

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

Of the

Suffolk County Legislature

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, Veterans Memorial Highway, Hauppauge, New York, on October 4, 2007.

Members Present:

Legislator Eli Mystal - Chairman
Legislator Wayne Horsley - Vice-Chair
Legislator Jack Eddington
Legislator Lynne Nowick
Legislator John Kennedy

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
DuWayne Gregory - Aide to Legislator Mystal
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
Paul Perillie - Aide to Majority Leader
Linda Bay - Aide to Minority Leader
Fran Siems - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Ben Zwirn - Assistant County Executive
Joe Dujmie - County Executive Assistant
Greg Moran - Aide to Legislator Lynne Nowick
John Ortiz - Senior Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Diane Dono - Senior Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Dr. David Graham - Chief Deputy Commissioner/Dept of Health Services
Matthew Miner - Deputy Commissioner/Dept of Health Services
Margaret Bermel - Director/Health Adm.Services/Dept of Health Services
Linda O'Donohoe - Assistant to the Comm./Dept of Social Services
Ed Hernandez - Deputy Commissioner/Department of Social Services
Ken Knappe - Client Benefits Division/Department of Social Services
Debra Alloncius - Legislative Director/AME
Steve Moll - Island Public Affairs
Sonia Wagner - Executive Director/Response of Suffolk County
- Vice-Chair/Suffolk Coalition for Mental Health Service Providers
Vincent DeMarco - Suffolk County Sheriff.
- Member/Suffolk Coalition for Mental Health Service Providers
Pat Fogherty - Maryhaven Center of Hope
- Member/Suffolk Coalition for Mental Health Service Providers
Ralph Fasano - Executive Director/Concern for Independent Living
- Member/Suffolk Coalition for Mental Health Service Providers
Diane {Mindoli} - Options Community Living
Hope Callazo - Director-Community Development Program/ARC
Gregory L. Noone - Program Manager/Thursday's Child
Kathy Ligouri - Tutor Time Day Care Center
Tatyana Reyes - Samantha Christian Day Care
Vic Zeleny - Pattersquash Civic Association
Barbara Scalafani - Pattersquash Civic Association
Bill Fahey - Pattersquash Civic Association.

Jennifer Heidenrich - Good Shepherd Hospice
Jovanna Little - Good Shepherd Hospice
Arnold Leo - Town of East Hampton/East Hampton Baymen
Larry Penny - Town of East Hampton/Director of Natural Resources
Susan Pfeiffer - Resident of Ronkonkoma/Child Support Issues
Joe May - Independence Party of New York State/Resident of Mastic
Delia McKernan - Mastics Civic Association
John Sicignano - President/Mastic Park Civic Association
2nd Vice-President of ABCO
Rick Brand - Newsday
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 2:02 P.M. *)

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Please rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Horsley.

Salutation

Good afternoon to all. Welcome to the Health and Human Services Committee.

At the onset, let me announce that Commissioner DeMarzo is not going to be here, she's not at work today. And for those of you who are interested, the resolution to consider -- to reconsider or to consider her reappointment to -- as Commissioner of Department of Health and Human -- of DSS, not Department of Health -- is going to be tabled until she can appear in front of the committee. So for those of you who are interested in that, we want to say that.

We also have a couple of presentations and one of them is from Thursday's Child? No, Mr. Moll.

MR. MOLL:

Suffolk Coalition of Mental Health Service Providers.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Sorry. Could you come to the table, please? I want to say good afternoon to the Sheriff; good afternoon, Sheriff.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Good afternoon.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Good afternoon. You have the floor.

MS. WAGNER:

Good afternoon. I'm Sonia Wagner, Vice-Chair of the Suffolk Coalition for Mental Health Service Providers and also the Executive Director of Response of Suffolk County. I'm joined by Sheriff Vincent DeMarco, Pat Fogarty of Maryhaven and Steve Moll of Island Public Affairs, as well as Ralph Fasano for Concern for Independent Living.

First I'd like to thank you for including us in your agenda. We were originally scheduled to appear next week, but we were upstaged by the budget, so we're here this week. Our Chair, Mike Stoltz, is here in spirit, he could not be with us this afternoon.

As you know, our coalition exists to bring together mental health service providers and to advocate

for the needs of children and adults with mental health concerns in Suffolk County. Today we're bringing to the table an invitation for the County to work with us in diverting 100 people from our jail system with a potential savings of over \$1.5 million per year. The overcrowding in our jails receives considerable press, but what is not as well known is that roughly 16% of the inmates, at least 16%, have mental illness, and most of them landed in jail due to nonviolent offences such as drug possession, prostitution, inappropriate behavior, disturbing the peace.

Our taxpayers are spending over \$7 million each year to house, feed and supervise every 100 inmates, and it's not uncommon for those with mental illness to become suicidal while incarcerated, necessitating solitary confinement and increased supervision. Our question to the committee is does this make sense? From a humanitarian point of view, the incarceration and isolation of ill people seems questionable at best, and from a financial point of view Suffolk County residents are pouring money into a jail system that's expanding well beyond its capacity.

So with all of this in mind, Suffolk County has worked with the State in establishing a Mental Health Court, which does exist now, to divert people from the jail into much needed treatment within the community. Our coalition has fully supported this initiative, but we hasten to caution the committee that the mental health system is itself grossly overbooked and unable to meet the needs of many who are desperate for our help. We're very concerned that unless our capacity is expanded, we will not be able to meet the needs of those referred to us by Mental Health Court or that we'll be forced to choose between those referrals and consumers outside the criminal justice system who are also knocking on our doors.

(*Legislator Kennedy entered the meeting at 2:07 P.M. *)

So our proposal includes clinical services, case management and other essential services for 100 inmates with mental illness, as well as housing and support services for 75% of them; we're expecting that the rest of the 25% will be able to be absorbed in existing housing. That our anticipated budget will achieve a savings is a win/win that we feel begs for all of our attention.

So I'd like to pass the microphone to the Sheriff who has been an enthusiastic partner in this, and then I'll ask my colleagues from the coalition to speak in some more depth about housing and case management as we are proposing it. Thank you.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Good afternoon. In the interest of time, I'm going to agree with everything that Ms. Wagner just said and then I'll go on from there.

We are dealing with the population of the mentally ill in the most expensive possible way; we're incarcerating them at an average cost of \$200 a day. They're not getting the treatment that they need because we're a jail, we're not a treatment provider. Judge Fitzgibbons, who has been before this committee before I believe, Mr. Chairman, has said to you, and to me just as recently as a few weeks ago, how awful she feels that she's sending all these people to our overcrowded jail -- we hit a new record on Monday of 1,870 inmates, we might go over 1,900 this weekend -- but she has no other option because there are just not any programs, housing for her to send these people to. She has no other choice, she can't ROR them or let them out on a low bail because she doesn't want to put them back on the street because they're going to go right back to right where they came from and commit the same crime. This is something that has to be addressed.

If we have to open up -- our new jail is not even finished being built; if we had to open it today we'd be overcrowded. And a large portion of our problem are the mentally ill because they don't belong in jail. And I know I've spoken to the County Executive in the past about this and some of you, and I agree with you that, you know, the State should be funding these programs, but the reality is that they're not and they're not showing a willingness to. So I think we have to make a choice here in Suffolk County; do we want to deal with this problem in the most expensive way which is incarcerating them and putting them in our jail, which is already overcrowded, or do we want to look

at an alternative way and help these service providers to offer these services?

And the 16% number is a very conservative number. It's very difficult for me to give you an accurate number of how many people in the jail are mentally ill because when you talk to the Health Department in our Jail Medical Unit, you know, we have people who are on -- they might say, "Well, we have this many people on psychotropic medication"; well, that could be sleeping pills. "We have this many people on this, we have this many people going to this program and this program"; the number is probably a lot larger than 16%.

MR. FASANO:

Good afternoon. My name is Ralph Fasano, I'm the Executive Director of Concern for Independent Living, we're a housing agency here in Suffolk County.

I just want to spend a minute or two just going over the housing situation here. We have some of the best mental health housing here in Suffolk in the country, many of our agencies have won awards, we have some very good housing. We have a solution to the problem, we just don't have enough of it. So, for instance, there are about 1,700 mental health housing units in Suffolk County, there -- we currently -- we have a single point of access where all referrals come through that. There's about -- there's over 400 people on waiting lists for housing; the average number of referrals that the single point receives is over 80, the average number that gets placed is about 28 per month. So as you can see, the situation will get worse.

People need to live somewhere, people with severe mental illness need to live somewhere. Thirty years ago they lived in State hospitals, here in Suffolk County we had the largest psychiatric hospitals in the world, I'm sure you're all aware, we had over 30,000 people living in State hospitals. It was a good -- it was good movement to move people into housing, we just didn't develop enough of it. The new institution that houses people with mental illness is our jails; this is happening not only here in Suffolk, it's happening in a lot of different areas. People have to live somewhere, if we don't provide housing for them they're going to wind up either in jail, in our shelters which are also very expensive or in and out of hospitals and on the streets and homeless.

So our proposal really calls for looking at people who are really not criminal by nature and don't belong in jail, who just have not received the housing and the services that they need; take a look at these people and house them in communities and do it in a way that's very responsible. The housing that we run throughout this County is very high quality housing; I know Legislator Eddington visited one of our sites. It's beautiful housing, it's often the best-kept housing on blocks, in apartment complexes and we like to do it right. We want to do it in a way that's very responsible, where there's enough services. So the budget here is a very responsible one, it calls for not just putting people in housing, but following up and making sure that they receive their services as much as on a daily basis, if needed. Make sure that they have the psychiatric care, the nursing care, the case management that's necessary to keep them out of jails, out of the hospital and maybe thriving in the community. You know, we like to throw some vocational rehabilitation into that because people with mental illness are like other people, they like to work, they want to work and they want to be responsible and productive citizens.

So that's essentially our proposal. I'm willing to answer any questions about housing, if anyone has any.

MS. FOGHERTY:

Hi, I'm Pat Fogherty, I'm from --

MS. MAHONEY:

It's not on.

MS. FOGHERTY:

I'm Pat Fogherly, I'm from Maryhaven Center of Hope and I'm also a coalition member, and I'm just going to speak to you about one of the services that the individuals, as they do come out of the jail, would need and that's case management.

Piggy-tailing on to what Ralph had said, once the person is discharged from or does leave the jail, in order for them to negotiate the systems within our environment that they have to negotiate, it's very tough. And I'm sure if any of you had to -- ever had to negotiate some of the Social Services systems that we have in the community, it's very difficult to do for you and I and for someone with a mental illness it's even more difficult. So a case manager is someone that follows them from their point of being first into the community and helps them and assists them in getting housing if they don't have housing, or in getting Medicaid if they need Medicaid, getting into a day program if they need day program services, getting into a clinic, making sure that they go to the clinic and take their medication. They supervise them almost -- they're available 24-hours a day to the individual and they really are there to support them through all the systems that they have to go through in order to stay out of the jail and/or the hospital. Because it's very easy to get lost in Suffolk County with all the red tape that everyone has to go through, there's documents that have to be written and, you know, sometimes they have to advocate and they can't advocate for themselves. So the case manager can do that, they can go to court with them if they need to go to court; they're really there to make sure that they get all the services that they need to continue with their recovery.

And the project that we have, we have -- right now our case management system in Suffolk County is probably saturated. There's waiting lists, they also go through a single point of access through the County. And to release these individuals from the jails, we definitely would need more case management because they're really the point person from when they get out to make sure that they stay out.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Can I just say one thing? I'm sorry, I left something very important out that I wanted to say. The recidivism rate of an inmate that is not classified as mentally ill is around 76%; the recidivism rate of an inmate who is mentally ill jumps up to the high 80's. So it's very important to have what I would call re-entry programs where when an inmate is getting -- we know he's getting out in a week or two weeks, that they can be assigned a case manager and get the services they need because if we don't do this they're coming back and they'll be back in as little as three days, because they're going right back to the same environment and to the same behavior. So that's something I forgot to mention, I'm sorry.

MS. WAGNER:

I'd like to add a quick point about the budget as well, and then we would be very open to questions. Which is the comment about the State, what is the State's potential involvement in helping here? We're looking to find a way to keep the County and the State from pointing fingers at each other and saying, "Well, this is really your job."

In our opinion, it's everyone's job, everyone in the jail, they're a Suffolk County resident, they're a New York State resident, that's the population we're talking about, we feel they're the responsibility of both the County and the State. So what we would be looking to do is to work with the committee, with the whole Legislature --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

I'm sorry.

MS. WAGNER:

With the whole Legislature and find a way to advocate for State assistance, Medicaid funding and other kinds of financial assistance as well as with the County. So we're really knocking on different doors, not just on your door and we'd like to be a partner in that. Questions?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much. I have a series of questions, and I'm going -- and everybody wants to speak, so. How much money are you guys looking for, from the County?

MS. WAGNER:

Well, if you look at the budget, we have an anticipated yearly operating cost of around 5.6 million. At the very bottom of that budget page you'll see there's a start-up cost which is a one-time initial start up cost, but we would expect a yearly operating budget of around 5.6. We're currently spending at least 7.3 per year and that does not include mental health services or medical services within the jail.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

So you're looking for about \$5 million from the County?

MS. WAGNER:

That's what we're looking to spend and we are looking to also find what we can from the State in the form of Medicaid reimbursement as well. We can't tell you what we could receive from the State because you have to first apply for Medicaid reimbursement, so that would be a process. So we are looking at a potential maximum cost, I think that's the best way to say it, from the County, which would still represent a savings. Do you want to add to that?

MR. FASANO:

Let me just say something on that. I think what you need to do there, though, is deduct that cost from the \$200 a day; every person that we divert from the Sheriff's jails at a cost of \$200 a day, that's the savings.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Yeah, the problem with that --

MR. FASANO:

So we have to figure that out.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

-- is like, you know, I dissent in that we would have to come up with let's say \$5 million for you, we still have to fund the Sheriff for the same amount. Your saving would be something in the future, but in terms of the budgetary process, as we give you the money, if we can give you money for, let's say, in the budget year of 2008, we still have to fund the Sheriff for almost the same amount, if not more money to continue what he's doing. Your program is not going to kick in until the later years when we start seeing some reduction in our program; that's the number one thing.

MS. WAGNER:

That's true, but we also wouldn't need all of this money to start either.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Yeah, I understand that.

MS. WAGNER:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

I'm just saying, where can we find the money? I'm sure the Sheriff is not going to say to me, "Why don't you reduce my budget and give it to them"; right, Sheriff? You're not going to say that. Okay, I didn't think so.

MR. MOLL:

Excuse me, Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay, go ahead.

MR. MOLL:

Unfortunately that's part of the same argument that we got last year. If we never have -- I mean, we understand we're looking for some political courage and some fiscal responsibility that, you know, people look at that number and they say, "That's too much." But it's going to be the same number five years from now when we still don't -- when the jail is twice as crowded and there are twice as many mentally ill, so I understand.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Mr. Moll, I'm not disputing the fact that you need the money, this is a good program. I'm just trying to be -- trying to see where the money is coming from, where we can get it from. You know, I can't go and raid the Sheriff's budget, nor can I raid the Department of Health budget, I can't raid, you know, anybody else's budget to give you that kind of money. And how -- in a given -- we have a tight budget in our hands and I'm saying where do we get the money? You know, that's question number two I wanted to ask you. You're talking about -- how many people are you talking about diverting to -- from the jail to your system, how many people?

MS. WAGNER:

One hundred.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

One hundred. How many housing stock are you going to need to house these people? Where are we going to put them?

MR. FASANO:

We planned on creating 75 units of housing, the other 25 people would go into existing housing that I described before.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Seventy-five units of housing where in Suffolk County?

MR. FASANO:

Our plan calls for renting housing in the open market. There are a lot of complications. I think you all know this would be very difficult to site a congregate facility.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

That's where I'm going with that question.

MR. FASANO:

So our plan was to do this in two-bedroom apartments, two people at a time and have the services brought to the individuals in -- across the County, not picking out --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Well, given the fact that we have a very limited amount, a limited number of apartments in Suffolk County in general and given the level of -- for lack of a better word, of NIMBYism involved, now, you're going to go to a residential area and say, "Okay, I'm going to house a couple of" --

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Careful now.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

All right, what, people out of jail?

MR. FASANO:

Well, people with psychiatric disabilities. I mean, that's foremost, that's foremost what we're doing, we're helping people with disabilities; they happened to wind up in the jail because they didn't get what they needed. And so we do this a lot, I mean, we have hundreds and hundreds of units of housing in the apartment complexes that we rent that we don't -- you know, we tell the owners, they know what who we are. We're actually very good tenants.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay. I'm not --

MR. FASANO:

People actually call us and they say, "We have an open apartment, would you like to rent it?" Because we pay the rent on the 1st of the month.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

I'm not disputing your good intention.

MR. MOLL:

Mr. Chairman, just briefly. If this were to come about, the County Department of Mental Hygiene would probably create the RFP that would have the specifics on housing, whether it was congregate care facility apartments, if it was piggy-backed on a State initiative, maybe they would be community residences that are licensed and have site selections. So there are all sorts -- the possibilities are endless in that respect, but it would all be dedicated or dictated by what the County wants to do. So, I mean, we would not be creating this model, it would be up to the County Executive's Department of Mental Hygiene to create it.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

To create, okay. Last question -- for me, not the last question. Obviously there is no money in the budget, this current budget for this program right now. How much money as an initial start-up -- so you're giving a gross figure, about \$5 million that you would need, but how much money initial start-up would you need if we were to include it in this year's 2008 budget? How much money do you need to start this program?

MR. FASANO:

I think you could -- you know, you could prorate the hundred people over the budget and say, "Well, we can only afford to do 20 this year," then it would be about a million dollars, if we wanted to do 30 it would be a little higher than that. I think it could be done based on the numbers. We know what the unit costs are, we would just have to come to a determination of how much money would be available and then serve that amount of people. And it could be looked at as a pilot project, you know, let's look at this and see how it works; did we really divert these people from jail, what are they doing? Are they living in the community? Did it work?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

The only way you can really do it is to see if we reduce the jail population or people with mental health, that's how -- and that would take about a year or two to find out and then it would fall back into recidivism. Anyway, I'm going to pass the microphone to the first speaker, Mr. Horsley.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I've got a couple of questions and they range all over, to all of you.

First of all, I guess to Mr. Sheriff. I know that we have been sending folks out-of-County as of recent; does -- what does this do to that dollar figure? Do we see an elimination of that program, of putting people Upstate or whatever? I mean, do we actually -- and have you factored those dollars amounts into the savings in which this program would bring about?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Well, it costs us anywhere from \$85 to \$125 a day to house somebody at Riker's Island or Albany or somewhere else; Albany is \$85, {Ulster} County is \$85, Riker's is 125.

LEG. HORSLEY:

And it's 200 in ours?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

It's -- on average, yes. That's what they charge us because they're not providing -- you know, they're housing sentenced inmates with really no services.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. They've got existing --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

So it's a bear bones, they're just basically watching them and feeding them. The cost to house an inmate on Riker's Island is a lot more than it costs for us to do it, believe me, but that's just what they charge us. Because we're sending them the best of the best inmates, they won't take people who have -- they won't take people with mental illness, they won't take people with behavioral problems, they won't take people who are not sentenced, so it's a whole formula.

LEG. HORSLEY:

They take our finest, huh?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Yeah, basically.

MR. MOLL:

The best of the worst.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

You know, if you've diverted a hundred people from jail, it's probably a hundred people less we'd have to send out, you know.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. But was that factored in to these figures about how much the County would save by this program; is that in the model?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

I believe that they took on average \$200 a day and --

MS. WAGNER:

That was how we got --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Right, that's how they came to their figure.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay. All right, and let me just -- let me move over just to the housing side a bit. You said that your -- this plan, if in full force, would be for a hundred people, then you said, well, you really only need it for 75 for new housing stock, meaning that you might have 25 vacancies right now; is that an assumption?

MR. FASANO:

No, the whole program would serve a hundred people; out of that, 75 would need new housing. The

other 25 would go into existing housing, either in official housing or maybe with families or -- in other words, they would -- that other 25 would receive services.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Do you have those vacancies right now? If we had to come up with this program and say, "Hey, let's get this thing started", you could put 25 people?

MR. FASANO:

There's always some vacancies in the system. Out of 1,700 beds, there's usually about a 4%, 5% vacancy rate, and it depends who gets priority. And the County would -- the County runs the single point of access, so the County can make a determination, you know, people being diverted, you know, from the jail system should get high priority. And so those people could go into -- there's always vacancies, it's a fairly large system.

LEG. HORSLEY:

And hypothetically, if these 25 were released tomorrow, Mr. Sheriff, how would you pick those 25 people, what would be your process?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

I couldn't pick who to release from jail.

LEG. HORSLEY:

How does that work?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

These people are remanded to my custody by a Judge. You would give -- what basically you would be doing is giving -- when you went back to court, his attorney could say that, "My client can be enrolled in this program if you let him out," and the Judge would actually have somewhere to send this person --

LEG. HORSLEY:

So it would be a future 25 then.

MR. MOLL:

Mr. Horsley, the Mental Health Court, the diversion part of this would work with the --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Yeah.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I'm just trying to understand this, okay.

MR. MOLL:

Right, but there's not -- this came up last year, one of your colleagues had asked how are you going to get these people out; it's not that we're getting them out, we're keeping them from going in.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay, so it's new --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Well, it can be both ways, actually. You know, it could be people who are in that go to court now and now Judge -- I'm just using Judge Fitzgibbons because she's been here before -- you know, actually would have a place to send --

LEG. HORSLEY:

She's from the Town of Babylon, she's fine.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Yeah, to send somebody other than jail. You know, she'll tell you that she just sends -- sometimes she has to send people to jail because there's nowhere else to send them, and they don't belong in jail --

LEG. HORSLEY:

Right.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

I mean, you know, because of the crime they would be ROR'd, but because of their behavior or --

LEG. HORSLEY:

A judgment would be made by a Judge, it wouldn't be --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

It would be a Judge; it wouldn't be me picking them, it would be a Judge.

LEG. HORSLEY:

It would be you going, "Boy, this guy -- he's been a good guy, you know, he hasn't broken any rules or whatever."

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Right, right. I'm not like that Sheriff in Los Angeles who just picks and chooses who he's going to let go; no, I can't do that.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I didn't think so. I just wanted to get an idea of how this --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

I don't want to be held in contempt.

LEG. HORSLEY:

How this is all going to -- good point, Vinny. Then let me go back over to the housing side again.

On the whole issue of security, I'm hearing that 80% of these mentally ill inmates come back to the jail because they're out breaking laws again and now you're going to have them in houses that are renting on Jack's street here and there's going to be -- there's going to be two in a house. And obviously, you're not going to have somebody living with those two people, you're going to be visiting on occasion, checking up on them and whatever, and doing your due process. How do -- how is the public assured that -- obviously, if 80% go back to jail, they must be doing something that's other than -- I don't know --

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Jaywalking.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Jaywalking, right, there you go, obviously. So what -- how do you protect the public with this program?

MR. FASANO:

We protect them by giving them the services and everything that they need. When they're released from a jail and they have no place to go, they're going to get in trouble. When they have -- one of the things we do, we provide really nice housing which adds motivation to people, they say, "Boy, I haven't had housing like this my entire life." And we tell them, "In order to stay here, you know, you have to do a couple of things. You've got to keep taking your medication, you have to take care

of the place, you cannot interfere with the community," and we're going to be checking on them on a daily basis, initially, to make sure that it's working. We're a phone call away. So people get into trouble because they don't have a place to live and they don't have the services that they need.

