

DATE

HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

MINUTES

A meeting of the Human Services Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on April 22, 2014.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Monica Martinez, Chairwoman
Leg. Kate M. Browning, Vice Chair
Leg. Lou D'Amaro
Leg. Kevin J. McCaffrey
Leg. Robert Trotta

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Tim Laube, Clerk of the Legislature
Tom Vaughn, County Executive's Office
Michael Pitcher, Aide to Presiding Officer
Lisa Pinkard, Aide to Chairwoman Martinez
Justin Littell, Aide to Leg. D'Amaro
Nan Lombardi, Acting Chair/Women's Advisory Commission
Nancy Ellis, WAC
Arlene Hoffman, WAC
Debbie Virga, WAC
Michelle Kelly, WAC
Diane Thiel, WAC
Mary Reid, WAC
Pamela Barr, WAC
Alison Neumann, WAC
Shirley E. Coverdale, WAC
Kym Laube, WAC
Mary Reid, WAC
Mike Haynes, Government Affairs Coordinator
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Reporter

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 2:40 PM

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Good afternoon and welcome to today's Human Services meeting. I do apologize for the delay and thank you for being so patient and waiting outside.

If we can all rise for the Pledge of Allegiance. And today's Allegiance will be led by Legislator Browning.

SALUTATION

Thank you. To continue with the agenda, there are no correspondences for today. Public Portion, do we have any cards, Clerk?

MR. LAUBE:

No.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

No? Anyone in the audience who would like to address the Committee? For the record there is no one, so we're going to continue with the agenda, that's presentations.

PRESENTATION

And today we have the Suffolk County Women's Advisory Commission, which they're going to present their goals for the year. And I'm so happy that you're here today because I'm so excited to make sure that this Committee moves forward with the ladies at hand. So, thank you.

Yes. So we have Nan Lombardi coming up along with -- who are you bringing?

MS. LOMBARDI:

Good afternoon and thank you, Legislator Martinez, for inviting us here, the entire Women's Commission.

It has been my pleasure to serve with these fine women. As you know, we meet once a month, the second Tuesday of the month at the Dennison Building. I took this Commission over in mid-January on an interim basis. Since then I have added to this Commission ten new members. At this point having these ten new members, we now have a quorum. Please understand none of this would have been accomplished if not for the women that I sit with and their support that we have this Commission. I took it over in turmoil. We all work together and we bring our issues today.

At this point I would like to introduce the Commission and who they represent. I'm Nan Lombardi. I have been reappointed by the County Exec Steve Bellone. Sue LeBow also has been reappointed by the County Exec. Arlene Hoffman is Legislator Muratore's Commissioner; Marlene Johnson, Legislator Barraga; Stacy Katz, Legislator Stern; Gina Colletti, Legislator Kennedy; Shirley Coverdale, Legislator Krupski; Sue Friedman, Lou D'Amaro; Mary Reid, Legislator Martinez; Kym Laube, Legislator Schneiderman; Pamela Barr, Rob Calarco; Michelle Kelly, Lindsay; Debbie Virga, Legislator Trotta; Nancy Ellis, Legislator Anker; Diane McGaffney Lori, Legislator Cilmi; Alison Neumann, Legislator Browning. Dr. Wang and Linda {Prodano} are from the Human Rights and were appointed by Rabbi Moss.

We have three openings yet: Legislator Hahn, Legislator Gregory and Legislator Spencer are all working on appointing. We have four active committees at this point working on projects that were put into place before I took over as Chair.

At this point I would like to introduce Arlene Hoffman, who represents Legislator Muratore.

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MS. HOFFMAN:

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Arlene Hoffman and I represent Legislator Muratore. I was given a list by Legislator Muratore's Aide, Lauren Auerbach, on things that -- the four or -- four or five major issues that are affecting people -- women in the Fourth Legislative District. And those are medical/Medicaid insurance coverage, child support and custody issues, utilities being shut off, heat and fuel deliveries and also redemption of property seized by the County for non-payment of taxes.

As Nan mentioned, I am a member of an active committee and I'm very happy to report that on May 28th in conjunction with Legislator Kennedy's office, because their districts kind of, sort of overlap, we are going to be having a Women's Expo at the Centereach Library on Eastwood Boulevard. I'm not sure of the time yet. Tomorrow we have our first planning meeting. I would like to invite everyone, if you can possibly come. Naturally there will be press releases going out telling everyone the times and so forth. We are having a variety of vendors coming, who are going to be dealing solely with women's issues.

No one is going -- this has been in the works for quite awhile. We just kind of put it on hold because we had such bad weather and we didn't want to get everything in place and then have three feet of snow and nobody showed up. So now that the weather is nice, thank God, it is in place. Again, everyone is invited. And I hope all of you can make it. Thank you.

MR. LOMBARDO:

We also have women in our military. It's a committee -- it's a working committee but unfortunately Marlene Johnston and Stacy Katz could not be with us today. But we have with us Legislator Krupski's Commissioner Cheryl Coverdale and Nancy Ellis, who are working on an active committee also.

MS. COVERDALE:

Thank you, Nan. My name is Shirley Coverdale and I represent Legislator Al Krupski. I live in Riverhead. And one of the areas that we were looking at as our Committee, which is three of us, Nancy Ellis, Susan Friedman and myself, is the issues of the elder or senior women in Suffolk County. And we find that there are a number of issues, but I think that you probably don't have time to delve into all of them until -- to talk about those that seem to be most glaring, as we are all part of an aging population, are the issues of Housing, the issues of caregiving and the cost thereof and the accessibility thereto; and also the ability to find a more user-friendly way of ferreting through the maze of information that is out there to find the resources that one needs when faced with this problem.

First of all, there is the -- the fact that the cost of housing and the availability of affordable housing is a real problem for senior women. And there are some pressures on this that make it even worse. One is a decided and entrenched -- long entrenched bias towards single-family housing on Long Island and the dearth of rental housing options for anyone in the population, but it affects senior women perhaps more than it affect others; senior women because of their longevity, they have a longer life span actuarially than men; are more apt to be the single heads of household as they age; and less apt because of disparities in earning power to be able to take care of a home after a spouse dies, if that's what their situation is. But then in order for them to stay on Long Island, they more than likely need a rental apartment as an option. And there just aren't very many rentals. And of those that are available, many people, including people in my community, have received notices from Section Eight Housing that there are pressures on that and that they're going to be expected to increase their share of the burden in terms of their rent. And their rent is already often in excess of 30% of their total income. So there's a real burden as far as the housing is concerned.

This seems to be counterintuitive considering that there's a stated preference for having people age in place in community, which I would agree as a legal guardian for a woman who will be 103 next month, is a better option than putting someone in a nursing home, which I've also dealt with on a

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personal basis. The outcomes are much better in community if the support is there. You can't just say you want someone to age in place in community and not provide the supportive and protective factors that are necessary to make that happen effectively.

And so the second issue is that of access to appropriate and affordable caregiving. And this place is a pressure both on the person being cared for and the person most often providing the care, who is also more often than not a woman. We have seniors taking care of seniors. Just a couple of weeks ago I ran into someone who was telling me about her plight in taking care of her senior aunt who is aging and suffering from dementia. She herself, being a caregiver, was 77 years old. This is not atypical. We are finding that conferences are being given in places like Stony Brook. And they're actively talking about the fact that seniors are taking care of seniors. And most often it is unpaid caregivers.

Even when it is a paid caregiver, such as a Home Health Aide, the working conditions for these people are often less than what I think this group of Legislators would consider appropriate or desirable in that they are typically, if they're a live-in Aide, they're working 24/7. They're only being paid for 12 of those hours and they're typically getting \$10 an hour with no benefits. This affects a lot of immigrant populations, who have language barriers and are intimidated by the system themselves. And they are in this very, very arduous task of taking care of somebody on a day-to-day basis without reasonable conditions. If it's a family member, often that person has -- is -- we call it the sandwich generation. That person has to jockey between taking care of children at home and an aging parent or other loved one. And so caregiving is a very big issue.

And then the third issue, as I said, is a more user-friendly way of accessing all the information that's out there. We went to talk with the Office of the Aging as part of our investigation. And we found that they're doing an admirable job given the resources that they have, but they're absolutely inundated with calls on a day-to-day basis. And in community we find the same thing. People don't know where to find the resources that they need, what to do next, how to go about handling these things until they're hit with a crisis.

In my community, I'm a Pastor's wife. I meet with a lot of these people every day. And fairly recently we had an elderly gentleman himself whose wife had a stroke while taking care of him after emergency surgery. She, of course, was hospitalized. And because he was unavailable to come and advocate or converse with the hospital, they made a very inappropriate placement and sent her home when she should have gone to rehab. She could have, had someone asked him, gone to a rehab that his insurance covered at a zero co-pay to him. Instead they sent her home. Within a week she was back in the ER; and then in a rehab facility in community, which is now -- he's got his hands up wondering how he's going to pay for this.

So these are real problems that you should be aware of. We are more than -- I can't really say happy to try to address them, but, you know, they're big problems. And I just -- I'm not offering any particular solutions now because these are things that we're looking into on an ongoing basis, but, you know, we should all be aware that this is what's happening. And I don't expect it to get better before it gets worse, because there are long standing policies in place in Suffolk and elsewhere on Long Island that are literally chasing our younger people off of the Island. We are losing both young people starting out who can't afford the single-family home and we're losing retirees as well. And so this population is likely not to have a great support system if that continues.

So that's the essence of what I had to say. And sorry it's not better news, but I'm just the messenger.

MS. LOMBARDI:

Thank you, Shirley. Our next speaker is Kym, who will be speaking on the situation with the youth here in Suffolk County.

MS. LAUBE:

So, thank you everybody for the opportunity to come and present today. My name is Kym Laube. I come up here a lot and share with you. Generally my area of expertise obviously is drug and alcohol prevention and treatment needs in Suffolk County. It's awesome to be part of this Women's Commission to make sure that we are taking a look at all of these issues and all things that impact young women and senior women and moms and families and the community as a whole.

In this position, I have been in here just a short six months, and what we found over the last six months is this rebuilding, this new energy getting new folks into the room and really beginning to take off. And having all -- having the quorum and having all of your different Legislative Districts being represented will do -- will allow us to really work to full capacity with our committees and really get some really good work done and some suggestions moving forward.

When it comes to young people, and what's really important for this Commission and for this Legislative body to always have in the forefront of their mind is, you know, who's teaching those young leaders as they grow up? And young people, it's really important for them to feel connected to their communities. That is what we call our protective factor. And on Long Island and in Suffolk County we know that if young people don't see a future in living here and affording to live here, it's very difficult to feel connected here for a real longtime.

And so we heard a lot of talk lately in the news about the natural resource of our waterways. It's on, you know, it's all over the place. And it's really important to look at the natural resource of our youth. And we need to see it as equally important. And although we're not talking about nitrogen and all those other things, there's a lot of threats to our youth out there. And substance abuse happens to be one of the largest ones as we fight this heroin and opiate and substance abuse epidemic we have going on here in Suffolk County.

So the main areas of concern become workforce development and capacity building. And those are things that we need to look forward as a county. In moving forward the Women's Commission and taking the youth at the youth -- in doing some real good work in the youth committee we'll begin to address some of these, analyze some of these things and hopefully begin to come out with some sound recommendations. At minimum what we'll work on doing is really work on some things that are going to help empower young women today as they grow up to be leaders, to be connected, to be strong moms, community members and just general -- general good folks in the community. And you'll begin to see some benefit from that.

Please see the Suffolk County Women's Commission as your partner. You have appointed us and you have empowered us to make recommendations to you. As you see things coming up through your District that you feel could -- we can help partner with you on, please let us know. We are more -- you know, we are ready, willing and able to work -- to work together with you. So thank you for the opportunity.

MS. LOMBARDI:

I'd like to also ask to come up some of the other newbies as I'm calling them who just came aboard our Commission.

MS. BARR:

I'll get it. This is my first time here. And I'm the newbie -- one of the newbies on the Commission. And I want to thank Legislator Calarco for appointing me. I told him at the time that I was not interested in just window dressing commission, that I wanted -- if I were going to be appointed, to actually get into the meat of the work that needs to be done. And I see, since my second meeting that there has been assembled --

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

I am so sorry. I just want to ask you to do one thing. Can you just state your name for the record?

MS. BARR:

My name is Pamela Barr, B-a-r-r.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Sorry. Thank you.

MS. BARR:

Sorry about that. I want to say that we have an awesome Commission that has come to do the work that needs to be done in this County. And I do have -- I was asked to present it -- what was put together by my Legislator and his Legislative Aide and with the input of the Suffolk County Coalition against Domestic Violence. We have a list of that -- can any of that be scanned? Okay. That's for you to look at at another time. I'll just give you one copy. Is that sufficient? Okay. There you go.

I've been taking some notes as I've been listening to my fellow Commission members. And I particularly want to echo what Shirley Coverdale and Kym Laube have mentioned about access to resources. And Kym's comments about "we need your input in this."

I'm a professional librarian. I've been at that for a long time. Information is my business. And I was able to compile the list of concerns that will come up on your screens when it's scanned in because of my professional work and the questions I received and how I know to go about getting information. And you have a problem. With the best will in the world and the best people to do the work, the information's not getting out there. And that's a real problem. And not to put anyone down, but in an age of limited resources, we really do need to think outside that box.

I understand that the County has IT services. We need to tap into them. Because the days of the Office for the Aging producing a handbook like this, which was not even available at the Central Reference Library in Suffolk County, which is the Patchogue-Medford Library, it was last printed June 6th of 2013. We didn't know it was available and so we went ahead, and the library itself produced a document very similar to this August 2013. What a waste of resources. And how many of these have been handed out, how many can we afford to print, to reach women who need this information? We don't have a budget big enough to do that. So we need to have this kind of information linked to the website for the County and for this Commission. And if that can be accomplished, we will be making a change with the way information and services are delivered to the people in this County. And, of course, this Commission is concerned with women in this County and their helpmates, their partners as well, who need this information desperately; and as Shirley and Kym were telling you, aren't being able to access it. So I think that might be the particular niche that I can fit in when I really get going with the Commission.

We've been taking in new members. I'm not on a committee at this time. There is no information committee at this time on the commission, but it might be time to have someone with some expertise. And I am tooting my own horn here. As I say I've been at this a longtime, and it might be wise to have someone who can step back from what's been done and take a look at what is possible.

So if you have any questions, you can reach me through my e-mail, which is Pamkbarr@yahoo.com. And you can also reach me through Legislator Calarco's Office. Thank you.

MS. VIRGA:

My name is Debbie Virga. And I am in -- Legislator Trotta's appointee. I'm very new to this committee and I am quite honored to work with an amazing group of women. I have not been on -- assigned a committee yet, but what I always try to stress is my background coming in -- in the education department. We need to educate people in Suffolk County. And my constituents spoke about issues across the Island, that not only deal in my District or Riverhead or Bellport or Deer Park, all over Suffolk County these are issues. And we all understand that. It's the issues of

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substance abuse for our young people, housing, senior care, the sandwich generation. But if I can throw something back at you, my brain's always working, what if we can somehow or other to get this information, if each Legislator has, let's say, a quarterly meeting with your constituents to say what is happening, what is going on, where is this information, how can we get you this information; and if we break it down -- sometimes when you look at it globally across all of Suffolk County, it's overwhelming. But if you break it down to each different Legislative -- into your district, this might be something that we can work on. So we can hopefully work together; and maybe that this is something that we can come up with that way.

So I thank you very, very much. And I hope to be able to do great things working together. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Thank you:

MS. THIEL:

Good afternoon. I'm Diane Thiel. I am the representative for Legislator McCaffrey. I am one of the newbies as well and was very honored when he had called me to see about representing our area.

My background being in -- still having kids in school starts from PTA. I happen to be currently our Board of Ed President. And one of the community groups that I'm on, there's several, is one of the -- our West Babylon Main Street, which represents bringing an entire community together and actually working with some of the neighboring communities in our Legislative District, to one of my more favorite groups that -- I'm not there this afternoon, my Friends of the Library, which tends to be more of an older population, but they do not like that stereotype, they're getting a lot more younger. So I have a nice broad range of seeing different issues.

I think Legislator McCaffrey and I, we've had several meetings trying to see where we're at as the Women's Advisory. It is definitely regrouping. Nan does an amazing job selling and being part of this. And this is something that every one of these women are very passionate about and want to see that we're able to do things and have, you know, this Commission really stand out.

And so we have very many similar issues. One of the particular issues that Legislator McCaffrey and I spoke about in our area that stood out more was the idea of being able to empower women in the communities with more of a financial planning, more to financial literacy. What happens is when -- especially women, if you're going -- even go in the domestic abuse area to our seniors, many of the women in the households do not have the backgrounds, that many of them have their partner doing the representation of the bills, what's going on with the life insurance, what's going on with the home taxes. And they don't have the ability.

And then when they lose their partner or spouse, they're left in the dark and they don't know what to do. And they're reaching out and, you know, he's found this, and I would definitely concur, that this is a big issue. When there are -- and then when you hear it mirrored in some of the other committees, the domestic violence -- I recently got a call from somebody who can't get out of a situation, the husband controls the financial. What does a woman do for her children and for herself to get herself into a better situation?

So one of the big initiatives that was very important to Legislator McCaffrey was that looking to enable some sort of, you know, service like this for women that would empower them, that would enable them to not be lost, to be able to take care of themselves, to take care of their families and be able to be there, which is really important and what it's about for, you know, helping the woman in our communities and the County.

So that was definitely one of our standout items. And that would be all. I'll share it with the next

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one. Thank you very much for having us here today.

MS. KELLY:

Hello. I'm Michelle Kelly from District 8 with Legislator Lindsay. We are meeting for the first time next week so I will just tell you a little bit about myself and the goals that I have. I am a Bayport-Blue Point resident. I am very active with the youth of the girls in our community. I was a public school teacher for 12 years. I left teaching to follow my dreams and become a -- I was a -- I have a pastry arts degree background. And I left teaching, fantastic field of tenure, to open my own bakery. So it's kind of unique. I have lots of girls that come in from the District and shadow so I can teach them everything I can. I am a strong believer in following your dreams. So if there's anything I can help in any of your districts, I would really love to. I do everything from delivery to stamping the packages to the baking. So I try to teach the girls, you could do anything you put your heart and mind to, so. I'm interested in working with everyone and it's an honor to be on a committee with such strong women. So thanks for having me.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

I hope you can teach me to bake because I don't.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. NEUMANN:

Hi. I'm Alison Neumann. I was appointed by Legislator Browning. Thank you very much; somewhat of a shock. I am a former Trustee for the Village of Bellport, where I live; lived there all my life, all 29 years. Fuzzy math. There were a lot of things that were very important to me. When I was brought onto this Commission, first thought was let's listen instead of opening one's mouth. I wanted to see where everybody else was coming from as far as this Commission was concerned. I have very strong opinions as far as women's issues, particularly from my own experience. I find that many of our females on this Island regardless of their age really lack self confidence and the ability to be an individual thinking for themselves, afraid of making mistakes. Yeah, I'm not afraid of that; make them often enough, but you'll learn from those. And you want to be able to -- and I'll piggyback on what Diane said in terms of empowering, not just our young women, but those that are older.

My mom was a very, very strong woman. She was able to make it through even after the passing of my dad, but we had always known that. She raised my sister and I to be very independent and very strong-willed. That being said, there were other issues that I ran into even though I thought I was very strong; wound up marrying an abusive husband, trying to get out of that situation and then becoming a single mother; going through postpartum by myself, something that unless you have gone through it, you have no idea what we go through, how we feel. We're lost. It doesn't make any difference what resources might be out there. We don't know what to do. We're afraid of admitting that we are suffering from this illness, this depression, but we're -- we don't know what else to do. Who do you reach out to? Sure, we have services -- health services available, but we need to make them more prevalent and more readily available.

Look at the issues that we have seen just recently of poor young women working for a family, giving birth, not knowing what to do, the baby's dead and now she's being held responsible. She is suffering from postpartum so she didn't understand the rationale, what her -- what she did. We need to empower females. And we need to start that at an early age. Diane being in the school and, in fact, the President of her School Board, probably sees that far more than I do. And I think that we need to start gearing our politicians, the people that represent us, to start representing all of us, not just some of us.

I come from an area that has very diverse population. You have Bellport Village, which is -- most people think is wealthy. There are many of us that are actually your average middle income individuals, homeowners. And then you have the other side of the tracks, which is North Bellport. It's sad to see that there is such a difference. It's like going to Puerto Rico and seeing the wealthy

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and the poor. There's nothing in between. We need to stop that -- that appearance, that we're not considering everyone, that we're considering one or the other, but not everybody in between. And you have far more here for everybody in between than you do of the wealthy and the poor.

But we need to be able to provide services for females regardless of their age, whether they need it to start their own business, whether they need it just to be able to see themselves going to college or going into a skill. And we need it for those people who are now middle age. Maybe they want to change what they're doing. I mean myself, I transferred from one position that I held for a long time, retired, only to go into something else. Of course, that was politics. But now I'm jumping ship and I'm going into something else.

We need to be able to provide everybody with the same set of values and your understanding. I'm hoping that with our commission, who I'm very thankful to serve with so many females that blow my mind in terms of their resources and their abilities and what they've experienced in life, but we need your help also. Can't be just one committee here and one committee there. You've got to bring us altogether. And I'm hoping that in time we can do that.

I appreciate Nan in terms of her leadership. I came in absolutely unfocused, not knowing, not quite sure if this was the right thing to do. We have a very strong, well-connected group. I'd like to think that we can connect with you, too. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Thank you. Does that conclude your presentation?

MS. LOMBARDI:

Yes, thank you Legislator Martinez.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Okay, thank you. We do have a couple of questions and comments for you ladies. I hope -- you want to go first? Yeah, Legislator D'Amaro.

LEG. D'AMARO:

I want to start off first by thanking all of you for coming down today and also to all of the members of the Advisory Commission for being willing to serve. And your work does not go unnoticed. I know, as we all work in government, and sometimes you feel like no one's really paying attention or listening to what we have to say, and it gets a little frustrating sometimes. So I can bond with you on that level. And I want to let you know that we are ready, willing and able to listen to what recommendations you do have to make.

There are many, many, many issues and you've touched on so many important ones here today affecting women throughout Suffolk County, young and old, single moms in particular, small children, housing issues, job equality, pay equality; empowering women is a big issue. I agree with sometimes you just don't have the confidence to go out there and try to succeed whether it's in life or a job or anything else because the system beats you down often. And it's very tough.

So there are many, many issues that you can choose to deal with. And I think what you'll find, however, if I could give you a little advice is that you can't, as a commission, although we want to solve every problem, you can't. You don't have the resources or the time, the personnel, the support. We don't even have that here in the Legislature. We have some staff, but we don't have full staff members that support each committee and can work with you directly on various issues.

So the point I'm making is that, and I'm sure you're doing this, is you need to single out particular issues of interest to you that are -- maybe need to be addressed at a particular time. And what I would recommend is that when you do that, and, of course, you're there to make that choice and figure out, you know, where should we put our resources because they're not limitless, you should

think about how can you then come to us as the Legislature and make a recommendation to us that will enable us to maybe even enact some legislation that will have a real impact. And it's always important to raise consciousness and raise awareness. And many of you speak so eloquently about these issues because you really do care, but that's only going to take you so far. And what I would look for, as you go about doing your work, is that ultimately if it could wind up with some recommendations to us, "here's a particular area, maybe it's in county government, maybe it's not, but if you enact a policy or legislation, this is how we would see this as helpful for a particular issue."

So just a little advice sitting on this side as the Legislator and all of us empowered to take those recommendations and try and implement them as policy, I would look forward to working with all of you. So, again, I commend all of you for working hard on that. And every issue is important. I'm not trying to single out any particular issue, but certainly I would encourage you to focus on issues that we can have a real impact in working with you. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

Good afternoon, and thank you to each and every one of you's for volunteering to serve. And I think what's important is, you know, I spoke with Alison about, you know, my district and the needs; however, I think when we really talk about the needs, and just my district, it's really not just my district. It's a Countywide issue. And I agree with Legislator D'Amaro, is that, you know, there are so many issues. And obviously we as moms, and I see probably grandma walked in with your grandson, you know, we do have so many issues here in Suffolk County that women have to deal with, with domestic violence, senior housing.

But what I agree with Legislator D'Amaro is to try and whittle it down. And that's my advice, is to whittle down where do we not have a strong support? And, you know, we do have our Office of the Aging. That should be able to address the issues with seniors and housing and when they're having medical issues. After the closing of the nursing home, there was a Patient Advisory Committee created. And they have been meeting. I don't know if you're even aware of that committee, but this is a committee that I actually went to their first meeting in talking about senior issues. Family members were -- when they're looking for nursing homes, or looking for any kind of care for their family member, whether it be in-home care, nursing home, you know, if they're having health issues, where do we go?

And this Advisory Committee was created for that purpose. Take advantage of it. You know, don't let them just sit there and think there is nothing. You know, if you guys are getting the calls, then you should know where to go in the County and where to direct people. And again you're volunteers. You know, you don't have -- you know, this isn't a 24/7 job. So I think it's a -- it would be unfair to ask you to address everything.

Kym, you do a great job working on, you know, the issues with our kids and drug and alcohol problems. And we have many avenues in Suffolk County and also outside of County Government that is working on that issue. And, again, something I'm very passionate about, the month of May, the coalition -- I was asked to introduce the legislation, make month of May Postpartum Awareness Day. A month, I should say. And to be all honest with you, yes, there's been, you know, a presentation at the Dennison Building about postpartum awareness. Well, who goes? You know, who's there? Personally, I think there should be -- it should be going on the road. And that's an issue. And I can tell you from personal experience also, postpartum depression, these men don't get it. (Laughter) They don't understand what it is. No, you don't.

LEG. GREGORY:

I'm feeling it right now.

(LAUGHTER)

LEG. BROWNING:

But, you know, again, it's -- when I went through it, you know, you don't know what's happening to you. Your husband doesn't know what's happening. And I think that that's something that is not truly recognized. When I read in the paper about incidents that occur, Alison touched on, you know, young women driving into a lake in their car with their children, and, you know, I've read comments in the newspaper when these things happen and the types of comments that come from these people about, well, "hang her" or do whatever, you know, it's horrendous. It's horrendous. It's because they don't know. And there's not enough respect.

And I have to say in Europe, postpartum depression is truly respected, understood and there's a lot of focus on it and paying attention to it.

After a woman gets out of the hospital, she doesn't just go home. For the first six weeks of that baby, there is a home health aide or a nurse that goes to the home every single day, I should say, for the first two weeks; and then every week after that, to check on the baby and to check on mom. And I think that's what's important. And that's something that's not done here. And, you know, they really do have a better understanding and a better respect. And I think, I hate to say it, here it's not understood, it's not respected. And when something does happen -- and when I read about something like that in the paper, and I'll say to my husband, "that was postpartum depression or a postpartum psychosis." And people don't understand that it goes past a year old of the baby.

And I've spoke to my local library. We have a family literacy program. And it's probably the largest here in Suffolk County. We have a lot of immigrant families. And a lot of them are learning to speak English. And I can guarantee you that a lot of them are young, new moms. And maybe because of their status, when they're going through this kind of thing, they don't know where to go. And I think this is something that needs to be taken out to our local libraries, to our School Districts and wherever else we can go and educate moms, have programs in our communities, not just over at the Dennison Building, but take it on the road and invite new moms, grandparents, husbands and offer the program; so that they can understand that when the moms having, you know, the blues, or feeling suicidal after that baby's born, they'll know what it is and they'll know how to handle it. And I have to tell you when I went to the doctor, what he only offered me was drugs. I just had a baby. I'm not taking drugs. I have to take care of that baby.

So, again, you know, it is something that's very near and dear to my heart. The month of May is the awareness month. And I really would love to see this Commission do something more proactive and getting it out there and trying to educate new moms in our communities.

Another issue, we all just maybe read in the paper about the incident in Riverhead with the Police Officer approaching the woman who was breastfeeding. You know, it was like, in this day and age, that was an absolute disgrace. She's sitting in her car. And I think that was -- how it was handled, was highly inappropriate. And, you know, I think that in this day and age, we try to teach our kids -- I mean our Health Department does programs on breastfeeding and talking about the importance and, you know, how much healthier it is and encouraging it; and then something like this happens. So, you know, those are issues that I think there's still not enough respect and understanding for.

And so, again, like Legislator D'Amaro said, try and whittle down what you're doing. Look at Suffolk County Government and say "what do they have here in County Government? And do we have a lot of resources to address that issue? And what issues do we have that women face that are not" -- there's just not enough resources and enough education that I think that need to be focused on.

So, again, thank you. And I'm hoping that -- again, I know I'm going to be working with Alison to try and get -- I've already talked to my library about bringing the issue of postpartum depression.

And I would hope that each and every one of you would do the same. So thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Legislator McCaffrey.

LEG. McCAFFREY:

Thank you. I just want to thank you for your service on this Committee. I know it's -- listening to everyone here speak and everyone's committed on these broad range of issues affecting women out there, and there are many of them; and although I didn't experience postpartum, I did live through it several times. And give us a little credit for surviving that as well, you know.

(LAUGHTER)

But it does give us an awareness about what women go through. And they have a different challenge than the men do; just as myself and Diane talked about, one of the things was financial literacy, I mean, just empowering those women and, you know, I have a daughter myself, a young woman who's moving forward in her career. And I'd like to think that she's got the same opportunities that a man does as well. And so you're doing good -- great work out there. I just ask don't get frustrated. There's -- sometimes you want to do all these things and you want to see results. And come to some of our legislative meetings and see how difficult it is sometimes to convince 18 people to be on the right side or the same side of the issue. And so all I ask don't get frustrated. All great work that you're doing. So, once again, thank you for everything you're doing and we all look forward to working with you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

Thank you, Legislator. And again thank you for coming here today. I know I sat with you all at one meeting. And you have so many great ideas and so many great initiatives, but I can't emphasize, just as my colleagues have, just minimize it to a few goals for the year so you can definitely execute them and you execute them correctly. And you have my support, as I've told you in the past. And you can see the commitment by Miss Mary Reid coming in with her grandson. She's the one who I appointed as committee member for this Commission. And she had to go pick up her grandson, but she came back. So you can see the commitment that all these ladies have. And I look forward to working with every single one of you and thank you for coming. And I wish you a great week. So thank you.

MS. LOMBARDI:

Thank you for having us. Thank you.

CHAIRWOMAN MARTINEZ:

And just to continue with the agenda, there are no Tabled Resolutions, no Introductory Resolutions so this meeting is now adjourned.

**THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 3:36 PM
{ } DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY**