Aide to Legislator Losquadro

Ray Zaccaro - Aide to Legislator Bishop

Eric Brown - Aide to Legislator Schneiderman

Tom Donovan - Aide to Legislator Schneiderman

Kara Hahn - Aide to Legislator Vloria-Fisher

John Ortiz - Budget Review Office

Ivan Young - Intergovernmental Relations/County Executive's Office

Ken Knappe - County Executive's Budget Office

Janet DeMarzo - Commissioner/Department of Social Services

Steven Colon - Department of Social Services

Bruce Blower - Director/Handicapped Services

Linda O'Donohoe - Assistant to the Commissioner/DSS

Lynne Bizzarro - County Attorney's Office

Linda Mermelstein - Acting Commissioner/Dept of Health Services

Richard Meyer - Department of Health Services

Sarah Anker - Resident of Mt. Sinai

Amee Bay - Suffolk County Perinatal Coalition

Judith Wishnia - Women's Advisory Commission

Paul Engelhart - Catholic Charities.

Anthony Mullen - Catholic Charities.

All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken By:**

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

***(\*The meeting was called to order at 9:32 A.M.\*)***

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

We're all going to rise for the pledge led by one of our newest Legislators, Mr. Montano.

***Salutation***

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

This is our first official meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee for the year 2004. It's always the Chairman's or Chairwoman's, in this case Chairman, prerogative to say a few words which I'm going to take that opportunity.

First of all, I would like to thank the Presiding Officer, Joseph Caracappa, for his appointing of this committee. This is a great mix of both young and old, and I don't mean age-wise but as far as on the Legislature which is always a great mix for a committee. And secondly, it's a great mix because it's people who not just engage their heads but also their hearts. And there is no more important committee to engage your heart than in a committee that deals with the poor, the under-served, those who are in need of health care, those who have to deal with the issues

of public health and social services.

So with that, I think we have a few cards today, we're going to have a couple of presentations. We have -- this wouldn't be called a full agenda considering we only have three resolutions in front of us, but on the other hand, this is a committee that has to deal with a lot of things that are -- that you need to start to think about now so that you can start to legislate for the future. I had the great opportunity for three years to chair the Social Services Committee and so some of us are aware of those issues. Legislator Foley who has done an excellent job in chairing the Health Committee for many years, and Legislator Viloría-Fisher who I had the good fortune of serving under as the Chairwoman of the Social Services, Human Services Committee, so we have a lot of experience here.

We also are geographically well balanced; we have south shore, north shore, we have east end, I mean really the east end, and west end. So in a certain sense, again, you know, the Presiding Officer showed, you know, great insight when putting this committee together. And I'd have to say that I hear we're one committee member short which, to tell you quite honestly, I couldn't be happier. A committee of six is great and missing our esteemed colleague from the Town of Huntington will be no loss to me whatsoever. Anyway, thank you and we'll continue with the --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Don't hold back, Paul.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

If you don't want to serve, we don't need you. Okay, I would say we'll start with I think Paul Egen --

**MR. ENGELHART:**

Engelhart.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Engelhart; thanks, Paul. Paul, I think you know already that I'm dyslexic, I'm terrible with names.

**MR. ENGELHART:**

Good morning. I think all of you have received copies of the testimony that I'm offering this

morning. My name is Paul Engelhart, I'm the Chief Program Officer for Catholic Charities, and with me today is Anthony Mullen, Director of our Parish and Community Services. Unfortunately, Laura Cassell, our Chief Executive Officer, is unable to be here as originally planned and she asked that we represent her here today.

First, we would like to thank the Suffolk County Legislature for a total of \$100,074 in one-time increases for our 2004 Suffolk County contracts; \$36,466 for our Chemical Dependency Clinic and \$63,608, a member item grant from Legislator Paul Tonna for our mental health clinics. We realize that this support was both an acknowledgement of the enormity of the needs of those who suffer with mental health and chemical dependency in this County and recognition of the quality of our agency's response to those needs.

For nearly 50 years Catholic Charities has served thousands of Suffolk County neighbors who are poor, disadvantaged, isolated or vulnerable. Behavioral Health Services has been an essential component of our care since 1959 when we introduced clinic-based services in Suffolk. In 1976 we opened and continue to operate the only Alcohol Crisis Center in the County; this program provides the critical first step in an individual's recovery. In 1978 Catholic Charities was instrumental in the creation of a pioneering supported case management program in response to the deinstitutionalization movement that had a very pronounced impact on Suffolk County.

In 1998 we opened Sienna Residence to help individuals discharged from inpatient care make the transition to community living, as well as to reduce inpatient hospital recidivism and the enormous additional associated costs. In 1995 we developed a Day Treatment Program to create a continuum of care for those recovering from chemical dependency. In response to a request from the County, we launched the Assertive Community Treatment or ACT Team model in 1996 as a strategy to engage the most difficult and resistant clients into appropriate treatment. Most recently we have initiated parish and school-based supportive services for those impacted by the tragedy of 9/11.

We know that the Legislature and especially members of this committee are well aware of the enormous financial commitment made by the Catholic Church, an average of a half million dollars over the past five years, to ensure that the level and more importantly the quality of behavioral health services is not diminished in this County. You know, too, that the fiscal imbalance in our partnership with government to provide services cannot be sustained indefinitely.

So even as we express our gratitude for the one-time funding increases approved by the Legislature, we also ask that you make these permanent increases to our base contracts. Certainly with operating costs for any business or not-for-profit only increasing, not decreasing, the rationale for last year's grants are even stranger for next year and the years ahead. We are confident that the additional dollars directed towards Behavioral Health Services are an investment in the quality of life for all Suffolk County residents and a cost effective alternative to expensive hospital based care or involvement in the County's Criminal Justice System. We stand ready to provide any additional information or follow-up necessary to support the permanency of this funding. Thank you for your attention this morning and your careful consideration of our request.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Any questions? Legislator Foley.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to welcome you as the Chair of this committee. This is going to be a very involved and interesting year with a full host of health and human service issues that will be facing the County at a time of some real financial duress, vis-a-vis the State and Federal dollars affecting our County dollars.

With that said, I would like to thank Mr. Engelhart for his presentation. There are those of us who over a period of years have viewed member items not as one-time increases, but because it comes out of the same pot of money that every other dollar of County government comes from, many of us believe and have believed over a period of years that that -- what the final, let's say, budget proposal, final budget that was adopted for your particular contract agency is the starting point for the following year and should not be reduced by what some would consider a member item when, in fact, it really is a loose description of how the monies were appropriated. But the way that I look at it and I think others do, particularly on this committee, is that it's the starting point for future let's say budget negotiations, particularly when it comes out of the same area of money that we fund things on a reoccurring revenue basis.

So while I'm happy that you gave this proposal, this presentation rather, it's my belief that if we use this term one-time increase with all the other items that we as Legislators have amended -- see, years ago when we would make amendments to proposed budgets, it was not considered a

member item, it was simply an amendment that was approved and that became a starting point for the following year, and that's the way I still look at it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**MR. ENGELHART:**

And that's certainly our hope. We just wanted to make sure that it was considered in addition to the contracts.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you. Well, we think it's part of the contract.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

One of the things that I would suggest also to our newer members of the committee, this is actually a great committee to serve on when beginning in County government. Because as one of our Legislators who's a Town Supervisor dealing with housing issues and different things, you would bring -- especially in your district, there's so much that you can bring to this committee with regard to especially the issue of homelessness, we know that there's a huge motel problem out there and stuff. But this is a great committee when you're starting because this is where the rubber hits the road, you know, in a certain sense, Federal and State dollars come to the County to be appropriated and to be utilized. And in a very real sense, we've had a great history of a partnership with Catholic Charities and the work.

And I think it should be pointed out that a lot of times we look at contract agencies and say, "What are we providing funding for," what they needed to do, and really it's the reserves. That in a certain sense -- and in this case, Catholic Charities and there are numerous contract agencies that have gotten involved and said, "Look, we can do things cheaper than the County can do them themselves." And actually we're the ones who are fortunate in benefiting, we're the ones who are being supplemented by -- in this case with Catholic Charities, by the Catholic Church to be able to supplement our efforts in government.

And so in a certain sense, even though it sounds like they're petitioning the County for more money to do our job, what really essentially falls on the County to take care; mental health is one of those aspects. You know, we get caught up sometimes, and especially when we're doing budgets or thinking about budgets, you know, we're going to give a certain amount of money to this group or this group or that group, but there is -- in the health and human services area, there are a number of contract agencies the roll is really reversed; that they, through the sense

of mission, through a sense of, you know, a thousand different things, developed an outreach, a charity, a cause that is actually supplementing County government, you know. And this is actually very, very cost effective.

So I would echo or repeat what Legislator Foley said and the insight that he provides which is I don't see this as a one-time, you know, initiation from the Legislature, I see this as a base. And I could tell you this, I will be one to fight not just for Catholic Charities but a number of contract agencies who are doing a fantastic job in helping the poor, in helping those who are in this specific case, things like mental health services, so I think you'll have a lot of support among that. And we want to be kept to-date and I would encourage any contract agency, if there are concerns or whatever else and cost effective ways that they think they can do things even better than the way the County does them, you know, we would like to know that. I know our Commissioner of Social Services has been, you know, fantastic with dealing with contract agencies and being able to partner up so that we can get the work done for those who are indigent in Suffolk County. Okay.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Mr. Chair, if I could just add one more thing to that.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Legislator Vilorina-Fisher.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

The importance of new members of the Legislature being on this committee, I couldn't agree with you more. Because there have been cynical remarks at budget time by Legislators who don't serve on this committee, everyone one says that if we invest a dollar we get back ten; I have heard that comment. When we serve on this committee and we have an intimate knowledge of what is provided by the contract agencies, we do see that there's a tremendous return on our investment. That the contract agencies not only provide the service at great -- much great -- at a great savings, but they also have matching grant money that provides even more, so to speak, bang for the buck, and serving on this committee has educated us in understanding that.

And I hope that all of us who serve on this committee and see that kind of impact on every tax

dollar that we spend with our contract agencies, that we bring that to the budget table when we're discussing our budget items and know that it's not just another hand that's stretched out saying, "Give us money and we'll give you ten times what you're giving us." This has actually been shown -- Kathy is back there nodding because last year we did ask her to bring the actual cost analysis and benefits charts which did indeed show that for every dollar we spent with your agencies we did get \$10 at least, it was increased tenfold in most cases.

So I thank you for coming here today early in the process and I do hope that all of us who will serve on this committee will be your advocates when we're looking at budgetary issues.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Legislator Schneiderman.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

A question more for the Chair. As, you know, one of the new members here certain questions come to mind. Certainly Catholic Charities I have worked with in the past, I'm a big fan of the work that you do and I appreciate your coming here. My real question is not about Catholic Charities, it's about these contract agencies and how the County reviews, obviously some provide more bang for the buck --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Right, absolutely.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

-- than others. What area within the County is doing the review of these services provided?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

It's actually -- there are multiple agencies within the County; when they contract with Social Services, Social Services does a review. Each review is also subject to an audit through the Comptroller's Office, but they're less programmatic and more, you know, dollar-wise as far as bills and things like that. And then Legislative Budget Review, we've had from time to time and I know there's been legislation passed that we have requested, specific information with regard to contract agencies. And there is -- you know, what I have found, my experience in the ten years serving as a Legislator is there is a very large continuum from those agencies that are effective and provide really cost benefit and those who, you know, for no better word happen to be pet

project, you know, agencies or causes within somebody's district or whatever which might not be as effective, and so there is a large continuum. I know that Social Services in the years has been a really great guidance to say, "Hey, this is a really good one, why are we spending money here when we can -- on this group when we can spend the money there and be more effective?"

So that's why serving on this committee I think is, you know, a great insight into seeing some of what that takes place. To say that, you know, it's -- that this committee and the focus, whether it be in Health and Human Services, is removed from politics would be ridiculous; I mean, I'm sure every elected official would love to say that, but the fact is is that it's a dynamic that's involved. What I have found, my experience has been and I think Legislator Foley as Chairman of the Health Committee could say and Legislator Fisher who was the Chairwoman of Social Services also, is that this committee seems to be the advocate, the advocacy group that really says, "Hey, we need to funnel our money in the right places, the places that are really doing the job." So this committee is not only a committee that makes decisions but also a committee that picks up a lot of information to make, you know, critical judgments. And during budget time it is the insight from members of this committee that are saying, "Hey, I sat through these hearings, I heard what they said," you know, and I think that's the interplay that takes place.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Okay. So when -- so there will come a time in the future when we're asked to evaluate the funding for these organizations we will have in front of us an evaluation, an audit of the services, who received the services; in other words, not by name but how many County residents received certain services and what the costs were for those services.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Mr. Chairman, if I may.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Some groups will do that, and Social Services provides that. I mean, Janet, Commissioner DeMarzo is going to be up here later and I think maybe you can address that issue, after your presentation, to Legislator Schneiderman with regard to specifically how Social Services audits organizations.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

You know, this had come up when I was Supervisor, too, and we had done audits on various

groups just to make sure that we couldn't provide these services better ourselves and make sure that there was a cost savings by going through contract agencies and making sure that the money was being spent within the township, because we found certain organizations that the bulk of their work was actually outside of the town. I know some of the agencies work not only in Suffolk County but in Nassau County, so I just want to make sure as we go that we're carefully analyzing it so that as many people as possible get the services that they need for the limited amount of resources the County has to offer.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Great. Okay, any other questions or statements? We'll ask that question of Legislator -- I mean of Commissioner DeMarzo.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Bite your tongue.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

She might want to run, you never know. I don't know who's district she's in. Okay, thank you very much, sir.

**MR. ENGELHART:**

Thank you.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

She's in my district.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

She is? I don't think she'll run then. I think she's happier where she is, to tell you quite honestly.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

No, I meant from her point of you view bite your tongue, not from my point of view.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. Sarah Anker; did I pronounce that correctly?

**MS. ANKER:**

Yes, Anker.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Anker? You're not related to Paul Anker, are you? He was a singer,.  
Big in the 70's, out in the 80's.

**MS. ANKER:**

No.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay, thank you.

**MS. ANKER:**

Hi. I have never really spoken in front of a committee but it was suggested by a Legislator that I come here and ask a couple of questions.

I addressed the Legislature about, what, two weeks ago, a week and a half ago about the situation in my town, Mount Sinai, and surrounding towns. There's a seven zip code area that's under investigation by the Department of Health for a breast cancer cluster and it's been three and a half years and the State still hasn't come out to really do any testing, physical testing of our area, and even though they know exactly where the clusters are within the clusters kind of thing.

And I was hoping the -- well, we're meeting with Legislator Losquadro on Wednesday, a group of people of my coalition, but if the Health Committee could maybe also write a letter, that seems to be -- it seems to be helping, to Antonia {Novell}, the Health Commissioner, asking her to expedite the investigation, if that's possible.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Maybe I'll defer to Legislator Foley who -- I didn't sit on the Health Committee last year, but this had to be an issue in the Health Committee, right, Legislator Foley?

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Absolutely.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And just has our own Health Commissioner weighed in on this?

**LEG. FOLEY:**

In fact, the County Health Department has, and later in the committee you will hear from Dr. Mermelstein. As may be news to the newer members of the committee, the local Social Services Commissioner as well as the local County Health Commissioner are also local agents for the State Health Department and State Social Services. So many times when there are State initiatives by either department, the local Commissioner is supposed to be involved in that, so I'm sure that.

Dr. Mermelstein can give us at least a brief update today and then do a follow-up.

But Ms. Anker's points are well taken. Not just in the north shore and the Mt. Sinai area but throughout Suffolk County in each of our Legislative Districts, the mapping that was done by the State did identify certain spikes in certain zip codes and there really does need to be some regulatory and State follow-up. As good as our County Health Department is, this is something clearly that can only be done in partnership, if not a leadership roll played by the State Health Department. So I'm glad that this is one of the things that we can do early on as a committee. To have that kind of follow-up three years after the basic foundation information was publicized, made public by the State Department of Health, but there certainly needs to be this kind of follow-up.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And I can assure you that working through your local Legislator, Legislator Losquadro, my office - Ron, write this down -- that Legislator Losquadro will direct this committee, you know, so as Chairman we'll write a letter that will support, you know, what is decided. So we'll we will lend the voice of this committee through Legislator Losquadro.

**MS. ANKER:**

Like you had said earlier in the discussion, you know, it's too bad politics have to be involved when it comes to health and social service issues, but the letters that the politicians have been writing to the State seems to have nudged them along to go on to the next update. There was an update that was due out in the end of December and it still hasn't come out, it could be out

in March, but again, it's an update, you know. And it's nice that we're being -- you know, that there is research going into it; from what I understand they are researching the area. But my also personal opinion is it's not just Mount Sinai, it's Suffolk County, like Legislator Foley had mentioned. And also, it's not just breast cancer, it's other cancers, it's asthma, it's other diseases that really, you know, need to be addressed to -- you know, it's something that Suffolk County can do.

There were a couple of things I just wanted to mention. I spoke to Amy Yukatz, she's a Toxicologist with the Health Department, and she had given me information on the Pesticide Phase-Out Community Advisory Committee, it's something that Suffolk County has going on which I wasn't really fully aware of which I think it's very helpful because I feel -- even though this is a Health Committee meeting, I really feel that environment and health go hand in hand and if there's something the County can promote pertaining to health, that will help a great deal.

And I was wondering, too, since I wasn't able to ask questions when I was here in front of the Legislature, I'm just curious what has the County done and what do you think that the County can do for the cancer or health situation in Suffolk County?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

I think that I'll leave --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

The Health Commissioner.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yeah, I think we'll wait for the Commissioner to come and I think those are probably good questions that Legislator Losquadro is aware of and will help you with at the meeting and then he'll share those insights with us.

**MS. ANKER:**

Thank you.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say thank you to the Chairman for offering the support of

this committee. And I look forward to working with you, Ms. Anker. As you know, I came on sort of midstream in this process, I know you put a lot of time and effort into this and I'm glad that we have this meeting scheduled. I'm sure you'll bring me up to speed on all the work that you and your crew have been doing and I look forward to working with you to see what the County can do in this matter.

**MS. ANKER:**

Okay. And Legislator Schneiderman, I think I had spoken to Eric Brown, your aide, and he had suggested also -- now, you're are on the Environmental Committee?

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Yes.

**MS. ANKER:**

To perhaps -- I would like maybe a little bit more information as far as what Suffolk County has done environmentally, that would be helpful.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I think many times there's going to be overlaps between the Environment Committee and the Health Care committee. In fact, a piece of legislation I'm working on right now which I discussed with you really falls into both, it has to do with environmental health issues.

So, you know, I would love to see you come and talk to the Environment Committee, too, and do a presentation.

While I'm on the microphone, can I ask you is it --

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Is your mike on?

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I think it is, maybe I'll just move it a little closer. With the seven zip code areas that was in the State study, in the letter that we're writing to the State, what exactly are we asking for? Now, are we asking for an update or are we asking for additional studies to try to figure out what causal relationships might be there?

**MS. ANKER:**

I think in the folders that I had presented to the Legislature, basically there's two things to expedite the investigation because it's been going very slowly, they keep coming out with updates saying that, "We're researching, we're looking into it, we're researching." It would be nice if people could have some type of direction to go to, and I think pesticides, that's within people's ability to do something, you know, health, maybe diet, something that people can do to try to have a certain amount of control over the situation because right now, you know, we're not being told what we can do.

So expediting the investigation and also coming out to our area, the areas -- like I said, they know where the clusters are within the clusters, I know where some of these neighborhoods are where there's four or five or six or seven or eight homes within a street, within a neighborhood, that have mainly breast cancer but also other cancers. In my neighborhood alone there's two ill with breast cancer, my next door neighbor died two years ago of stomach cancer. I just found out last week a neighbor behind me has -- her mother has breast cancer; and that's just within a matter of walking distance, you know.

So it's time that they come out, they test the water, they test the soil and they said they have been doing it; "Oh, we're looking into the water and soil." And we've have gotten all the information from what they've been given, they haven't actually physically gone out and done an epidemiological study, as far as I know, I could be wrong. But those two things, that would I think, you know, be good for our community.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Certainly with the pesticide issue, you know, we continue to introduce chemicals that we know are toxic into our environment, often for no other reason then to have a nice green lawn which doesn't make sense at all.

But in terms of a survey in epidemiological work, we in East Hampton have a documented cancer cluster, too, around the high school area and we did do a very exhaustive survey of people even who have moved from the area, tracked them down and tried to develop some of the causal relationships if we could. We haven't actually succeeded in pinpointing what it might be and that always leaves you in the dark and then everything is suspect. You know, I wish we

would be able to find a cause so that we could address the problem more clearly, but without it you're left saying, you know, trying to eliminate things that might be the cause and it's very frustrating.

**MS. ANKER:**

I think there's also something that I didn't mention in the letter but it was brought up among the Advisory Council Group. Congressman Tim Bishop and a lot of the activists and medical people there had suggested the State needs to include residential history, which they do not, in their register. When people who have cancer register, they don't put where they live five years ago or ten years ago and that's when cancer starts, you know, it doesn't -- cancer doesn't start over night, it progresses. And I think certain factors like estrogen that we've discovered -- and again, a lot of pesticides and chemicals are estrogen-mimicking chemicals -- but those types of chemicals progress cancer, they make it go faster.

But I think, again, I don't know what the County can do but to just put the residential history. It's like one of the things that you have to know before you -- you have to know this before you can determine what the result is and if you don't have that one factor, and it's like the State just doesn't want to know what that factor is, you know. I don't want to blame anyone, but it's a really critical factor that's not being addressed.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

To date there has not been a survey of, you know, the cancer victims in those seven zip code areas in terms of the hundred questions that you might ask to try to find some commonality there; that hasn't happened yet?

**MS. ANKER:**

As far as I know, no, not directly in the area. And again, it started out as a three zip code area, it started out as Mt. Sinai, Coram and Port Jeff Station and then it extended because Sound Beach had such a high incident also, and so they went a little east and they went a little west, so it includes seven Zip codes. I don't know if that was a good idea or if it's going to water down the results or -- you know, but I think they need to go right back -- they need to start focusing in instead of pulling away.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

And the State hasn't assigned an epidemiologist or there's nobody specifically working on this

problem?

**MS. ANKER:**

This is something I think the County can address the State. I know, the media has tried get in touch with them and I've been fortunate, I have a contact there and she's been helpful in giving some information. But I think that, again, the County can put the State -- the State said we have this cluster, if they didn't say it they wouldn't be responsible to address the issue, but now they need to address it. And I think the County and the town and the other political leaders, you know, it's basically your job, their job to finish the job, basically.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Legislator Losquadro.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Thank you. And you've heard assurances from all of us, we as a committee and as a Legislature as a whole will certainly offer whatever support we can on the County level to make sure that the State addresses this.

I'm sure you know that just this past summer we lost Denise {Servillo}, a very good friend of mine from the Rocky Point Civic Association. So I know this is something that's near and dear to all of our hearts within that area, there's a very high concentration. So I'll see you on Wednesday.

**MS. ANKER:**

Thank you. And one other thing as far as what I think the County might be able to do, too, is education and promoting and that aspect. I mean, yes, write the State, do what you can, push in that direction, but also awareness is really important. If people know what they can do to lessen their chances of becoming sick, again, that's why you're here, to help people stay healthy and I think that would be a good thing. The thing that pops in my mind is Brookhaven's Recycling Curby Can, that was such a great promotion and people really started recycling. Again, it's just something that maybe the County can do is focus on awareness and promoting that. Thank you.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Mr. Chair, if i could just make one more comment?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Sure. Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

We were both there at the Connetquot -- I mean at the Comsewogue Library when the Health Department came down and Ms. Anker and I were both there, I think it was two-and-a-half years ago.

**MS. ANKER:**

Right.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Because we had the dubious honor of sharing this distinction of the seven zip codes with Legislator Losquadro and so there were an enormous number of people there at that presentation, but there wasn't that much of an opportunity for dialogue, as you recall. There was -- there were presentations but not really a great opportunity for dialogue.

Since that time, because of my concern that some of the zip codes that were flagged in my district were areas where there had been a lot of potato farming, rather than looking at what many people had been looking at before that we started looking more carefully at farming. We now have an Agriculture Environment Committee -- which, as Legislator Schneiderman said, we're always looking at environment and health together -- where farmers are voluntarily going to be reducing the pesticides and fertilizers that they're putting into the soil; that's a beginning.

I believe that the County has been trying to address -- while we're waiting for the final reports, we have been trying to address the use of pesticides and fertilizers, their reduction, but we will keep pushing the State to give us more information. Because as you know, at the State University where they have been doing environmental and health studies, Dr. Christine {Aleski} had -- her research conclusions had been that some of the culprits that have been thought to be the environmental causes of cancer, and I don't want to get into detail because I'm not a scientist and I'm just working from memory, she had said that she did not find conclusive evidence, that there was the link so we have to look elsewhere. And there is a lot of data that

has to be researched, but we need to know the status of that research and I think that's what you're asking for primarily --

**MS. ANKER:**

Right.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

-- is where are you, what's the status and where are you going from here.

**MS. ANKER:**

Right, we need a direction.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Absolutely.

**MS. ANKER:**

I don't think we'll ever know what exactly causes cancer, you know -- well, maybe one day we will but at least we're suspecting. You know, as a mother of three children, you know, I'd rather be safe than sorry. If there's cigarettes, cigarettes, tobacco was thought of nothing, you know, it was okay, and maybe we're in a stage where we just don't know. But we should also -- we do know, we do that know that certain chemicals are carcinogenic and we should address that a little bit more aggressively and proactively and I think that at least would be heading in the right direction.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

By the way, we were the first County to ban MTBE --

**MS. ANKER:**

Which is great.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

-- before -- in the State, so we're always working at and it trying to clean up our environment.

**MS. ANKER:**

And it was Suffolk County, I think Suffolk County has the highest use of pesticides in the State

from what I understand. I think that we're definitely heading in the right direction. Thank you.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay, thank you very much. And I just want to keep encouraging you to keep everybody's feet to the fire. Thank you very much, Ma'am.

Okay, we're done with the cards and I'd ask for a presentation by the Commissioner of Social Services, Janet DeMarzo.

**COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:**

Good morning. I have with me Steve Colon from the Department of Social Services who, with his background and expertise in statistics and policy analysis, will assist me in doing the presentation on the client satisfaction survey.

We have given you a package which -- last year the Legislature sponsored a resolution to direct the department to develop a survey to determine whether or not the clients that we serve are being treated appropriately. Basically like any other private or public agency, whether or not our client's satisfaction, our customer service was working, and the resolution directed us to work with the Commissioner's Advisory Council on developing this. There was a little trepidation, we'll be honest. We thought we had done a good job as an agency. I see Commissioner Hickey is here and he was there during the time that a lot of the department efforts went into addressing what was at one time a problem. We had gone through significant welfare reform, there was overworked and overburned clients and we didn't have the focus as an agency on the needs of the clients and the sensitivity of the clients. And I think that -- you know, I get to sit here today and take credit for the work of prior Commissioners who really worked to address some of those problems. So what we found was really positive, as I'm leading to.

And what I'm giving you here so that you have time -- when you have time you can look at it is an executive summary and a real detailed analysis of the findings center by center as well as some of the questions and processes that we undertook to do this survey. And then what we have is a pretty easy follow-along. We had thought about doing a Power Point and we decided to just do a handout that you can follow through with some of the concepts that we're going to

outline, and that's this document here which is on the left side of the folder.

I'll start with the easy stuff and then as we get into more of the statistical analysis, I'm going to turn it over to Mr. Colon to really deal with because he was hands-on in developing the process and the survey controls. But essentially, there was a perception that the Department of Social Services was not client sensitive, that we really weren't meeting the people's needs in a polite and friendly way, so the department took this very seriously. And during the 90's, especially the late 90's, they put together a committee to look at what can they do to change the culture of Social Services and the department, and there was a courtesy committee formed and that committee looked at the process and came up with a number of proposals.

What we did was they decided on a Professional Courtesy Award. Semiannually we go out and we -- this committee and staff look at people who are fine examples of going above and beyond and really touching the individual and that we recognize it and we value it as a department. So we have an award ceremony where they get a basket of nicknacks and, you know, desk supplies and there's a little celebration, so that we make them know it's important, it's not under recognized. We also developed handbooks and posters to remind people of the value of being nice. Staff training put a focus on it.

You know that we deal with very difficult clients and difficult situations. I mean, you know, we are a center that has guards and we've had incidences where people have punched walls and attacked workers, so we have staff training on how to diffuse situations, how to work with clients, especially difficult clients, how to deliver a no in a positive way. And we also made it a critical part of our review.

So that when an employee is evaluated, especially early on in their career with the Department of Social Services, they recognize it's something they will be essentially reviewed and considered and discussed so that if there are issues -- I mean, you can do a great job but if you do it -- if you do the paperwork great but you don't do the client work part good, you're not going to get a great review.

So the department -- you know, as I said, I cannot take credit for that, it was started before me and I think I get to reap a lot of the results. I have gone out recently as a result of this to meet with all the centers because, you know, we thought we had turned the corner as a department but the results are better than we had thought and some centers do exceptionally well so I've

gone out to talk to the centers because I think a real important part of the process is for them to know it and them to be encouraged. I think the Department of Motor Vehicle, for a long time -- I think everybody who lives on Long Island knows this -- was a horrible place, everybody hated the 1st or the 15th, whenever they had to go there and spend a day. And now we go to DMV and it's pleasant, you get in, you get out, the people that work there feel better, you feel better. So I actually, in presenting to the agency people, have said to them, you know, we're on the DMV route, we're going to change it and I think an important part of that is that they know that they're on the right track.

So I have gone out to the three of the centers and I have two more centers to visit, but I think that they're really encouraged. You know, I know that I've heard individually from Legislators some good experiences, and I'm not saying it's perfect, but there are some good experiences and I think that, you know, the department is on the right track.

So with that, I'm going to ask Mr. Colon to go over the development of the survey and how it was instituted and to highlight the survey.

Findings because he's a better -- he has a better understanding of it than I do.

**MR. COLON:**

Prior to getting into some of the findings, I would first like to just discuss some of the research methodology along that went into it. Much of what we do because this is an important task to us, finding out levels of client satisfaction, was done in an effort to reduce bias and reduce error so that the information that we provide you and the information that we collect is as good as it could get.

One of the things that we did was we developed an interview style survey assessment tool. We didn't think that it would be good to have the clients fill it out themselves without any assistance because there may be questions, the wording may not be appropriate, so we actually had student interns read the questions to them and then make note of the answers and also help, too, with decoding the data when it came to handwriting and things like that.

In addition to collecting information on levels of client satisfaction, we also collect information on client experiences in the center on that given day, case specific information, also other demographic information. We also translated the survey into a Spanish language survey so that

we can accommodate one of the common spoken second languages in the County. And if you'd like to take a look at those two surveys, in your full findings on the right-hand side we've included in Appendix A and B copies of the actual surveys that you can flip through at your conveyance.

We were able to get a lot of help from the Suffolk County Community College. Fifteen students as part of a course requirement to provide 25 hours of Community Service helped us by administering the survey and they were very, very much a beneficial part of this whole function, and we thank you for suggesting that to us. They each received about an hour worth of training and that gave them about 24 hours worth of actual survey interviewing to be able to do.

In an attempt to secure a very random sample, we asked them to stand by the lobby doors as clients were exiting the lobby and solicit it every third person for an interview. Now, the reason why we did every third person, as you would imagine, much like with the mall surveys, these people tend to -- interviewers tend to gravitate towards individuals that they find in some way appealing or attractive, whether it be physically or the emotional, whatever that individual is projecting; we wanted to make sure that we got a very random sample so we required that they solicited every third person exiting the center. As you would imagine, we could, therefore, get anyone who was done for the day with their center service or people who were just going outside to go to the coffee truck, so where they were in their daily -- their center experience was also quite random.

We collected 292 surveys over the four week period, which I think for a voluntary survey is quite good. However, we had to disqualify two of them for conflicting data, so our final sample size was 290. Are there any questions on the methodology before I go on to the findings?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Just --

**MR. COLON:**

The very first question we asked them was we asked the clients to rate on a five point scale their overall level of satisfaction going from very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neither dissatisfied nor satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. And as you can see, 53.4% of the clients that we surveyed responded that they were somewhat to very satisfied with their center experience on that day with 26, almost 28% of them claiming that they were very

satisfied with their center experience on that day. We then took that information and mapped it out on what we called a feeling thermometer. Some of you who --

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Mr. Chairman, if I just may ask, that's the -- you pooled all the numbers together and it was 27.6% that was satisfied; do you have a breakdown as to what those percentages are by the centers?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yeah, that's in here.

**MR. COLON:**

Yeah, in the full findings it's broken up by center.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

No, the other one, Brian.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Okay.

**MR. COLON:**

It's the larger packet in the back.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you.

**MR. COLON:**

We then broke that information up on to a feeling thermometer which is used a lot by the National Election Studies to determine how warmly or coldly people feel towards individuals and institutions. Basically ratings between 50 and a 100 mean that you feel increasingly warm or satisfied with your experience, ratings from 50 to 0 mean that you're increasingly cold or dissatisfied, and the 50 mark is the ambivalent mark and neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. When we aggregated our numbers, the average client was 54 degrees feeling slightly warmly towards their center experience on that day.

Now, this may seem on the outset not glowing numbers to tout. When we looked at the dissatisfaction, over 60% of those individuals who were dissatisfied, who were somewhat to very dissatisfied also indicated they did not receive the benefits that they were expecting to receive on that day. So there's a very high correlation and the fact that the benefits were not received could very well be the contributing factor to their dissatisfaction.

When we actually asked them one of the reasons why they were dissatisfied, the most frequently cited reason was for the long wait times, waiting to see somebody or waiting on line to actually get an interview. When we followed up that question on whether or not they felt that the wait time was acceptable, as you can see the table indicates in every center the wait time, the majority of the respondents said that they were somewhat to very acceptable, and overall the wait time was somewhat to very acceptable.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Just a quick question. Did the staff -- prior to the day that you surveyed, because this is a one day, did the staff have any indication that you were going to be conducting a survey that day?

**MR. COLON:**

It was actually more than just one day, it was over a four week time period. The staff, most of the staff were unaware that we were there because the students were actually in the lobby.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Right, but it wasn't something where you had meetings and said, "By the way, we're rating everybody this month," you know, because that could skew the results just a tad.

**MR. COLON:**

No. Actually, we were actually very much unaware of when it was going to take place ourselves because obviously we had to work within the confines of the semester for the Suffolk Community College and the students had to set their own schedule; so when the students would be there and when they wouldn't be there was quite random..

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

I've seen those surveys done but, you know, not here, obviously. Okay, thank you.

**MR. COLON:**

We additionally wanted to know, besides their level of satisfaction with the center experience, how they felt with the actual center staff, and generally our staff was thought to be helpful and polite. If you look at the table I believe on the fifth page, over 80% of the respondents indicated that the center staff was somewhat to very helpful with the majority opinion being that the center staff was very helpful. Equally encouraging was the fact that over 85% of those people who responded said that the staff was somewhat to very polite with 60% saying that the staff was very polite.

In light of both the high levels of helpfulness and politeness with regards to the modest levels of client satisfaction, one could reasonably assume that the level of dissatisfaction are not staff driven but yet may, in fact, be process driven. Another encouraging component to all this, especially with the levels of -- high levels of perceived helpfulness and politeness is the idea that over 70% of the individuals who walked into the centers throughout our survey did not have a scheduled appointment, these were individuals who were in fragile states, they had emergencies, they were obviously coming in for a desperate and dire need and yet they still, in their fragile state, felt that our staff was helpful and polite and that's something that we hold in a very high regard.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Great. I have a few questions, you know, if anybody else does, going over the information. First of all, I want to commend the Commissioner and her staff. You know, generally speaking, bureaucracies are very defensive, especially when in government you hear -- whether it be on the Federal, the State or local levels, that people don't want to know because if they know then, you know, it can cause problems. And so there is a certain amount of risk.

First of all, and I know some Legislators would chime in, to have a Legislative initiative actually followed up and taken seriously is in itself an amazing event. That being said, secondly is to do it so thoroughly with the fact that you didn't have a known quantity, you didn't know what the results would be. And then third of all, this is a great starting point. I mean, you know everybody in management knows you cannot manage unless you can measure and measuring, you know, and developing indices is an extremely important part of business management and it should apply also in conducting business in government.

So I just want to commend you on, you know, this first step. I don't know if other counties have done that, maybe that would be my first question; were you taking any models from any

other counties, did they conduct these type of surveys at all, were you able to use any models from other governmental entities or agencies?

**MR. COLON:**

One of our fears as we went around looking -- as you can imagine, not many other governmental agencies had ever endeavored on anything like this before -- so we actually looked towards the Commissioner's Advisory Council and the members of the private sector on that council who have done this for -- for instance, KeySpan Banking, their client satisfaction, and they helped us develop it and many of the questions that we had modification on modifications over what they used for their daily management oversight.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And in your opinion, in looking through it -- and I'm not a sociologist nor a statistician, but you feel this is a pretty good scientific survey that from the standpoint of the industry, you know, how the industry would conduct themselves that this is -- you know, that this data would pretty much hold water.

**COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:**

Steve can give you the detailed response, but I will tell you that.

Mr. Colon worked very hard. I mean, we -- one of the reasons Mr. Colon is part of the Management and Research Unit of the department is that he has a lot of experience in this from his educational background. And in fact, there were times we said, "Come on, let's just make it work," and the integrity of the survey was very important. You know, while -- I mean, I really questioned whether 292 was a significant enough number and he explained to me that based upon all the controls that we had in place and the number of clients seen during that, it was a statistically valid number. So I don't know if he'll be as strong but his background and his integrity in this process really assured me that I think it's a valid survey. I don't think it -- you know, I'm going to be honest, I thought we did a pretty good job but I didn't really know if the clients all shared that view. So we did approach this with a little trepidation and we are very happy with the results and we're hoping to build upon them. Because some of the things, as Mr. Colon said, we found were process-driven, some of our physical structures, some of our wait time and some of the things well beyond our control such as the State rules and regulations and the processes and the paper work; I mean, it's just overwhelming. I don't know if any of you have ever filled out a form but it can be overwhelming.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Right.

**COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:**

You know, you can answer it.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yeah, just one -- go ahead, Steve.

**MR. COLON:**

Every effort was made to make sure that we reduced error; obviously every survey has some error just inherently built into it. The fact that we only gave the students one hour worth of training when we could have used a full 24 hours worth of training to 25 hours worth of training to give them -- to help them do this, there's some error. But I'm very confident in the fact that we've received a good sample size here and the numbers actually are as clean as they possibly could for this type of survey. Also, our sample breaks up when you break it up by center, it's proportional to the size of each center's population for us. You know, Coram has, you know, whatever that percentage was and the survey actually matches that percentage as well.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Great. One of the concerns that I have or questions, you know, every survey -- and again, I really commend you and I think you can honestly say the glass is half full. But starting with the glass half full, one of my concerns is that obviously we weren't able to survey those who did not come in and they didn't come in for a reason, and I'd like to see if we can focus in on the fact that -- you know, and the stories that we hear in our district offices and, you know, the kind of anecdotal stories or constituent calls that we get, a lot of times a single mother working hard, you know, having to take public transportation to get her son or daughter to day-care, is not able to get or access the benefits that they want because if they take a day off from school, you know, or take a day off from work, you know, all different things like that.

My sense is is that as we continue this process, and this is a good process that says, you know, the medium is the message that we care about what you think and we care about service, that we move into directions that we can maybe take this and say, "Okay, now how do we outreach? What is the process-driven mechanisms where we can all of a sudden start to think about night

hours." You know, I've said it a thousand times, you could always use -- my district office could be, you know, in my area of Babylon and Huntington, that maybe there are some creative models that we can pilot to say maybe we can do some night things where trained people can come in and help people with paperwork in the evening so, you know, when they're off from work, especially the working poor, you know, that they have their children or whatever else, they can come in and do some things that would help the process. You know, even if there's some things that we can do on-line where you have somebody in a district -- you know, and again, my district office would be a great place to pilot it but, you know, maybe something where you can go on-line with a trained worker where they can do it in an evening and then have all that paperwork processed and stuff like that.

**COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:**

You know, the public transportation, the hours, those are all barriers for people. Just to tell you, one of the efforts we're working on to kind of address that is the George Mason One-Stop Shop has evening hours and we're looking to work with the Department of Labor having a benefits forum for people so that there are so many Federal dollars we could bring with food stamps and day care and income tax credit. So we're working right now with the Department of Labor of having a once a month forum for people to get them information. At this point it's just a forum, we don't have the computer systems in place, but we're going slowly to see if we can really do the outreach and identify people that will access that if we have nighttime hours.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Right, okay. Thank you very much. Yes, Legislator Viloría-Fisher.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Thank you, Commissioner and thank you, Mr. Colon, for that presentation. It reflects some of what we have seen anecdotally and discussed here in the Legislature which is that the overwhelming application process, that interview process really is a major problem. I think that we saw -- in some of the visits that I have made to the centers, the courtesy of the people, of the staff was not an issue, the wait at the centers was an issue. Did you ask as part of your survey, Mr. Colon, questions about the physical condition of the centers?

**MR. COLON:**

Yes, we did. And if you -- sorry. There's an index, a Table of Contents actually, and if you look at -- I'm trying to see exactly, it's towards the end, it's in the Demographics and Other Section

starting on page 14; pages 14 through 17 deal with demographics and then they ask about physical, the physical structure of the building. One second, please. Right after the helpfulness and politeness indicators.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Is that on page 14 where it's saying the interview site provides enough privacy?

**MR. COLON:**

Yes, starting on there, those were those. One quick point about most of the indices at the end of this survey is that the survey tended to be about 20, 25 minutes long and as you would imagine, a lot of the individuals that we surveyed were on their way out of the center when we approached them.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

And they wanted to leave.

**MR. COLON:**

Yeah, so what ends up happening is towards the end of -- I'm not as confident as the information contained in the end of the survey as I am in the information contained in the beginning of the survey, mainly because -- especially the last few questions because of the idea it had been already 20, 25 minutes and that usually is the attention span that surveyors like to give to surveys and after that you can -- you know, there's a tiredness effect that goes on with the client.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

I just wanted to mention, Mr. Chair, and everybody will be getting this in writing, but as you know, we have a Welfare-to-Work Commission that -- many of these issues are addressed in that commission and I'm sure on your advisory committee, the size of the question. The interviews, the instruments that you're required to use by State law, and I guess by Federal law as well. But the commission that had been set up by Legislative resolution last year requires that we have two public hearings and in March we will have two public hearings, one March 12th here in Hauppauge and one March 19th in Riverhead, and this will give people an opportunity, clients or any member of the public an opportunity to come before the commission to talk about their experiences and that will be further input.

And I think it would be beneficial to look at what -- now, the motivation is different when you have people who are randomly interviewed it's one thing, the motivation for someone to come before the Legislature will have a different slant but it will just be interesting to note what kind of input we get at those hearings. And of course those hearings are more specifically targeted at Welfare-to-Work issues and March will be Welfare Reform Month in Suffolk County, Welfare Reform Awareness Month in Suffolk County, so those will be two opportunities for people to come speak before us and I think it will be almost a supplement to what you've seen but, of course, coming with a different agenda when they do come. That was all I had to say, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Thank you. Okay, any other thoughts? Thank you so much.

**COMMISSIONER DEMARZO:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And we appreciate the effort, the time and the vulnerability; you know, you have to be vulnerable when you're asking people to look and analyze things. It's a good sign in government.

All right. Dr. Mermelstein? I couldn't see you the whole time. There you are, okay. Welcome.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

I know you might want to make a short presentation or just say hello or whatever else.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Well, thank you for inviting me to come and speak. I had not prepared something ahead of time but if you -- I understand that you wanted some information based on what Ms. Anker had talked about earlier.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yes.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

So I can tell you from our perspective what our thoughts are.

First of all, I just want to make you aware that the issue of breast cancer is very important to me personally, my mother died of it; although she didn't live on Long Island, it's still important to me and I definitely would like to know what the cause is and try and find a cure.

But I just want to speak with regard to the local Health Department's role in dealing with the findings that the State had. The State has a Cancer Registry that they maintain and the registry findings are addressed by this State, so the main role in terms of following up on those findings does lie with the State. Our staff has been in contact with the State and we have been supplying them with a volume of material from our studies in terms of water quality and environmental studies and we have worked closely in providing them with whatever information they need to be able to follow through with their addressment of the registry findings.

And the State would be the one that will be determining what direction the study is going to go. And as Ms. Anker had mentioned, I believe they were going to be coming back with an update sometime in December and now we're looking towards perhaps March in terms of when they will be presenting to us what their next step is. And as the State has been going on they have been updating the community as well in terms of what direction they're going in.

I just wanted to say that in speaking with my staff who has been in contact with the State, this is a monumental task. We have given them a huge amount of data and information that they have to go -- you know, sort through and trying to come to conclusions with.

And then just from the standpoint of epidemiology, just to understand that there's really not a magic bullet, there's not an easy test that you can do that's quick and can just make a causal relationship. There have been a couple of studies on Long Island, the most recent was the NCI Study which was a case-control study, a look back study. And when the State came and found the data, the County Health Department did further analysis of the registry data, again, looking to see if we can find any kind of conclusions, but it's a difficult task and the kinds of studies that are required to come to to make a causal relationship are very expensive and very long-term in terms of years, in terms of coming to conclusions.

I know Legislator Schneiderman was talking about maybe doing a survey, that has some value

in the course of doing an epidemiologist, but we're not at the point I guess now or the State is not at the point where they're ready to go that route but when they will, I'm sure that they would take that action. So that's basically what I know about what's going on with it.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Great. I have one other issue and I know we spoke on the phone and I promised you I would never surprise you, so I would say that I'll just raise the issue and if you need some time to follow up on it. I just received a letter myself -- and I think it's addressed to all Legislators, to the County Executive and to you, Doctor, and the Sheriff's Office -- with regard to the overpayment of about -- let's see, from hospital or, you know, health care of inmates. I don't know if you've seen the letter, I will furnish it with you (sic) but maybe at our next committee meeting you can address the issue.

We have -- it says -- and again, this is no fault of anybody in the Health Department or anyone else, it's the State Comptroller's audit that basically said we overpaid area hospitals \$1,024,383. And so it gives its findings and conclusions, it talks about its recommendations and I guess for our next Health Committee, if you don't mind, if you could come prepared, you know, just to get a sense, give us a perspective on this and then what we're going to do to collect the money and what we're going to do to be able to make sure that we don't allow that money. And then I'm sure the Legislature can say this was our million dollar day; no, anyway.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Well, we have --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay, thank you.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

I'm aware of the letter and we have been looking at that issue and working on this and we are in the process of preparing a response, so we will have something for you hopefully at the next --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And this was done with people still being able to drive home, I mean, you know, a million dollar day. All right, thank you.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Just one other question that came up earlier was what the County is doing in terms of cancer and what we can do. Our focus has primarily been on prevention and providing primary care through our health centers for cancer screening and community awareness; those are the things that we do have resources for and that we have been dealing with in the County, so.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Oh, that's great. Okay, thank you. And I'm sure Legislator Losquadro will be giving you a call or meeting with you and, you know, following up.

And I would ask, Doctor, if you didn't mind, especially to the new members of this committee, if you haven't reached out yet, maybe to reach out to each of them and maybe they can meet with you and just get a sense or a tour of the Health Department or, you know, a sense of what's going on and stuff with the County Health Department which has a huge, huge responsibility in public health.

And Commissioner DeMarzo, if I could ask you to extend the same, if you have not already, to the new members of this committee, maybe for a grand tour and then we're going to rate them after and see their satisfaction level with the tour, we'll have a statistical report brought back next meeting; I want to find out what their feel thermometer is. Anyway, thank you very much. Thank you for your time and energy.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Question, Legislator Foley and then Legislator Vilorio-Fisher.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It would also be helpful, even for the veteran members of the committee, is for each commission to give to each of the members the catchment areas for both, for the health centers as well as for the Social Service Centers. Because there is -- particularly in the field of Social Services, there is, whether by design or simply by having inaccurate information as to how large a given geographic area some of our centers serve. So it would be helpful to have that to the different committee members so they can see exactly what

geographic areas are served by which centers with what services within each of those centers.

Commissioner, I just wanted to follow up on the discussion we had the other day. And I know -- Mr. Chairman, I know this is also important to you and that has to do with the implementation of waivers for bars and restaurants that the State Department of Health's requiring of municipalities. And I had a discussion with Roger Corbin, my counterpart in the Nassau Legislature, with several restaurant owners who -- many of whom like the law as it currently exists. They love the idea that they could have a smoke-free environment; many are having new patrons, some are having a slight drop-off but nothing precipitous.

My concern, though, is I know for a fact that there are those within alcohol as well as the tobacco interests that have been meeting with State Health Department officials and may be giving those State officials a wrong impression about the ability of the County Health Department to administer the waivers. As much as I don't think the -- I disagree with the State allowing waivers, I think that we should just move forward with the law as it is. But given the fact that for a brief period of time that waivers will be reviewed by the County, you may want to -- not today, Mr. Chairman, I think at the next meeting it would be very informative to have the Commissioner go through the whole waiver process that the State is requiring localities to do.

But my concern is is that before many weeks go by, if you have -- I'm sure you have already, but to contact the State as we will of the State Legislators to reassure the State Health Department that the County is ready, willing and able to move forward with the review process. Because one of the concerns I have is whether or not those interests, those tobacco interests in particular, will attempt to have the State, in essence, weaken the waiver requirements that local counties may have that are stronger than what the State requirements are to meet those thresholds for waivers.

So I would just hope that you could speak with them, report back to the committee, maybe you already have this information, but to make sure that the State is not getting ready to co-op, to substitute their procedures for the County procedures that you have, that your department has developed. Can you give us any immediate impressions on that, or what kind of discussions you've had with them? Is there a protocol in place when a State hears from lobbyists and others from a particular region of the State, does the State then call the local County Health

Department and say, "Listen, here's what we've been told. Can you tell us what's really going on in that particular area?"

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Well, I can just say from my own experience, we have not been approached by the State to have them impose their waiver process on us. The process has been shared with us but it was more I think from the standpoint of trying to help some of the local Health Departments be able to create their own guidelines and their own process. We were relatively early in terms of coming up with our waiver process so we have something in place. But I will certainly check into that to see if they are, in fact, trying to impose, but I have not received that.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

It's not so much ask them if they're going to impose but just to ensure that they don't do that; it's not to ask them whether they will or not but they're not going to do that, number one. And number two, to follow-up with them to dispel any rumors or any misimpressions that may have been given to them by some local folks that went up there to say that the State -- our County Health Department -- we heard this on TV the other day, that the County Health Department is muddled and can't administer the local waiver process. So the fact -- well, I'm just telling you what's out there. So that's why we need not just to ask the State but to, in fact, not suggest but to express to the State that we have this ability. But at the same time, they need to contact us, contact the Health Department if and when meetings are being held, what's being said so you can dispel any wrong information that I'm sure is being communicated to them.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

We --

**DR. MEYER:**

Just on that specific issue, early on in the waiver process the New York State Association of County Health Officials met back last summer and it actually urged the New York State Health Department to adopt a policy of not granting any waivers anywhere, that it would defeat, they felt, the intent of the legislation.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Absolutely.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Good point; we're with you.

**DR. MEYER:**

We had signed on to that position as being -- at least from an administration standpoint, that makes the most sense, however that wasn't going on as we witness today. We reverted then to a policy we've had in place for a couple of decades, not specifically dealing with smoking legislation but actually deals with waivers. We've had a process in place to deal with waivers involving any issue within the bounds of the Suffolk County Sanitary Code, it's a process we believe works extremely well.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Good.

**DR. MEYER:**

It assures that the intent of whatever it is, a portion of the Sanitary Code or the Public Health Law is met before any waiver could be even considered and we've at least expressed that through the New York State Association of County Health Officials and shared our process with them. But certainly the point is well taken, we have not heard of a movant afoot but we will communicate with the State.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

There is, I can tell you there is.

**DR. MEYER:**

We'd be happy to communicate with them, it's a process we firmly defend.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Actually, I had attended a meeting just on Thursday, this past Thursday, with the New York State Association of County Health Organizations and there was no discussion about any imposition by the State.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

If I may just follow-up, Mr. Chairman. There wasn't among the County folks because right now the lobbyists are not speaking with the County health departments, they're speaking directly to the State Health Department.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

They have more of an in.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

And that's why you need to contact them directly; it's really a two-fold approach. My impressions are they're attempting to have the State which has a weaker standard than does the Counties in the waiver procedures, to try to get the State to impose its will on the County, number one.

Number two, it's also an attempt to revisit the whole issue of smoking in this year's Legislative deliberations on a State level. So we really need to have our eyes and ears tentative to this issue and to keep this committee apprised, not just the committee meetings, but in any given week when any new information arises about the subject.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Thanks. Thank you very much, Legislator Foley. Thank you, Doctor.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Just the last thing, and Legislator Schneiderman pointed this out, the State Comptroller's Office with regard to the Health letter with regard to overcharges by hospitals is asking for a written response within 15 days. I am assuming, okay, that although it was addressed to the County Executive, to the members of the Legislature and to you, Doctor, and to the Sheriff, I would want to know as Chairman who is going to write that response. And I would ask maybe you could just -- is it the County Executive's Office that's going to write it, is it the Department of Health?

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

We have not yet -- the letter just came on the 4th so I have not yet been contacted by the

County Executive's Office, but we are in the process of preparing a response --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Oh, you are.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

-- to this letter, yes.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

That is going to make it within the 15 days.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. And if you could do me a favor and cc that letter to this committee, all right. And I would expect that prior to the 15 days that they've asked that a response is and we'll leave it up to then your department and to the County Executive, the Executive Branch, to make sure that we get this done. If there's going to be any deviation from that, if all of a sudden there is some type of, you know, Executive decision made that they're not going to respond and that it falls upon the Legislature, I would ask that you communicate that to this committee so then we can draft a response immediately. Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yes, Legislator Schneiderman?

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

On that, Dr. Mermelstein, the letter also talks about reviewing internal control processes. You know, I'm not expecting an answer now but maybe within the context of that letter or at some future point to talk to this committee about what mechanism are in place so that this overpayment won't be repeated in the future.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Okay, we'll prepare a report for the next committee meeting.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

It doesn't have to be at that committee but at some point or even in letter.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

The issue, I can just tell you, is somewhat complex and the way it looks on the face of it is a little different from what the actual situation is, but we will try and present that to you at the next meeting.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

All right, thank you very much, Doctor. And we look forward to working -- oop, sorry.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Mr. Chair?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Legislator Fisher; Viloría-Fisher, I apologize.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

I had let your aide, Ron Cohen, know about this letter I had received from the Suffolk Coalition of Mental Health Service Providers, I just about this letter, I just handed him a copy earlier today. And I was wondering, Dr. Mermelstein, if you had received a similar letter regarding the number of adult homes for people with mental illnesses, the number of adult homes that had been closed. And there are three adult homes which are listed as do not refer homes by the State of New York and four that are facilities and enforcement and the concerns that they will be a number of displaced people, adults, as a result of this. I would like at some time to focus on this at some later meeting and I just wanted to be certain that you had gotten a copy of the letter that I had received.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Yes, I'm aware of the letter, it's a coalition of providers.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Suffolk Coalition of Mental Health Service Providers, yes

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Right, and they're lobbying to try and get the State to take action and to try not to close the adult homes, and I would be happy to sit down and speak with you about it with Tom MacGilvray who is the head of our Community Mental Hygiene, he's very intimately aware and involved and knowledgeable about the issue.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Okay, good. I look forward to that and I think it would be helpful to the whole committee to be aware of that --

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Absolutely.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

-- because I think this could be something that spirals into really having a great impact on our homeless situation.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Absolutely.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

These people have no place to go, they will be in the street and then we'll be working with the Department of Social Services rather than with your department.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

Yes.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

And I'd rather take care of it before it gets to the Department of Social Services.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

I understand.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. Thank you very much, Doctor.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I have one question.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yes.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Dr. Mermelstein, we had spoken about five or six months ago when I was Supervisor about a problem we were having in East Hampton with Triple E, Equine Encephalitis. And there was an issue about the delay time between the testing and the results and you were looking toward finding a different laboratory that might be able to provide quicker results; has any progress been made in that area?

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

We had looked into a number of possible alternatives, but at this point there's not anything that's better than what the State could provide for us that we were able to come up with that was feasible within our budget structure. And I don't know, Rich, if you can speak a little more to this.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Maybe just for the benefit of the other Legislators, there's some three week wait time or so between when the sample is taken and the results are in and we had a situation where the results were positive for Triple E Encephalitis and we found out three weeks after the sample. And that concerned me as Supervisor that people may have been exposed for a longer period of time than they should have been to a potential health hazard.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

It was a concern for us as well and I think because it was Triple E they were doing additional

testing which delayed it even longer. But the State is aware of that issue and we have been asking if there's any way that they can try and be more responsive.

**DR. MEYER:**

Yes, one small light, although it may not be an immediate fix, because it goes beyond Triple E, it also goes at the heart of our response from West Nile, too, the same situation where we don't get a good turnaround on our mosquito pools. The State has received additional monies from the Federal government to upgrade its laboratory capability. It was ironically addressed as a result of bioterrorism, but rightly so they realized that it was critical to enhance the entire public health laboratory structure and so we have been at least verbally told that they expect better turnarounds. Now, whether we see those results this season is very much -- we're somewhat skeptical, but right now that is still the principal game in town.

The other more, we think, global solution is that they're also funding additional State Regional Laboratories because the only game in town now is the State Wadsworth Center in Albany which will be housed in Westchester and Erie County. And once they begin to expand capacity we think our turnarounds -- we think then we'll really see a better turnaround, but right now the best we can do for this coming season is to assure that we're not part of the three week backlog by ensuring that when we do the sampling we get them to the State right away rather than accumulate pools of mosquitoes. So that's something that will move it along this year plus the State devoting more resources to Wadsworth in Albany which should help. But I want to reiterate, we're somewhat skeptical as to whether we're going to see a better turnaround this year.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Is this not a test that we can do with our own Health Department laboratory?

**DR. MEYER:**

That's correct. We'd have to expand our laboratory to a Biosafety Level III Laboratory and essentially it would take quite a Capital investment.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay, thank you very much.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Just are there any Level III Laboratories at the State University?

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

There is a laboratory that has Level III capability --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Yes.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

-- I believe one of the research labs.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Dr. { Binash} , I believe Dr.{ Binash} has a Level III.

**ACTING COMMISSIONER MERMELSTEIN:**

And our Public Health Director had been in communication with that laboratory and another one at Stony Brook to see if there was a way that we could come into some sort of contractual agreement for the studies to be done at Stony Brook, but it was basically cost prohibitive and it was -- it didn't work out.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Thank you. Okay, let's move with the agenda. All right, it's going to be a quick agenda. Thank you again, Doctor. Thank you.

**Introductory Resolutions**

All right, ***Introductory Resolution 1020-04 - Adopting Local Law No. 2004, a Local Law defining income for disabled persons real property tax exemption (Presiding Officer/County Executive)***. I'll make a motion to approve, seconded by Legislator Viloría-Fisher. All in favor? Opposed? Great, ***approved (Vote: 6-0-0-0)***.

No. 1089 -- by the way, I'm assuming that everybody when we come to voting on the agenda

that they're familiar with the resolutions prior to the meeting so that we can move these things quickly.

**1089-04 - Designating "Welfare Reform Awareness Month" in Suffolk County (Viloria-Fisher).** Legislator Fisher, you have a motion?

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Yes. Well, I'm going to make a motion to approve but I also wanted to point out that there is a scrivener's error in the first RESOLVED. Apparently when it was sent over, instead of writing March, 2004, it has September, 2004, but that's not a substantive error because you can see in the title that it's --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

March Madness?

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

That it's for March. And so I'm asking, Counsel, could we go forth on that and see that as a scrivener's error?

**MS. KNAPP**

Yes.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

We can do that, we have the technology, no problem. Okay, so there's a motion by Legislator Viloria-Fisher, seconded by --

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

On the motion.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

On the motion, I will second it myself. On the motion?

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

In the WHEREAS clause that you say these changes, "the Federal and State level could impact the burden placed on Suffolk taxpayers"; what burden, what additional burden would that have

on us?

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Okay, it -- well, the TNAF grants, getting people off the welfare roles into the work force if we can't effect the training that they need to go into the work force. These are all issues that have been brought forth in the Welfare-to-Work Commission and based on the changes that might occur, there might be cuts, full family sanction cuts on the State level and that would effect us here in Suffolk County with possible greater homelessness and other issues. So what we want to do on March 12th and March 19th is to have those two public hearings which I mentioned earlier. On March 12th the Welfare-to-Work Commission has invited all of our Federal and State Delegation, Legislators at those levels to brief the Welfare-to-Work Commission on how those changes will impact us, and of course we've invited the Commissioner. So what we're looking for is education and information during the month of March so that we can see what the level of impact is; I can't tell you myself right now, this is why we're doing this, so that we can see how it would impact.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Okay. And aside from those two meeting dates, would there be any other expenses incurred? I know in the presentation we just heard there were handbooks and posters that would be printed up for things from the Health Department; would there be similar costs incurred with this for promotional aspects?

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

No because we just have the Public Notices which the Clerk has put in the newspapers. And even if we didn't declare this -- I just wanted to get your attention back. This legislation, this resolution is not what requires those two public hearings, those two public hearings would occur whether or not this passed. This is just naming it March -- naming March as Welfare Reform Awareness Month. Those two public hearings are a result of a resolution which was passed last year putting together the Welfare-to-Work Commission and part of its charge is to have these public hearings, so this resolution in and of itself does not incur any budgetary expense.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

This is more one of Normanclature.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Exactly.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

This is not one of --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

To create an awareness month.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I just wanted to double check that just to make sure there wasn't any additional expense incurred.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Absolutely none.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Okay, thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. So there's a motion.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I have a question.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Sure, Legislator Schneiderman.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Two quick questions. One, in your fourth WHEREAS Governor Pataki is proposing a 10% reduction; where does that actually appear, is that in a tentative budget or is it something --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Yes, that was Governor Pataki's proposed budget, the tentative possessed budget that the Legislature must act upon.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Okay. And that's pending before the Legislature now?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yes.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Okay. So that's factually correct?

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Yes, we double checked it when I went over it with Counsel.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Okay. And the other question in terms of designating a month with any particular name, which I don't have a problem with, but is there already a designation for March that it might conflict with?

We know February is Black History Month; is March already --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Counsel, did you come up with any -- we didn't come up with any conflicts other than March Madness for basketball.

**UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:**

It's Women's History Month.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

It's also Women's History Month, okay.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

All right.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

But this does not conflict with it being Women's History Month.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Actually we can integrate them.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

So a month could be more than one --

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

Yes. As a matter of fact --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

You should see the proclamations I give in March, everybody is this day and that day; ten people have that day in Suffolk County as their day.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

And the unfortunate fact is that many of the most vulnerable people who are going to be coming to our hearings happen to be women who are single parents.

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

Sure.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Mr. Chairman?

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Wait; Legislator Schneiderman, I'm not sure, are you done?

**LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:**

I'm done.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. Legislator Foley?

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Yeah, just very quickly, normally its done in the February meeting but I guess it will be done in the March meeting with both the Departments of Health and Human Services in times past have given very instructive -- highly instructive presentations on the impact of the State proposed budget on the two departments. So I would hope along with Commissioner Hickey and current Commissioner DeMarzo and Commissioner Mermelstein, these presentations, these -- Mr. Chairman, these presentations are very important because then we can then speak to our counterparts in the State Legislature.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And we can --

**LEG. FOLEY:**

We can make changes based upon the presentations made by the two departments.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And we can inform Legislator Caracciolo -- oh, maybe we'll invite him to come especially. Okay, thank you.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

So could that be part of the next -- it should be part of the next committee meeting.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yeah. Well, I would ask --

**LEG. FOLEY:**

It has to be because they --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

I don't want to do both; I don't want to do both in one sitting.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

But we have to, Mr. Chairman. The only reason I would beg to differ, this is one of the reasons why some of us had wished the two departments had separate committees because combined its close to \$800 million worth of operating costs that are very, very involved and complex. But if you have only one next month and one at the end of April, the problem then could lie in the

fact that we know that the State has taken many months past the deadline to --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

That's for sure.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

-- settle a budget. But at the same point, I think it would behoove us.

To have it done prior to at least the official deadline which is April 1st.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

I will take that under advisement.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

We'll look and we'll see, we'll talk to both Commissioners and see if they can -- you know, what it involves.

**LEG. FOLEY:**

Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Thank you. Okay, let's vote on this.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

And we're not going to promise not to ask questions.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Yeah, right; exactly, I don't want to rush a Commissioner through.

So okay, there's a motion and a second. All in favor? Opposed? **Approved (Vote: 6-0-0-0).**

***Sense Resolution 2-2004 - Memorializing Resolution requesting the State of New York to adopt tougher standards for employees of homes certified for operation through the***

***New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Development Disabilities***

***(NYS/OMRDD) (Crecca)***. Anyway, I'll make a motion. Is there a second? Second by Legislator Losquadro. All in favor? Opposed? Great.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

On the motion, Mr. Chair. And this will be something that we'll discuss --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

At the General Meeting.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

No, this concept when we discuss the adult homes --

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Oh, okay.

**LEG. VILORIA-FISHER:**

-- for people with mental illness.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

And if -- do we have a Vice-Chair?

**LEG. FOLEY:**

No.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

We have no Vice-Chair?

**MR. COHEN:**

Not yet, they're talking about it.

**CHAIRMAN TONNA:**

Okay. While they're thinking about it, just since I will not be at the February meeting, I would just ask that if there are any questions, you know, just that you represent -- Lynne Nowick? Okay, I'll have to call Lynne Nowick then to represent, but I would ask that you represent that I

was in favor of these bills. Thank you.

All right, meeting adjourned.

***(\*The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 A.M.\*)***

***Legislator Paul Tonna, Chairman  
Health & Human Services Committee***