The jails have become the new hospitals. We don't keep people in hospitals any longer, for any long period of time. You know, they go into a hospital because they have a medical problem, they haven't been taking medication, they're psychotic, they put them on medication for a couple of days and they let them out without any plan to make sure that they're going to keep taking medication and that they're going to be well in the community. The plan that we have is put them in good housing, make sure they get all the services and the treatment they need and monitor it. And you know, it could be that a very small percentage are not going to make it and then we have to come up with a plan.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I was going to bring that up, because you know that's going to happen.

MR. FASANO:

We have to -- what we do is we pick up on that and say, "Okay, this isn't working. We need to do something else. This person either needs to be in a more supervised setting, and we have that ability, we have supervised settings in the community, or we need to go back to the criminal justice system and say, "Listen, this doesn't look like it's working, let's come up with a plan here."

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

And Legislator Horsley, we're not talking about violent people because you're not going to find -- and I'm sure they couldn't even -- we're not talking about violent offenders, no Judge is going to let a violent offender out for a pilot program. You know, we're talking about people who are in jail for drug possession, prostitution that just keep doing the same thing over. Because while they're in jail they might get their medication but once they're let out they're let out and they're going to go right back to where they came, but if they have caseworkers and follow-up care, they're going to be on their medication because these people are actually not going to make them, you know, come to a place to get the services, they're going to bring the services to them.

MR. MOLL:

Also, Legislator Horsley, each client is going to be evaluated as to their situation at the time. So people that need more supervision are going to be put into a situation where they have that support and there are other people that may need less and, you know, that might be the person you'll see in a two bedroom apartment.

MS. FOGHERTY:

And also, the people when they come out, they're not --

LEG. HORSLEY:

That struck a cord. I think it's great. Go ahead, please.

MS. FOGHERTY:

The people that come out are not going to just be going to this two bedroom apartment and just sitting there all day. I mean, there is going to be expectations that they will -- during the day they will be somehow productive in what they're doing. So whether it means going to some kind of a day treatment type program where they're getting intensive treatment throughout the day for a long period of time or whether they're working with a job coach, say, getting a job and actually being productive and giving back to the community. So it's not like they're just going to go and sit in their apartment, you know, that's not the intent. And the case manager really does assist them in hooking up to all these different services and making sure that they're going and doing what they need to be doing.

LEG. HORSLEY:

All right, so you're saying that there's going to be a complete oversight of these people, you're saying that these are going to be some of the lesser ill people. Though when we comment -- what kind of diseases; you know, schizophrenia, diseases like this I assume?

MS. FOGHERTY:

It could be schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, it could be personality disorders. I mean, I hate to say this but there's probably people living in all of your communities, next door to you that you don't even know that have some of the disabilities that we're talking about.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I understand, I'm not -- that wasn't a comment, I'm trying to get and have this out on the table of what types of people that we would be having in our communities, because that would be our roll and a concern for that. So I understand. Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Legislator Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

Hi, welcome. Sonia, it's always nice to see you; you, too, Steve. Just a few of the questions from what I'm hearing, and Legislator Horsley's questions were excellent.

When you're finding housing, do you work with the towns, would you work with the towns to see if what you or the County found is appropriate for that particular area in the town? And you know where I'm going with this.

MR. FASANO:

We generally don't.

LEG. NOWICK:

So you just go in there and say -- you rent the house; there's a house for rent, a two-bedroom house, you would rent it as the coalition.

MR. FASANO:

No, the individual agencies. There's about eight or nine different housing agencies here in Suffolk County that do this and we either rent, we own a lot of houses, my own agency owns 110 different sites, we rent about 70 other sites. Diane {Mindoli} is here from Options for Community Living, they're another very good housing provider, they own a lot of sites, they rent a lot of sites. We rent a lot of the sites in the apartment complexes, we're in Fairfield and --

LEG. NOWICK:

So in other words, if you -- oh, okay, in Fairfield. So in other words, if you go in to, say, Stony Brook, you find a home that's for rent, you rent it as the organization.

MR. FASANO:

As the agency, right.

LEG. NOWICK:

The agency, and then you bring in possibly two of the -- what would have been a prisoner to a two-bedroom?

MR. FASANO:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

One bedroom a piece.

MR. FASANO:

One bedroom a piece.

LEG. NOWICK:

So there would be only two to a house or a three bedroom, three people, right?

MR. FASANO:

Yes. If I could just say, the idea is not to announce to the community. People have rights, you know, and they have a disability and we try to do it in a way that it doesn't interfere with the community at all. And many of our sites, no one would know that this is a program, there will be two people living there. If there's a problem in, you know, the apartment complex, we work with the apartment complex managers, they know us, we know them and we address --

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah.

MR. FASANO:

The thing we do is we address problems immediately.

LEG. NOWICK:

How long would they stay in this particular -- well, I guess you would call it a shelter of some sort.

MR. FASANO:

It's not a shelter, it's called permanent housing, it's called --

LEG. NOWICK:

So they're there forever.

MR. FASANO:

It's permanent supportive housing, as much as you or I live where we live.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay.

MR. FASANO:

So they may not be there forever, but they can stay if they need it.

LEG. NOWICK:

So once you put them in there, they're there to stay if they -- when you say if they need it; how do you --

MR. FASANO:

Well, they may decide to move out on their own, they may feel that they no longer need the help and the assistance of the agency. A lot of it is an economic issue. We have the highest rents, some of the highest rents in the nation. When you have a severe disability like schizophrenic or Bipolar Disorder, most likely your income comes from SSI and you're getting a little less than \$700 a month. And there's an national organization that does a tabulation of what percentage of your income would you have to use for your rent here; well, here in Suffolk it's about 150% of your SSI income, so it's really impossible for people to live. So a large part of the program is actually a rent subsidy program where we're helping people to afford the housing that they wouldn't be able to afford that makes them homeless or in the jail system.

LEG. NOWICK:

So these are for people that would otherwise be put in jail or could be taken out of jail, like Sheriff DeMarco said, and put in a house. And you would not announce it to the community, nobody would know, and you would do drug testing and that sort of thing, I guess, you would have to, right?

MR. FASANO:

Where warranted we would.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. Would they get jobs in the community, would they have cars?

MR. FASANO:

We would certainly encourage that. And as Pat was saying, that's part of -- we encourage people to get out of the housing and go to places where they can get vocational training, where they can work and a good percentage of people do that.

LEG. NOWICK:

So most of the time these would be non-violent criminals, Bipolar, schizophrenia, drug addicts, that sort of -- I think it could work out well in my community.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

It's under Smithtown. Legislator Eddington?

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yes.

MS. FOGHERTY:

You know, just when you said that, I don't know about -- you know, when you say drug addict, don't -- I think we have to remember that some of the times for people with a psychiatric disability, you're not really sure what came first; are they taking drugs because they're having hallucinations and they can't stand the hallucinations so they take a drug to mask that? So it's not -- I don't -- I wouldn't want you to go away thinking that we're talking about people that are, you know, hard drug users.

LEG. NOWICK:

But addicted.

MS. FOGHERTY:

They might be addicted, but in addition to that, they have a psychiatric disability which when you're working with somebody with a dual diagnosis like that, it's a very special -- it takes a very special trained person to do that, because it's not necessarily the drug addiction that's the overlying thing. That's all I --

MR. FASANO:

An interesting story just came out. Patrick Kennedy, the Congressman from Rhode Island, just came out and said he realized he has Bipolar Disorder and he's been treating it with drugs and alcohol over these years. Now on an appropriate medication, he's not as -- he doesn't need the drugs and alcohol as much anymore and he's functioning as a Congressman. So this isn't -- we're not looking at just the people who are criminals and addicts and everything, we're looking at people who can recover.

LEG. KENNEDY:

(Inaudible).

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

And I think also we're missing a key component here, that if somebody commits a crime, whether it's, you know, a drug possession charge, a petit larceny because they were on drugs, a DWI, whatever the case may be, and they're going to the Mental Health Court, all this is is you're giving a Judge in the Mental Health Court an option to say, "Hey, I'm not going to send you to jail, I'm going

to send you to this program because if you weren't mentally ill I wouldn't send you to jail." That's the key component; these people are being sent to jail because they committed a crime, they're mentally ill and the Judge has reservations on not RORing because they know that he's going to go right back -- because there's no services, he's going to go right back and do the same thing.

Now, if they had the option to send them to this program, they would still be monitored because they still have that charge, they still have to go to court, they still have to report in to the Mental Health Court and it's going to be monitored. And, you know, the minute that they fall back, the Judge is going to probably put them back in jail.

MS. WAGNER:

I hear questions about community sensitivity, I think that's what we're getting at here is how welcoming are communities when we're talking about people who have some difficulties moving in. I think part of this is framing; are we talking about criminals who have mental illness or are we talking about people who have mental illness who have committed a misdemeanor?

The target population we're talking about really is entirely people with mental illness who have committed a misdemeanor, and it's very different. We're not talking about someone who is sociopathic and not responding to consequences, will continue to commit crimes regardless of what you do, we're talking about people who first and foremost, have a mental illness and it's presented itself in ways that the community understandably has a hard time dealing with but who we have reason to believe with sufficient support will not find themselves in that place again. Where there other questions?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yes. When I was on that side of the table as a mental health professional, we called it MICA, right, Mentally Ill/Chemically Dependent? And that's what you were talking about, Legislator Nowick. And of course I've seen that many times.

But to follow on what a couple of the Legislators said, when we talk about communities, you know, I represent a south shore community and we've talked about targeting and saturation. I mean, in my community, as you know, we have a number of mentally challenged homes, people that are mentally challenged. We also have sober homes, sex offenders and FECS homes and they have been identified fairly quickly and we're -- when I talk about it to other people about not targeting oversaturation, I always hear the issue about rents, and I smiled when I heard Legislator Nowick mention Stony Brook, and of course I'm going to make her smile now when I say how about Smithtown?

LEG. NOWICK:

I didn't mention it just for the --

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I understand. I guess what I'm saying is I've got a placement recommendation; north of 25A or north of 25.

Applause

Because what we're always doing is looking for the lowest rents, but it seems to come down to the same areas. And then, of course, when people like me listen to my constituents, we're called names or I'm called names, and the other part is that they're justified. It's not saying we don't want to help people, but if you -- on one block in my area, Bay Avenue, it's only like five blocks long, there are three sober homes. Can you -- buses are stopping to pick up kids. We're not talking about bad people, we want to help people, but I'm not seeing any of these homes in Old Field or Setauket or,

you know --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Oh, yeah, right, Old Field.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

-- or other places; you know what I'm saying? I want to help. Then maybe we have to look at alternative funding sources to get more money, but we can't -- I hear it all, I agree, I want to help people, but they're always in the same -- and if Legislator Browning was here, you'd probably be hearing a lot more screaming.

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:

Yep.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

So you know what? We have to start looking at -- when you're presenting this, and we're all supportive of the concept, but when we leave here they come to me and then I have to deal with it. And people continually are apologizing, "You know, I'm not against these people, but" -- and I tell them, "You shouldn't have to be apologizing. You live here, you're paying taxes."

So I think when you're doing this, you're going to have to, for me, come with a recommendation of how you're going to equally distribute the help in our County.

Applause

MS. {MINDOLI}:

We do have to get houses, you know, with reasonable rents; I mean, we can't go out and pay \$4,000 a month to rent a house.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

And that's the best cover to keep it in one area. You understand what I'm saying?

MS. {MINDOLI}:

But we do try to really spread the houses out and Options does have rental houses in Smithtown, a number of them.

MR. FASANO:

That's a good point. One of the things we did, we did consider what you're saying and we budgeted a good amount, we budgeted \$1,600 a month for two-bedroom apartments. We can spread ourselves out throughout the whole County with that amount and many of our agencies have done that.

I think your points are well taken, we shouldn't be doing -- first of all, we shouldn't -- nothing we're doing is anything like a sober home. So two people in an apartment, we don't support, you know, putting eight, ten people into a home where the services are insufficient, there shouldn't be that many people, there's no staffing; that's not at all what we're proposing. We're proposing small apartment units spread throughout the County and not congregated in any one particular area.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

No, and I understand that. But I'm saying you're going to add that in addition to all these other things that are saturated. I'm not at all criticizing your structure, I think it's great, that's how the model should be; unfortunately, in many of these other homes that I've given you it's not. And as the community sees, it's just one more thing, that's how they look at it. You know what I mean? They're not mental health professionals, they don't understand it, they're every day workers who are trying to pay nine or \$10,000, you know, in taxes and looking out and saying, "Why is it always around me?"

MS. WAGNER:

I don't think anyone can blame any homeowner for wanting to feel safe and feel that their properties are worth what they were work before, or more than they used to be worth; I think it's a very reasonable expectation.

We're not choosing between having all these individuals in jail and having them in our communities, they are eventually leaving jail and winding up back on our streets. So when you see people, you know, congregating on street corners and you wonder, isn't anyone doing anything; a lot of them are not getting the services that they need and that's how they're winding up through a revolving door.

You know, it used to be there was a hospital and you could say, "Well, okay, you can't be in my community, you're in the hospital," that's not an option. And the jail is an extremely expensive alternative and it's not a permanent solution, it really is not an option. We're having these individuals in our communities in one form or another and we're saying why not give them the services that they need, invest some money and if we can achieve a savings at the same time, that's wonderful.

But I want to speak to the people sitting behind me and say you're quite right to be concerned and want the best for your community. There's a great sensitivity among coalition members to this issue. Scattered housing, scattered supported housing is called that for a reason; it's scattered, it's not in one development. It's not just in Patchogue and it's not just in Smithtown, it's apartments here and there in different communities; that's a very, very important point, we take it seriously.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Legislator Kennedy?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know many of the folks in this coalition that have worked with them, as you and I have talked about, for this issue for the better part of about a year and a half, so I welcome them for bringing this to us yet again. I see them here wondering how it is we're going to help to fund their initiative that they bring to us, cognizant of the fact that we had 13 or \$14 million last year that was a reckoning by the State of Medicaid expenditures that moved down to us lump sum and wound up evaporating in the ether, never going to mental health.

There are a couple of things, I guess, that I would say to you and then I would say to us as decision makers. First of all, we need to characterize, as you bring this to us, some of the specifics, and we probably also need to go ahead and have some dialogue with Judge Fitzgibbons in the Mental Health Court. Because you're asking us to embrace something that is going to -- we're going to facilitate and be a part of, taking individuals who come through the criminal justice system, rightly or wrongly, and now not put them where everybody who sits out there who doesn't sit in government systems believes folks who are criminals go which is to jail, a place far away, and we're going to put them back into our communities.

So one of the things that's important is to talk about specifically who these people are that are going to be coming through the system. And my recollection is we're not just talking about folks that are charged with violatins, we are talking about going up to misdemeanors; is that correct, Sheriff?

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

I would think so. You know, petit larceny -- yeah, I mean, I would think so.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

You're talking about -- but it's up to a Judge to decide.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Well, I understand it's up to the Judge to decide, but it's important for us because we're also being asked to decide or embrace the concept as well.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Right, right. Now, from what -- and you do need Judge Fitzgibbons for this, but my understanding from speaking to her is what she's, I'm talking about, we're talking about -- for the most part, not everybody -- criminals or people who are mentally ill who commit a crime because they're not on their medication or because they have a drug dependency --

LEG. KENNEDY:

Sheriff, I don't take --

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Right, but where that person -- if it were you or me without a mental illness, we would not be sent to jail; we would go to court in the morning and we would be sent home.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Absolutely.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

Say come back on --

LEG. KENNEDY:

That's right.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

-- you know, October 23rd.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Right.

SHERIFF DEMARCO:

But these people, because the Judge knows that this person needs help and cannot get it, she has no choice but to send this person to jail where she knows that they will get some medication.

MR. MOLL:

Mr. Kennedy?

LEG. KENNEDY:

I agree with you and I understand that we're talking about many different levels of the system here that are faced with untenable choices. But I guess I need -- what I would suggest to the consortium here is as you ask us -- forget about the money for a second, even though we can never forget about money, we always have to look at and find money. And I see Mr. Chair raising his eyebrows; yeah, I know we have to find the money. But what we also need to do is we need to define this category of individuals you're asking us to go ahead and now stand in our communities and say, "We've made this collective decision that this is going to be a good thing to have these folks in the community," and we have to better define it. We have to talk about the folks that I've had as clients --

MR. MOLL:

Mr. Kennedy, just briefly? Excuse me, Mr. Kennedy?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah.

MR. MOLL:

You just pointed out --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

No, no. Sir, no, until the Legislator is finished, then you can respond.

MR. MOLL:

I'm sorry.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah, let me -- we'll get there, Steve, because I know, you know, it's a point and it's a point that needs to be had. But I think it's important that what we do is we further confirm that the group of people that we're looking to go ahead and try and categorize in this alternative may be the individuals who purposely went to the mall and stole a pair of pants because they knew they had no place to go that night in December or January and it was going to be below zero, and they also knew they were not med compliant and they also knew that they were bordering on walking pneumonia, and you've got one of the best med places around for individuals without medical coverage and they can get their treatment and they can get their care and maybe they'll get five or six nights where they're not going to be under a cardboard box someplace. That's some of the reality that mentally ill individuals are being to forced to do at this point. They commit the crime knowingly because they know they'll find some resource that they can't find elsewhere. That's the real hard reality of what it is out there for some of these folks.

My point is, I guess, a couple of things. One, help us define this category a little bit more, help us be able to ensure that if we were able to fashion a way to go forward, we're not asking our communities to go ahead and welcome individuals that in any way, shape or form are going to be other than, as you just described, maybe our next door neighbor, maybe our nephew or niece, maybe one of our relatives who, you know, for whatever reason was born or came upon a mental illness and has had problems and didn't have the family support that some other folks have, they're due right now. That might help us to go a little bit further.

And then on the money side of the equation, I guess what you've got to do is as you talk about this scattered housing -- and this I'll say to the folks on the south shore, although I disagree with some of their, you know, sentiments that we do not have mental health housing and some of the other sober home housing; I have it in my district, I know where it is. Part of what you're talking about with your location, though, is a Padavan-type of concept where you look at what is the saturation of a particular district, and you're going to have to do it with not just mental health housing, you're going to have to do it with some of the other types of supportive housing that are in a particular area; otherwise, we're stuck with an untenable choice.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Mr. Moll, you wanted to answer, or anybody else who wanted to answer.

MR. MOLL:

I just wanted to remind Legislator Kennedy, this program is our suggestion but will be your implementation and that of the Department of Mental Hygiene.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Sure.

MR. MOLL:

So if there is going to be specifics on who can go into the program, that would be part of DMH's decision making process. We would enjoy the opportunity to work with them and have worked with Director MacGilvray a number -- on this program, but until the final decision is made, again, this isn't going to be -- it's a new process, County-funded housing for people with mental illness, so you can do what you want with a lot of these issues. We would never suggest that this is the way it has to be, we're just making a policy suggestion.

LEG. KENNEDY:

And again, as I said before, Steve, I welcome the fact that you brought it here. Sonia, I mean, we've talked many times about some of these issues as well. And as a matter of fact, the Sheriff, you know, it is a hard reality sometimes that an individual, you know, has to go to incarceration in order to get those medical support services. But that's the additional pieces that I would encourage you to bring to us or help us to work on so that we can have the answers. I don't think any one of us here doesn't empathize with what you're saying to us, and know that we have those individuals in our community and we have a responsibility. We don't want to keep spending that amount of money to lock people up that should just be getting medical treatment, but we need to have a way to get out of that, that's a prudent way, that doesn't compromise our communities, that's all.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. There are no more questions. The other thing I want to add is that although I have enjoyed the discussion among us, I still feel that maybe we're putting the cart before the horse. I'm still trying to find out -- we need to find the money; you know, once we find the money, then we can deal with all the other issues.

And my main thing, you know, and I've been talking with Jack Kennedy about it for a year and a half, it seems to be that we had some money last year and it evaporated, sucked it into the grip beyond. My thing right now is to try to find some kind of -- some money to fund this. There are a couple of programs that Jack and I, we both agree on, there's one coming up soon that I would love to implement, the question is finding the money in a budget that is very, very tight, that's a budget that, you know, the County Executive is telling us is so tight you probably can play the drum on it. I want to help, I would love to see that program put into effect because I think it could help.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

But where the money is, I don't know yet.

MR. FASANO:

Could I make one suggestion on the funding?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Go ahead.

MR. FASANO:

There are Federal funding streams and State funding streams that could be tapped that the County makes a decision how to spend. So there's Community Development Block Grants, there's home money from the Federal government, from the State, and maybe we should look at how that money is being spent and whether this should be a priority and whether it doesn't have to -- some of it doesn't have to be direct County funding, some of it can have to -- some of it can come from Federal funding where you make a decision on where that Federal funding goes.

The other thing is whatever the County invests we can match, we're very good at housing agencies and other agencies at leverage funds, so. And it's to our advantage, if we say, you know, the County is putting up a thousand dollars, we can go out and get Federal money and State money a lot easier than if there's no investment from the County side.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much.

MR. FASANO:

Thank you.

MS. WAGNER:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

We are going to start our public portion. We have a number of cards. I want to remind everybody that you have three minutes, please use it judiciously. We will call each one of you. The first person is Vic, Vic --

MR. ZELENY:

Zeleny.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Zeleny. Okay, Vic.

MR. ZELENY:

That was easy.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

That's easy.

MR. ZELENY:

How are you doing, Mr. Mystal? I actually want to speak about the reappointment of Janet DeMarzo, actually.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Could you -- anybody who wants to speak on Janet DeMarzo, could they please come to the next meeting, the next committee meeting? Because she's not going to be here today and the resolution is going to be tabled.

MR. ZELENY:

We can't talk anyway and just have it go on --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Oh, yeah. Oh, sir, you can talk about her all you want. I'm just saying to people that she's not going to be here today and the resolution is going to be tabled until the next committee meeting, next cycle. You can talk about Ms. DeMarzo, yes.

MR. ZELENY:

All right. Well, with this here, I think they should put them all in North Amityville, personally.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay; I'm not going to touch that with a ten foot pole.

MR. ZELENY:

How are you, Mr. Mystal and everybody else? We did want to talk about the reappointment of Ms. DeMarzo. And as an area of the Mastics where we are over saturated with the DSS programs and, of course, as you know, sex offenders, we feel that the position has been taken very irresponsibly. That in her time that she's held it, other programs couldn't -- have been come up with such as other states where you get a two year cap on your DSS, instead of these people just making -- becoming lifetime leaches on the system. We see it in our neighborhood, we see people who don't work for a living, drive around in brand new Escalades. I see people come into my butcher shop, order 60, 70, \$80 worth of wings and ribs and you ask them, "What are you doing with that? Oh, we're having a barbecue today." I say, "It's a Tuesday afternoon. Well, we don't work, you know, we have a barbecue whenever we want."

You know, I -- unfortunately, I can't do that, I'm losing money being here, I'm self-employed. There were other programs, probably unconstitutional I'm sure, but the working man is held to a standard of a urine test to receive his paycheck, if he comes up dirty, no longer owns that job. We have people that, again, make a lifetime career out of this, have babies, get more money, maybe for unmarried parents who have another baby on the system, maybe they get money taken away from them as an incentive not to have any more, not to overburden our community.

Our school systems, 95% William Floyd used to be one of the finest schools on the Island, one of the finest districts on the Island, let alone in the State and elsewhere, but right now we have major problems in our schools as far as drugs and weapons and everything else and 95% of our problems are coming from renters. And I just feel that when you consider putting her back in her position, that maybe you take into account that she could possibly do a little more. We don't feel she's doing enough and it's not being handled correctly. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you, sir. Jennifer Heidenrich?

MS. HEIDENRICH:

Good afternoon and thank you for having me. And Jovanna Little is also with Good Shepherd, so I've invited her up with me as well, she also has a card in.

I distributed a letter with some information. We are looking to have a budget reinstated that was put in late last year for our bereavement program. We started the year with the understanding that we had \$95,000 of grant money to spend for the bereavement program, but as we went through the year and through the various documentation stages, we went from 95,000 to 21,000, and then we just recently found out that one of the grants that we believed to be 11,000 was taken from the bereavement program as well; so now what we started with was 95,000 and now we're down to 10,000. I've been asked to put in a budget revision, so I'm just here to request advisement and to see if these monies can be reinstated.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

A couple -- a couple of advisements for you. First, put the budget reinstatement to the Presiding Officer's Office, and Paulie, maybe you can guide them as to how they go about that process. See Paulie right here, he'll tell you where to put it in so they can take it into advisement in the working group on the budget.

MS. HEIDENRICH:

Okay. I'm sorry, I was referred here from the Presiding Officer as of yesterday, so that's why we would present our case today.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay.

MS. HEIDENRICH:

My apologies.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

That's okay.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Give her the County Executive's telephone number.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Well, the County -- the budget is finished anyway, so it's our budget now. Basically, give it to Mr. Paul, you know, and Paul will make sure that it finds its way into the working group. What we have is a working group that deals with the budget, I think it has seven people on it and those people are

more or less doing whatever they do with the budget. I'm not in the group this year, unfortunately for me, so give it to them and make sure that, you know, we get it to the Presiding Officer and the working group. Thank you.

MS. HEIDENRICH:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Jovanna, you want to speak or you want to --

MS. LITTLE:

Yes, please. Thank you so much for allowing us to be here again today. On August 10th, I had the privilege of speaking to you about our inpatient center, I just want to give you an update that the renovation of that project is moving along very nicely.

And with regard to our Bereavement Program, to be able to have a cut of that size this year while we're undertaking a \$5 million project for our Inpatient Center seems like not a lot to many other organizations, but to a small organization like Good Shepherd Hospice it is a lot. And I just want to let you know that we're sending out information to each of your offices as well as other elected officials on Long Island to let them know of our age-specific groups that will be in the community free-of-charge to our constituents running from October 15th to the 18th. The money that we had requested, that \$95,000, actually covers the salary of licensed Clinical Social Workers that run these groups to our community. And I just want to add that under Medicare, we are mandated as a hospice to provide 13 months of bereavement counseling to the families of those on our program as well as the community. It's the only program under Medicare that's mandated but not reimbursed for any of the services that are required that we perform.

While the \$95,000 seems like a small amount, it covers a long way. Last year we served up to 2,500 people with that money who -- in Suffolk County who required counseling, either due to a loss of a spouse, a child. We have children's groups, groups over 60, 59, you know, different age-specific targeted groups. And especially our families of our soldiers killed in Iraq, they need counseling as well. And I just held a Legislative breakfast two weeks ago which Tim Bishop and Steve Israel attended and we went over all of the kinds of issues for the families that they're facing when they lose someone to our war in Iraq.

So this is very important to our organization. I hope that you will consider reinstating it and help us to partner with other organizations. We're putting out the word about our free services to other not-for-profit organizations so that we can share our resources as well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. Let me make a general announcement because there are so many people here who are interested in the budget process and what's going on. For those of you who are interested in the budget process, what's going on right now, this is the period of time when the County Executive submits his budget to the Legislature, the Legislature puts together a group of Legislators which is called the working group and the working group is the group which either is going to reinstate, add to, subtract, eliminate, whatever is in or not in the budget.

What I want to do is to give you the names of the people who are on the budget; write them down because those are the people you need to talk with and it's very important that you talk with them; Mr. Noone, you heard me, right? Legislator Lou D'Amaro, Legislator Rick Montano, Legislator Steve Stern, Legislator Barraga, Legislator Losquadro, Legislator Lindsay, Legislator Cooper and I think --

MS. BAY:

Alden.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Legislator Alden. Is Schneiderman on that? No. Legislator Alden. I'm not on that, I'm not in the working group, I've been excluded. I've been banned. Don't call me. Okay?

MS. LITTLE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

That's for everybody who's interested in the budget, call those guys and let them know what you require or what you --

LEG. EDDINGTON:

I want to just ask them a question.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

You want to ask a question?

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Just a quick thing.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

When you said about the bereavement to the families of Iraqi veterans who were killed in action, I'd like you to call my office because I'm on the Veterans Committee and I offered yesterday a workshop for veterans that are being deployed and coming -- and families and people that are coming back and I think you would add a very essential piece to that puzzle. And it's a model that we're developing that the other Legislators, if they want, are going to take it on in their districts. So reach out to me so I can add you to that next group.

MS. LITTLE:

Absolutely. Thank you so much.

MS. HEIDENRICH:

Thank you.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Arnold Leo?

MR. LEO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the committee. My name is Arnold Leo. I've represented the East Hampton Baymen for the past 30 years and this year the Town of East Hampton hired me as the consultant for commercial fisheries and it's in that capacity I'm appearing before you today in support of Legislator Jay Schneiderman's resolution that would set certain criteria for the use of Methoprene in spraying for mosquito control. And I know that there has been evidence submitted to you previously that Methoprene is toxic in the marine environment; it definitely kills fish, crustation, other, you know, forms of microscopic life that are part of the food chain.

What Mr. Schneiderman's proposed bill is trying to do is set certain limits whereby it would have to be established that in the area where the Methoprene would be sprayed, there has been evidence found that, in fact, the mosquitoes are bearing some kind of contagious disease such as West Nile or Encephalitis. This seems like a very sensible precaution, especially because there's some evidence

coming forward now that the mosquito that would carry West Nile disease does not breed in salt water wetlands. So it would seem that some caution is really being called for here.

You know, I've been involved with the baymen in East Hampton for 30 years and among our members, you know, we have a verbal record of how things were in our estuaries, you know, you know, for the last 70 or 80 years. And many who saw what DDT did to the wetlands to -- you know, the bird life in those estuary areas, I myself saw with Malathion was capable of doing; I saw fish kills after the helicopter sprayed the Malathion. And it just seems that with the growing decline of the commercial fishing on the east end of Long Island, every precaution is a good one that might prevent further deterioration of the resources on which their livelihoods depend. So I'm urging --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Could you please wrap up?

MR. LEO:

Yes, I'm going to pass this memo around urging you to send Intro Resolution No. 1625 concerning the use of Methoprene, send it to the Legislature so it may be debated and voted on. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. Larry Penny, on the same subject, I suppose?

MR. PENNY:

Larry Penny, I'm the Director of Natural Resources, the Town of East Hampton. Actually, the only Natural Resource Department in the State of New York and all the townships; I've been that -- had that capacity since 1984. And I'm also here to speak on behalf of the Schneiderman et al bill that would keep Methoprene out of the marshes unless there was a health emergency, that is a West Nile, EE or Malaria or some other mosquito-borne disease. We know that Methoprene is a -- it's a synthetic hormone. Synthetic hormones mimmick -- hormone mimmicks are now shown to be responsible for changing the sexes of fish in water, doing a lot of environmental damage. This particular hormone keeps the mosquito from becoming an adult, but it also works in all invertebrates, arthropods, crustations and so forth, so it -- even lobsters, and we know that lobsters, for example, are doing very poorly in Long Island. So essentially, it doesn't just affect mosquitoes, it affects all marine organisms where it is applied.

I did -- my department did a little experiment this summer and I would like to share it with you. We looked at a marsh that was treated by Suffolk County for 15 years with BT and Methoprene and we looked at a marsh, another marsh in East Hampton that was never treated -- and when I say treatment, they use helicopters and they spread the BT by helicopter -- and it turned out that the number of salt marsh dragon flies in the untreated marsh was about three to four times greater in number. And the irony here is that dragon flies are one of the great mosquito predators. So in trying to limit the mosquito population with the Methoprene, you're also limiting the population of the predators that would naturally feed on mosquitos.

That's all I have to say. I would like you to -- I would like this bill to be reported out to the full Legislative body and I would -- East Hampton, I'm representing East Hampton Town now, would like to see it passed, because we are a fishing nation, a fishing town at least. There are a lot of other fishing towns on Long Island and it's very important that we -- while we're trying to keep the mosquito diseases down, that we preserve the fisheries. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much, Mr. Penny. Barbara Scalfani?

MS. SCALAFANI:

Hi, Legislators. I'm speaking about the reappointment of Janet DeMarzo. I know that's tabled, but I would like to still speak.

My name is Barbara Scalafani, I'm a Mom, I'm a Board of Director for Pattersquash Creek Civic Association. And I believe if you reappoint Janet DeMarzo, you are further destabilizing our neighborhood in the tri-hamlet area and causing our residents and our children to live in an unsafe neighborhood. Janet does not think of the long-term consequences of placing a disproportionate amount of DSS housing and the toll it takes on the community and its residents.

Our neighborhoods of Mastic Beach, Mastic and Shirley are at a tipping point. We need someone with the foresight to see that further concentration leads to neighborhood deterioration. The neighborhood then becomes a target for bottom fishes which is a complimentary term for investors who are looking for a fast buck with no concern for the neighborhood and who's squeezed the remaining equity out of our homes. I implore you Legislators to please appoint someone else who would take the time and responsibility to seek other alternatives such as equal placement of DSS clients and not destroy and destable our community. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much. Mr. Bill Fahey?

MR. FAHEY:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about certain conditions. I am opposed to the present policies of your Department of Social Services because of the fact that they're destroying our community. It's our tax money that's destroying our community and I don't think it's right. Government shouldn't be in the business of destroying communities, and this has been going on for 30 years.

The substandard housing and the over saturation has become an industry. There's a lot of money involved in this here process and I think, as was stated before at the hearing about mentally ill people, if they had -- just this is off the point a little bit, but if they had a place like Pilgrim State or some other State building where they're all centralized and they put them in there to take care of them, do the best they can for them, train them instead of having them scattered all over the place, it might be a lot cheaper to operate.

Just going back to what we said with this policy of the service, Social Services. It impacts on our school taxes, we have special education people and it's 28 or \$30,000 for each one, we have to pay it from the community. Also, we have a lot of people raising families in the community, we've got the sex offenders and everything else. It's a simple thing to think about, consider yourself living next door to the same situation; you wouldn't like that for your family, it shouldn't be done to other families, there are other ways of handling these things.

Also, the crime involved when we have the situations and the services of the fire department, the ambulances and everything else imposes more tax money on us. In fact, we had a situation maybe a year ago, one of our community members was a firemen in New York City, was almost killed by three individuals, one of whom came out of a jail, Upstate, New York, that same day. And this is what we've got to live with in the community.

Also, we have the people fighting in Iraq for us, they have families over here. How can you put some of these people next to a wife with children trying to raise them and the husband over fighting in Iraq and, you know, the quality of life is right down the tubes. And nobody monitors these people after they get out, everybody washes their hands and just leaves them there no matter what happens, they don't say a word, go through the system.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Please wrap up.

MR. FAHEY:

Okay. Well, I would like to -- for resolution 1622, I think which was in your committee to make these buildings the same as we have to abide by the laws, slumlords should have to abide by the same laws.

Also, I would like to see trying to get a FOIL to get some information out of the Department of Social Services. I've been trying for two days and I can't find the place to get a FOIL application, to get information. Does anybody -- can anybody up there tell me how to get that?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Yes.

MR. FAHEY:

Okay, good, I'll get that thing.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Paul will come by and tell you in a minute.

MR. FAHEY:

And the other situation is I think --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

And Madam Clerk will.

MR. FAHEY:

Towns should be informed of when people put people buildings, in town.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. Thank you very much, Sir. And Ms. Ortiz will show you how to get a form. The next speaker, Gregory Noone? You've been waiting patiently.

MR. NOONE:

Thank you very much, Chairman Mystal. And it sounds like you all have your hands full. And yes, I'm very much aware of the working group and I still wanted to put into the record, as I've given copies to the Ladies and Gentlemen behind the dais here about Thursday's Child.

Honorable Legislators, I stand before you one more time, days prior to your serious and difficult task of creating the Operating Budgets for 2008. I come before you to plead on behalf of the over 3,900 Suffolk County residents who are living with HIV/AIDS. The well-known poem from which our agency's name is taken states, "Thursday's Child has far to go." After meeting with many of our County's leaders over the past few months, I can honestly testify that indeed we have far to go.

Marianie J of Brentwood stopped by our office last week. Marianie lives with both HIV/AIDS and Leukemia. Marianie does her best to provide for her beautiful school-aged daughter, but as one who lives on a fixed income she's always falling behind on her bills. She and her family come to Thursday's Child once or twice a year requesting help; help her to organize her bills, help her to fill out Social Service applications, advocate for her when her case management team fails her. More often than not, this family just needs a little extra help obtaining food.

She left our office in tears last week. She left my coworker Kevin and I stunned into silence. She left in disbelief, how could the Federal Government be so cruel as to cut off the Thursday's Child Emergency Food Program for people living with AIDS? I come before you today with a request that the County fund a one year project at Thursday's Child, the AIDS Services Access Program. Marianie and hundreds of others like her deserve this dignified, confidential resource.

I also come before you today both grateful and humble. It has been an honor to have met so many of you and your colleagues in Suffolk County government. I'm happy to report that our meetings at

the County Executive's Office have resulted in assurances that Mr. Steve Levy is supportive of Thursday's Child. In fact, Deputy County Executive Jeff Szabo wrote, "Thursday's Child is the only contracting agency to receive an increase in the coming year's budget."

I now ask each of you to search your hearts and fully fund the AIDS Services Access Program. This proposal is narrow in focus, limited in scope and serves a targeted population. This proposal will be effective not only to our clients but also save hours, time and money for the County at the end of the day. Applications for services will be made complete and accurate at our office prior to anyone visiting a Social Service Center. DSS employees support this proposal as they know it will cut down on wasted effort, wasted paper, paper work and relieve aggravation and tension.

Another important goal of this proposal will be to move clients from County to State and Federal chargeback. Obtaining Social Security Administration benefits will ultimately and permanently offset costs associated with this project, and for the working poor, obtaining a DSS denial letter is all that is often required; again, a cost savings for the County will be seen by applications made properly and made once.

I close with recent news about Medicaid, our government's health insurance for the poor. In 2008, we will be faced with yet another dilemma. HIV/AIDS patients who are covered by Medicaid will be forced to choose a Health Maintenance Organization. The HIV/AIDS cut-out provision for straight Medicaid will be phased-out. Clients face the daunting task of choosing an HMO that will cover their many needs. This is just one more difficulty facing Suffolk County residents with HIV/AIDS; this is just one more reason why I implore your assistance to support Thursday's Child of Long Island.

This Legislature is recognized nationally for its groundbreaking statutes, protecting the public against the dangers of driving and talking on cell phones, against the dangers of Ephedra, the dangers of DMX. On behalf of those whom we serve at Thursday's Child, please again show your bravery and leadership. This program can serve as a model for counties across our nation as a cost-saving and a life-saving measure. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

There's one question from Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Well, it's almost more of a comment. I appreciate you coming forward. And if I closed my eyes, I would have sworn I was hearing an NPR report. You have a great voice, you're a great advocate and I appreciate you coming to see all of us and advocating for that group. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Then give the man some money.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yeah, show him the money.

MR. NOONE:

Then up our line in the budget. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you, Gregory.

MR. NOONE:

Thank you, Sir. And I believe -- is Ms. Nowick on the working group this year?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

No, she's not.

MR. NOONE:
She's not?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
We've been excluded.

LEG. NOWICK:
Actually, I am.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
You are?

LEG. EDDINGTON:
Get her, get her.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
Ms. Nowick is definitely in the group, see her, call her.

LEG. NOWICK:
You've done that.

MR. NOONE:
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
Don't call Jack.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
Ms. Tania Reyes? Oh, see, we're moving in to DSS payment, okay.

MS. REYES:
Good afternoon to all of you one more time in front of you. One at this time is to remind you of a Retention Program. I don't know if you guys recall, back in 2004 you guys founded the Retention Program which helped us to be able to maintain our employees. It was just like a little present that we were able to give an employee if they worked in child care for a year. So I ask you to please, now that we're doing budgeting, to please have that in mind, that we need to be able to keep ours. The children in a program need the same faces and it's now almost impossible for us to be able to pay \$30,000 salary like many other agencies do. So I ask -- that would be one of my first things, please reconsider your funding the Retention Program.

The second thing is we had -- September 27th we had a meeting to be trained in the KinderTrack Program. It was an excellent meeting because we were to find out that the implementation of the program won't be until January of 2008, after it was supposed to be done --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
September.

MS. REYES:
September, October, November, so now we find out that until 2008, that's when we're actually going to be seeing KinderTrack.

In those regards, the schedule was done at ten o'clock in the morning and 2 PM. If you are a family day care provider, which you are the only person working with five to eight children, if you go at ten o'clock or 2 PM, who will stay with the children? Oh, I know, by licensing, nobody will have to close that day. A group family day-care provider, if you have more than six children, we need two people,

so that means any time I'm not there I have to pay someone else to come in. And since we get our payments within 30 days, you know how easy it is to pay employees.

Based on that, I also ask you to please help me in guidance, if any of you can guide me in a pro bono attorney or also grants that could help me with when my house went into foreclosure due to the payments delayed that I had.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

What kind of attorney are you looking for?

MS. REYES:

Pro bono attorney?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

To do what?

MS. REYES:

Well, I'm looking at this time for all the losses that I had from the County not paying on time.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Oh, you want -- darling, I can't give you an attorney to sue me.

MS. REYES:

I meant information on it.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

I thought you needed an attorney to help you with the foreclosure thing.

MS. REYES:

No. I mean, that's one of the main reasons really.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

See, I was going to give you one of the best who's sitting right here, Jack.

MS. REYES:

Okay, Jack, I'll be seeing you. No, it's in regards to that.

LEG. KENNEDY:

What I would offer to you is somebody certainly through the Bar Association, or there are attorneys who would assist in corresponding with the lender asking for some kind of hardship relief from what the arrears might be. As the Chair said, we can't help you sue us.

MS. REYES:

Of course not, no. But that -- now my hard time is having, since I have to refinance because I went through this, I have no credit, so I'm stuck on where am I putting -- they want to do an invariable rate which will be increasing every six months.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

You think --

LEG. KENNEDY:

We need to have a conversation outside of this forum.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Yeah, I was thinking maybe Paul Sabatino can represent her.

MS. REYES:

Oh, I'm sure he'll love that. Well, he loves my summer home a lot.

So I would appreciate it if I could be guided through that so I can get some information on attorneys to be able to refinance or do any of that information.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay, with financing, we can give you some guidance on that.

MS. REYES:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

But suing us, that's kind of weird. Okay, thank you.

MS. REYES:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Kathy Liguori?

MS. LIGUORI:

Hello again. I have some information for you, some of the details that we were provided at the training so you can see specifically what the KinderTrack and KinderAttend will do, as we first found out then.

I just want to make you're aware also of some of the things that we were told at the training which added to our frustration, and I believe that the KinderTrack System will help us. KinderAttend, as we know, is not being implemented until January of '08, it is also optional. So this fixed problem from April till June to now let's wait out through November to January is an optional solution and not a fix.

In any event, again, the frustrations that we heard were that many of the providers spoke out about not getting letters of approval in time, which also was adding to their delayed payment processes which we made you aware of. In defense, one of the supervisors had said that they were not prepared to implement this training and that it was forced upon them and that they were doing the best they can; I believe that to be true. They said that they had boxes of applications to be processed that they haven't gotten to and that's an equal concern. I have a parent that came to me this afternoon before I left for this meeting, she was a DSS client, she has five children, she's a single parent. Returning from maternity leave, she put her application in May to reinstitute for services to go back to work. She still has not been given her letter of approval. First they lost paperwork, she had to reapply because she expired the 30 days of application, then they said that there was an inconsistency in her application, to speak to a supervisor, the supervisor then said, "Do not call anymore because we cannot help you and we will get to you when we can."

So I just wanted to keep you updated with some of the things that we're dealing with with regard to the payments. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you, Kathy. Susan Pfeiffer?

MS. PFEIFFER:

Hello. I'm very nervous.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Don't be.

MS. PFEIFFER:

I just wanted to talk about a problem that's in the child support system that I have talked to a lot of people who are having the same issues as me. I've had some money recently that's been lost in the system that's just -- you know, my husband's employer says they paid it and they're saying, well, they haven't received it, and the problem is that people like me don't seem to have any recourse as to how to go about finding it. They just shrug you off, they send you away and nobody seems to want to help with these things. So I just wanted to make it known that there's a problem in this system, that you go in -- they have a process, you go in, they refer you to a window of a "specialist" and this person tells you that he can't help you and they won't let you go to the next level and talk to anybody.

I called my Legislator who is trying to look into it for me and hopefully can get some results, but there should be a process in place, a recourse for people who aren't finding their money. You know, some kind of rights that you have when this happens, so I just wanted to bring that to everybody's attention. Thank you.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Wait, wait, wait, don't go. Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah. Ms. Pfeiffer, first of all, thank you for coming down. As a matter of fact, Ms. Pfeiffer is my constituent, we've talked two days ago, I did correspond. But actually, I think I'm going to have a conversation with her, and I know we do have a rep from Social Services here.

Again, in the spirit that you keep with this committee of openness and the desire to go ahead and hear about what is, in fact, going on, this apparently is an element where four single parents who are actually trying to avail themselves of receipt of, you know, the payments from non-custodial parents. Unfortunately, they're getting, I don't know if it's so much a systemic type of thing, but it may be something that we're hearing about an ability to get access through the agency to resolve what may be just normal housekeeping disputes. So I thank Ms. Pfeiffer for coming, we'll have that conversation now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay, thank you. Do me a favor. Ms. Pfeiffer, could you see that gentleman with the beard over there? Get a card from him, let's see if he can track what's happening. Joe May? Where is he? All the way in the back. Are you trying to hide, Joe?

MR. MAY:

I'm back. Good afternoon. My name is Joe May, I'm a member of the Independence Party of the State of New York. I'm running for Town Council in the Town of Brookhaven. I defeated Edward Hennessy in a primary and my other candidate is Ed Romaine's son Keith.

I live in the Mastic/Shirley area all my life and about a month ago I talked about saturation and what a couple of other people already spoke about. This thing that I read here, for the record it's IR 1913-07, Approving the reappointment of Janet DeMarzo as Commissioner of Suffolk County Department of Social Services; I guess County Executive Levy is the one that put this forward. Most of us drove 30 miles to get here, 30 miles to get back and we waited over an hour and we hear it's tabled; I don't know when it was tabled, but I'll go with that.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

No, no, it hasn't been tabled yet. I just made the announcement that it is going to be tabled because Ms. DeMarzo could not be present today.

MR. MAY:

All right. As far as the record, the Deputy Commissioner is here --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Somebody is here from the department.

MR. MAY:

The gentleman with the beard, right?

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Yes; yes, he is here.

MR. MAY:

What I'm looking for is reform. The Independence Party, all people, politicians who got the line that don't have the Independence line, reform is what I'm doing. And what I'm asking for here is because of the Commissioner, she's got -- and Mr. Kennedy -- he's gone again. Well, he's listening to me through the microphones. Mr. Kennedy says he has a few problems in his town; well, our town has 600 from the County, 400 from CDC's from Centereach and 200 from the town, that's about 1,200 we have on three zip codes. I challenge any of the Legislators of a hundred villages throughout Long Island, put three zip codes together and come up with 1,200 people referencing government-funded housing.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

I can beat you.

MR. MAY:

Well, I know you can, but within the top five. All right, I'll give you that, I'll give you that, Mr. Chairman. Say no to Janet and even her Deputy Commissioner, make reform, make a clean sweep. I'm afraid that Mr. Levy is not going down the reform trail on this one.

The first sex offender group home was going to be on Eleanor Avenue, four sex offenders in one house, that was under this Commissioner. This Commissioner also set up a policy, I believe, of a \$110 bonus to any renter or landlord that would take a sex offender, \$110; don't know if it's fact, but it was given to me by a reputable person. Say no to the Commissioner. She placed sex offenders on Eleanor Avenue when there was, what do you call it, a child care thing within a quarter mile, probably a thousand feet. You know, probation, arrests, have all got problems here, but reform is where I'm going with this and now it's an election process going on here, silly season, whether this is tabled for after the election, this is an election issue. Ms. {DeMarcus} (sic), she is actually on the ballot this year.

I'll finish up with the placement should be stopped and reform should actually be done and this reappointment should be denied. And let us know about two weeks in advance and we'll all be here, I could bring a hundred people. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Joe, just for the record. Although this Legislature will vote up or down on Ms. DeMarzo, we have no say so on her Deputy; he's appointed.

MR. MAY:

I understand that, but start from the top. I'm starting from the top, it's reforming the town, I'm doing the same thing, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

So, you know, I don't want you to look at us and say -- we have nothing to do with that.

MR. MAY:

I understand that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay. Delia McKeenan? McKernan. Did I say it right?

MS. McKERNAN:

Yes; Delia McKernan. Good afternoon, Legislators. My name is Delia McKernan, I represent Mastic Civics Association and many other associations as well. By the way, I am not in favor for reappointing Janet DeMarzo.

If you lived in my area, the Mastics, you would understand our frustration. We are over saturated with subsidized housing, sex offender housing, sober homes and mental ill housing as well.

I wanted to say to these people, which they left, they didn't have a chance to listen to what we had to say about their releasing these inmates; unless they already have inadequate -- unless they already have adequate case managers, we can't afford to release these people into an unsupervised society. This can't be a proposed plan, this must be a plan already in place, which it sounds like it's not.

We have rallied numerous times in our community against oversaturation, subsidized housing, sex offenders, which we have informed Ms. DeMarzo about; we informed her how we feel, that we have our unfair share and we cannot take any more. I don't know where she lives, I don't know if she has children, I don't know if there are sex offenders in her community, but there certainly is enough of that in ours. Our children are being robbed of a quality of life because the State is unfair in distributing an equal amount throughout Long Island; this makes the neighborhood unsafe.

If you release a hundred inmates from the jail by renting homes for them, our community of Mastic, Mastic Beach, Shirley, Smiths Point, better not get not one single rental of this kind; we already have more than our share and more than we can handle. I don't care how much money this makes for the State, my child, our children are worth much, much more.

How many of these people are sex offenders? You say these people are not dangerous people; how do they know that for a fact? No one can predict the behaviors of individuals that are mentally ill, especially if they are on meds. Most psychotropic meds today cause people to become suicidal, have feelings of hopelessness and despiration. How is living in a two bedroom apartment in a residential area going to be able to gauge this unpredictable behavior? I don't see the benefit of this housing. We need to reinstitutionalize these mentally ill people, for their safety and ours, and implement case management and therapies through these types of facilities. Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much. John Sicignano. John? I always mispronounce your name.

MR. SICIGNANO:

Sicignano; I knew it was me when I saw you trip over it.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Say it again?

MR. SICIGNANO:

Sicignano. Hi. My name is I'm John Sicignano, I'm President of the Mastic Park Civic Association and also Vice-President, 2nd Vice-President of ABCO.

I met with Janet DeMarzo after August 1st of 2006 when we rallied and papered Eleanor, which Joe

May talked about, 115 Eleanor. And thank God for Parents for Megan's Law, that their computer was up-to-date and we saw that there were four Level III Sex Offenders in the home and the Police made a -- had a paperwork problem where it didn't go out to the school and it didn't go out to the community. We walked, we papered the community, we found out there were seven kids across the street, five kids right next to the house, all of the same age, by the way, of two of the sex offenders that raped and molested a seven year old girl in that home.

And I find out later that Janet DeMarzo and the DSS walked up and down the street and they were casing out a place where they can put sex offenders in the community, and it would have been a sex offender group home, that's what they were trying to do to get away from the trailers. This is before the trailers; remember the trailers that are still going around? It was before that, they were trying to see if we were going to -- if our eyes were open. I don't know if it was a coincidence that the Police didn't know about it in that it didn't go out to the school and the paper work didn't go out to the home, I have no idea, but it didn't happen on that one case. And luckily, I track every one of them, we have 85 sex offenders in the Mastic, Mastic Beach, Shirley area, I track every one of them weekly, and that's the reason why we found 115 Eleanor. It's an outrage.

We then met at Kate Browning's Office at the end of August with Mr. Ed Hernandez sitting there, Deputy Commissioner. By the way, ten years ago he ran not-for-profits that housed people also. And now I'm wondering where the connection is between Janet DeMarzo and why we're getting so many from not-for-profits in our community; because the very man sitting there was one of them that ran one of the not-for-profits. So, you know, this isn't a coincidence, this is what's happening in our community and it's happening from our elected officials. We've had enough. We've had enough. Are we going to wait until somebody gets murdered? We've got to track them every week because we can't even count on the notices being correct. It's got to stop. It's got to stop.

We're asking you to say no to Janet DeMarzo, say no to Mr. Hernandez. Enough is enough, send them packing. Let's get someone in there that's going to really do the job and be sensitive to areas that are oversaturated already on Long Island. And let's put some smart legislation together and spread them out, spread them out. You can't put them in one area, you can't put them all in Bellport, you can't put them all in Mastic, you can't put them all in Amityville, you've got to spread them out. You have to put them in wealthier areas. Our kids are worth just as much as the kids in Dix Hills, Setauket or anywhere else.

Applause

We've had enough; enough is enough. Sorry I got a little aggravated here, but I've really had it, really had it.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you very much.

MR. SICIGNANO:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

That's all the cards that I have. Anybody else wish to -- come on up. Could you please state your name for the record, since I don't have a card for you.

MR. FARBER:

My name is Bill Farber, I'm a resident of Oakdale in Suffolk County. I'm here to discuss Janet DeMarzo's renomination.

I went through a year-long battle with DSS. I went to Senator Levy's -- I mean County Executive Levy's Office to discuss this with them, I had to go back six times; I was sent letters, which I have

here if anybody would like to see them later. He says to me that DSS problems are out of the purview of his office, he says to me in one letter. He says to me -- in Janet's second letter he says to me that on my matter in the situation that involved my two daughters and my family in a DSS matter would be handled by her personally through Lenny Grecco, the Community Relations Unit in Mr. Levy's office. The second page, never spoke to her, never seen the woman, never seen her since. I can't get through the front door of the County Executive's building, they have me wait downstairs. I'm a union contractor, I was on his re-election committee, Levy. I've got another letter here at the end of this, all the battle -- an unconstitutional infliction on my two daughters in a situation where a caller made a false allegation against my family.

It is in my estimation that Suffolk County Social Services Department is in total disarray, it is broken down, there is no one in charge. The trailer situation, the homeless people situation. She sits up there with a \$155,000 a year job. If I've got a person on my job who's incompetent, they're fired, they're removed, someone has to step in, all right?

Applause

In regards to my situation, my situation has gone on for 14 months. I have a Civil Rights case with the Federal Prosecutor's Office in Brooklyn, I've got the case sitting in the Complaint Division of the Inspector General in Albany. The State is blaming the County. When a case goes to the County from anywhere in the State that funds you, your County is directly responsible for the actions of your Social Services Department. You are liable and you are responsible for what they do.

On top of this -- and I just want to make this very clear to you. This woman has lost complete control of everything that's going on in this County. The trailer situation -- you know what? If the State wants to fund them, we've got a Pilgrim State Psychiatric Center with no one in it, no one in it.

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:
Kings Park.

MR. FARBER:
And Kings Park. Now, with all due respect to Kings Park, that issue, too. You could take one building, four acres, barbed-wire it and that's an essential hub, Pilgrim State, and send everybody in there, document them, let them go to work, give them bussing; you'll cut yourself down a couple of hundred million. Okay? If anybody wants to save money for us. Okay? Put them all in these buildings that you -- Kings Park; has anybody drove through there lately? Twenty-two floors, 36 buildings, take six of them, send the rest of it for your housing you want to do and put all these people in there. The State wants to send the problem to you; why don't you send it back to them? Go, "Listen, we've had enough, let's get" --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:
Please wrap up.

MR. FARBER:
We could track them. Anyway, to end this, I want to say this; do not vote for her. If you want to see a model Social Services Department, go to your cousin next door in Nassau. They destroyed their Social Services Building and knocked it down, they fired everybody in sight, they redid their Family Court System, they got rid of the welfare recipients that were collecting ten paychecks a household, they got rid of all of it and they have a well-oiled machine there. The hard, cold truth here is that this has gone on long enough; you've got to do something. Go over there, see if you could get in there, report to Roland Hampson, his Director, go ahead. Come with me, I dare any one of you to come with me one day, I'll put my suit and tie on, I'm a layman construction guy, and we'll go there together and see if they let me in the building to talk to anybody in there, after paying taxes for 14 years in this thing. Come over with me to Levy's Office, see if they don't put you through to three different people and send you letters here saying that, "She'll get back to you." Here, letters signed by Levy, they've got his signature on them. It's out of the purview of his office,

DSS; the purview of his office, my situation. And that's all I have to say to you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you, sir. Sir, sir, somebody wants to get something from you.

Okay. Mister -- I'm almost afraid to call you, Ed, but I need to talk about KinderTrack. Ed, could you come and talk about KinderTrack?

LEG. HORSLEY:

Two minutes.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Two minutes, and then I'll give Jack ten minutes. Good afternoon, gentlemen. I don't -- I'm not going to address any other issue right now in terms of your -- anything that's been said before. All I want to hear today is about KinderTrack as to -- you heard Kathy Liguori speak, you heard what has been said; can you provide us with some answers and could you give us a briefing?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Are we on here? Okay. First let me apologize for the Commissioner not being able to be here because of a family issue. I'm not the KinderTrack expert, but I brought one of them with me.

I've been asked to talk about KinderTracks. KinderTracks and KinderAttend are two components of the system; KinderTrack has been fully implemented. All the bills, August bills that were submitted in the system will be paid within 40 days, more than 80% of the billing is being done through KinderTracks, I believe it's 630 out of 700 day care providers. One hundred percent of the September bills will go out under KinderTracks, you know, and the department feels it can maintain that 40 day timeframe during the issues.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Could you pull the microphone closer to you and speak a little louder.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Okay. A training session or two training sessions were held for the providers, now I'm hearing that perhaps an evening session may be in order; I would assume there's no opposition to doing that. I'm not sure if it was requested before. And of course, with any new system, there's been a number of issues that have been worked through on a daily basis, and the Commissioner said she would provide a further update at the next meeting. But if you have any questions, Ken Knappe who works in the Client Benefits Administration, has been working with the implementation of this system, the providers and all the paperwork that goes back and forth, getting people enrolled and everything else.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Before passing on to the prosecutor, Ken, welcome; I've known Ken for a while. Explain a couple of things to me. You said that KinderTrack is fully implemented. KinderAttend, which is the attendance part, will not be implemented until when?

MR. KNAPPE:

Just to give a quick explanation, I'm sure the --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

No, just answer that point; quick, when? Just give me the when.

MR. KNAPPE:

There's a pilot set to go forward in December and then full implementation during the month of January.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

All right, so we are in October now, it's about three months from now. Now, how does that KinderAttend hinder the process of payment?

MR. KNAPPE:

The KinderAttend portion eliminates paper work for the providers, it's a web-based Internet set-up where their attendance can be recorded and electronically transmitted back to the Department of Social Services.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

So if KinderAttend -- when KinderAttend is implemented, would that reduce the amount of lag time between payments?

MR. KNAPPE:

It definitely will.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

By how many days; a day, ten days?

MR. KNAPPE:

Without looking at a crystal ball, it will definitely eliminate at least --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Ball park figure.

MR. KNAPPE:

At least one or two just in regular snail mail going back and forth from the providers to the department.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Just one or two days.

MR. KNAPPE:

At the very least, and then there's a lot of efficiencies that are built in to the KinderAttend that will have some benefits for the department.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay. With KinderTrack you're saying that, you know, we're getting payment now within 40 days?

MR. KNAPPE:

We're within 40 days at this moment, yes.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

With KinderTrack.

MR. KNAPPE:

With KinderTrack.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

And when KinderAttend comes in we're talking about maybe 37 days, 38 days?

MR. KNAPPE:

With everything staying as is, there's no reason to think that it would go anywhere over that, it

should be around the 38 to 39 days, if not even sooner.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

You don't ever, ever see us ever getting -- to pay within 30 days, no matter what we do? Ken, I've known you for a long time, you've always been honest.

MR. KNAPPE:

Yeah, I don't think a system can create that many efficiencies. It has created -- we went from 50 down to 45 down to 40, and we're looking at even going closer in the 30 range.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Some of that will be supplemented with staff on the accounting end.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

All right, fasten your seat belt; Jack, you've got them.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Gentlemen, I'll tell you, it's a pleasure, as always. All I can say is I guess it was fortuitous the Commissioner had a family matter today; nevertheless, you're the victims de jour.

We -- let's begin with, you know, where we're at right now and how I reconcile what I hear you two saying to me and what my constituents are hearing and what all of us hear when they stand here at the podium. Eighty percent of the providers are now involved with KinderCare or Track?

MR. KNAPPE:

Let me just clarify a little bit. When we rolled out KinderTrack in the last week of August, I want to say August 23rd or 24th, we produced the attendance sheets for the month of August for the providers; over 80% of those providers received attendance sheets. For the September attendance sheets that went out last week, the third or fourth week of September, those attendance sheets, 100% of the providers were up and running under the KinderTrack System.

LEG. KENNEDY:

They all have the software loaded, they're all familiar with --

MR. KNAPPE:

KinderTrack is our portion of this model, this is what's helping accounting and there's a big interface. The providers don't see the computer model until the KinderAttend portion, which Legislator Mystal was talking about, is going to be a December/January implementation.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

There's two pieces; one is getting the accounting end internally up and running, and once that's up and running then you get the billing portion direct interface with the providers.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

MR. KNAPPE:

So we're already seeing efficiencies with the KinderTrack piece and even more once we go with KinderAttend.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay, all right. Listen, I am an optimist but not an idiot. And so -- I don't think, although --

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Don't take a vote, Jack, don't take a vote.

LEG. KENNEDY:

One would wonder. So I hear that you're making that progress.

Let's go to the accounting piece, Ed, because I am not going to make the committee go through this, but I am tempted at this point to get the Clerk to go pull the minutes from the March or April meeting where I had heard that the Commissioner agreed to go ahead and create an upgrade in that accounting unit. And I'm hearing about the fact that we're going to have new staff come on. I know I lost a lot of time, but what, seven, eight months? What's going on at this point with this account unit, specifically? I don't want to hear any more maybes, might's or mambo. What is going on with the unit?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

First of all, people have been in and out, there have been people who have been promoted up out of the unit.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Well, there was an attempt to earmark those positions, I have to go to specifics. So you had an Account Clerk who succeeded and placed on a Senior Account Clerk list and you offered them the opportunity to get that promotion remaining in this Accounting Unit, they said, "We had enough, we're out of here, we're going elsewhere"; is that it?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Or it's a better opportunity, we're going elsewhere. So there was a little delay in backfilling, first of all. Second of all, the Account Clerk list, I believe, is expired, it's been gone through, so it makes it difficult in terms of hiring certain positions because --

LEG. KENNEDY:

We used to call that provisional.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Well, you can hire a provisional, but you don't want to train them for six months, nine months or a year and they don't score high enough on a list and have them walk out the door.

LEG. KENNEDY:

They'd be leaving anyhow, they're not staying with you anyway. You know, I don't mean to be blunt but I've got no choice to be blunt anymore.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

And we've been receiving assurances that automatic backfills will take place within the unit.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. How many people do we have in the unit now; do we know?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

I don't; I know there's three vacancies in the unit.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Are we staffed at 70%? Are we staffed at 60%, are we staffed at 90%?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

There's three vacancies right now, an offer went out to a Senior Accountant, there's one accountant

position being -- we're trying to upgrade to a Senior Accountant, and I believe there's one Account Clerk vacancy open that we're trying to fill, plug it because of the lack of list.

MR. KNAPPE:

I also believe that interviews for those positions, for at least two of those three positions that you mentioned have been ongoing last week.

LEG. KENNEDY:

So it's -- we do really, seriously believe we're going to be able to get to fill those vacancies and that there's a decent chance the people are going to remain in those positions?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

We can hope. I mean, there was a work group that was put together --

LEG. KENNEDY:

I'm aware.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

-- with representatives of the Budget Review Office, Comptroller's Office and their recommendations are being reviewed before a report gets issued, so I can't speak on those. But, you know, the Commissioner is here every month and knows what the issue is and is not going to let her end fall in terms of being accountable to this committee every month. So she's doing the best she can to make this process work.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Assure me that -- and what I hear on balance sounds like you're making some progress. And I said it before to the Commissioner, I'll say it to you too; I acknowledge and I appreciate the things that you're doing to address it.

I am woefully frustrated when I hear stuff that's going on as far as, you know, what's simple Civil Service matters; but nevertheless, not all of that is in your control. But assure me that we don't have any more of this stuff that's preauthorization or identifying individuals before they get into that 40 day timeframe. When we started this whole saga back in January, there was that notion about one person to approve, I guess, APS, Children's referrals or are a couple of people that were in this, you know, preliminary area before we hit the 40 day cycle; is that all gone?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Maybe Ken can talk more about it, but the whole process from top to bottom has been looked at, taken apart and put back together again so it works better. Are there still problems here and there? Yes, but we're considering those more individual cases than systemic problems. And maybe Ken wants to talk about it more.

MR. KNAPPE:

Just in general terms, the authorization of child care, no longer is it going in between different divisions. My example, if it is a Family & Children Services related matter, their workers, the caseworkers in Family & Children Services are authorizing their child care. No longer is it being funneled over to the Client Benefits Day-Care Unit. Child Care in the Day-Care Unit of Client Benefits is dealing with the temporary assistance and non-temporary assistance clients that are in need of child care. Family & Children Services are dealing with the Child Protective Service cases and the foster children that need day care. So no longer is the frustration for the providers or for the clients trying to figure out which division they have to interact with at what given day, that has changed.

Retroactive cancelling of authorization, which has been a problem that we heard loud and clear from the providers for different situations, that has all been resolved, and if it hasn't been resolved it's

being brought to my attention and it's being worked on, as the Deputy Commissioner said, on a case-by-case basis. Because we got away from the systematic problems now and we are dealing with individual situations. It is getting better, the changes are in place and they're being worked out.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Are some of these providers able to go ahead and deal directly with you, Kenny, if they have issues that are bookkeeping, accounting or payment issues?

MR. KNAPPE:

Ms. Reyes talked --

LEG. KENNEDY:

They're getting through to you.

MR. KNAPPE:

Yes, they are.

LEG. KENNEDY:

They're able to have a conversation with you.

MR. KNAPPE:

Yes, they are.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Fine, that's fine.

MR. KNAPPE:

And just to give one example, Ms. Reyes I was able to help out with one case; there were two other children that is being researched, she gave me a call Monday or Tuesday, earlier this week, and it's being researched yesterday and today and hopefully when I get back there's an answer.

I've probably spoken to about 15 providers in the course since Thursday's training. My own personal number has been given out to all the providers, there were about 90 some-odd providers at the training on Thursday, both sessions. And it's just not me, it's other people in the department as well, there's been a whole resource information of phone numbers being sent out to all the providers when they receive their checks with phone, important phone numbers and e-mail addresses for them to correspond to us. We have tightened up a lot of policies to make sure that communication gets brought back to the providers, that they're just not left out waiting for return phone calls.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. I'm going to yield, but I'm going to yield with two rhetorical questions. A, I wish that would have happened ten months ago; and B, after ten months of hammering, it looks like we're getting close to getting the issue resolved. This is just one of many components in DSS. How many other sleeping nightmares are out there or are you looking at the systems proactively? That's all.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you, Jack. One -- before I pass it to Legislator Eddington, would you guys please consider having not one but a couple of night sessions for KinderTrack for these people? Because they have to work.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

No, absolutely.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

And it's very hard for them -- you know, the kids are around. So consider having a couple of sessions at night for the day-care providers on KinderTrack and whatever else you have in there, okay?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. Legislator Eddington.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Yeah, you get the other Jack, too. You know, it's funny because I'm thinking of voices today. The only good thing out of this seven month ordeal is I also love Ms. Reyes' accent, I love hearing her speak, but I don't like it when she's not smiling. And what I've heard from all these groups that have come here is that there is a systemic problem, and it may not be a software thing, but there's not direct and honest communication, that's what I'm hearing. I mean, I'm hearing, "Oh, there's four slots here," "Oh, but they haven't backfilled and then they have to be trained." It's like circular reasoning. I have found out that when I talk to the people individually, they're not crazy, insane people, they just want to be told straight and not hear something today and then something tomorrow. And, I mean, Ed, you know this as a social worker; it's not what you say, it's how you say it. And that I see is a serious issue in your agency.

The gentleman that left a few minutes ago or is sitting in the back, it was the same issue of a lack of communication. And I've talked to the Commissioner about this, that whether we have to put somebody in that position as an ombudsman or use somebody that's already there. We have to look at how you communicate what you're doing in an open and honest way. I haven't had anybody that gets upset when you're saying that, "We're working on it and here's what we're doing," but you've got to be straight, "And here's the timeframe that we think." But like Jack said, seven months and the same people coming and they're hearing different things and then we hear a statement like, "Well, it's your summer vacation home"; I mean, those things just don't help honest communication. And so I want -- that's what I'm asking you to bring back to the Commissioner. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER HERNANDEZ:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. That's it.

Okay, we are going to move to the agenda. It's a short agenda, so if you all give me your attention for the next few months we can zip through this.

Tabled Resolutions

1577-07 - Directing the Department of Health Services to conduct a feasibility study for the creation of a Division of Geriatrics (Romaine). Can I get a motion? I make a motion to table.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Thank you. All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1622-07 - To strengthen County policy to comply with zoning and building code

requirements in the Department of Social Services' Placements (Romaine). Can I get a motion?

LEG. HORSLEY:

To table.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

To table Legislator Horsley, seconded by Legislator Eddington.

All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1635-07 - Establishing guidelines for the use of Methoprene in Suffolk County (Schneiderman). Can I get a motion?

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Motion to table by Legislator Eddington, seconded by Legislator Horsley.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1719-07 - Establishing an Equitable Placement Policy for the Department of Social Services (Browning). I make a motion to table for the sponsor.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Seconded by Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1744-07 - Directing the Suffolk County Department of Health Services to conduct a soil, groundwater and air quality study in the Town of Brookhaven and amending the 2007 Capital Budget & Program and appropriating funds for the environment study on the Papermill Road Facility Site, Town of Brookhaven (CP 8221)(Romaine). Motion to table by myself.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Seconded by Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Introductory Resolutions

1912-07 - Declaring September 28th through October 5, 2007 as "Homeless Awareness Week" in Suffolk County (Romaine).

LEG. EDDINGTON:

We did that; we did that by CN I think.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

We did it by a CN, so we don't have to do it right now.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Right.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Okay, that's done already.

1913-07 - Approving the reappointment of Janet DeMarzo as Commissioner of the Suffolk County Department of Social Services (County Executive). I make a motion to table.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Seconded by Legislator Horsley. All in favor? Against? Abstentions? ***Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

1945-07 - Adopting Local law No. 2007, a Local Law to require uniform drinking water mains in Suffolk County (Losquadro). I've been asked by the Legislator to table this.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

It has to be tabled for a public hearing anyway. Seconded by Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Against? Abstentions?

Motion is tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).

We have no other business in front of this committee, so I make a motion to adjourn.

LEG. EDDINGTON:

Second.

CHAIRMAN MYSTAL:

Seconded by Legislator Eddington. All in favor? Abstentions?

We are adjourned.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 4:11 PM*)

{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically