

LABOR, HOUSING & CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE
MINUTES

A regular meeting of the Labor, Housing & Consumer Protection 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 June 2, 2011.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Leg. Jon Cooper, Chairman
Leg. Kate M. Browning, Vice Chair
Leg. Thomas Cilmi
Leg. Jack Eddington
Leg. DuWayne Gregory

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Sarah Simpson, Assistant Counsel
Alicia Howard, Legislative Aide
Laura Halloran, Budget Review Office
Paul Perillie, Aide to Majority Leader
Charles Gardner, Director of Government Affairs
Ali Nazir, Aide to Leg. Kennedy
Mark A. Gatz
Lora Gellerstein, Aide to Leg. Cooper
Denis Browning, County Attorney's Office
And all other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Flesher, Court Stenographer

THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:08 PM

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you to the June 2nd meeting of the Labor, Housing and Consumer Protection Committee. Legislator Eddington, if you can lead us in the pledge, please.

SALUTATION

Thank you very much. Before we get to the agenda, we have one speaker's card that was filled out. Mr. Mark Gatz, if you could please come up and identify yourself for the record.

MR. GATZ:

My name is Mark Gatz. I live in Hampton Bays, New York, out east.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Hello, Mark.

MR. GATZ:

This is in reference to a letter that I wrote to this Committee on April 26, 2011. It was addressed to Legislator Cooper at 50 Gerard Street. And unfortunately when I went there you had a fire so I was instructed to come here to deliver it to you.

The contents of the box contained many documents, letters that I wrote to County Executive Levy, letters that I wrote to the Suffolk County Police Department. And it also contained approximately 600 names of people that I've been collecting for the past 14 years who feel that they were cheated or ripped off by Otis Ford, a car dealership out east in Quogue, New York.

In regards to this letter, as I reported it to County Executive Levy, there was no action by Mr. Levy. As I reported it to the Suffolk County Police Department, there was no action by the Police Department, who I get a firm sense that they do regular business with Otis Ford. Included in that box were 30 pictures of Suffolk County Police cars that I took that were being repaired at Otis Ford.

So my questions to the Committee: Was the Suffolk County Police Department ripped off by Otis Ford on its repairs to its police cars? My second question is: Were the Suffolk County taxpayers who pay for those repairs also ripped off by Otis Ford? And to date I have not yet received any correspondence from this Committee either via e-mail, letter or phone call.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Mr. Gatz, I think I have some good news. We were able to retrieve the box, the documents from my district office; my old district office. So it's now in our possession. We're going to make copies of it and we will distribute that to all the members of this Committee at the General Legislative Meeting, which is next Tuesday. And you will hear back from my office.

MR. GATZ:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Thank you for coming down.

LEG. CILMI:

Can I ask a question?

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Sure.

LEG. CILMI:

If you could just briefly summarize what's the nature of your -- what do you think Otis Ford did? Is your complaint specifically with regard to Otis Ford ripping off the taxpayers and the County? Or is it some -- also some private issue?

MR. GATZ:

My feeling is that -- that there's Suffolk County Police cars that are being repaired at this car dealership.

LEG. CILMI:

So it's a public -- your issues are of a public concern, not a private, personal concern. That's really my question.

MR. GATZ:

The other part to that would be that, as a person of Suffolk County, I contacted -- did my part contacted the Suffolk County Police Department. And letters that I sent to them were returned.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MR. GATZ:

And un-acted upon.

LEG. CILMI:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Thank you, again.

MR. GATZ:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Legislator Gregory has a question. Mr. Gatz.

LEG. GREGORY:

Yes, thank you, Mr. Gatz.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Gatz.

MR. GATZ:

Gatz.

LEG. GREGORY:

I'm sorry.

MR. GATZ:

Thank you.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you for coming here today. I heard that you're concerned about Suffolk County vehicles being repaired at this Otis Ford.

MR. GATZ:

Otis Ford, Inc. They're located on Montauk Highway in Quogue, New York.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. My question is what is your relationship with this company or what has your experience been, where you're saying -- for them being used -- or repaired at this place doesn't automatically mean that the repairs are being performed unsatisfactorily. What is the nature of your complaint and how did you come about that conclusion?

MR. GATZ:

Well, I have a website. It's www.Otisfordsucks.com. And I've been collecting names of people who contacted me through this website approximately for fourteen years. And in that list that I hand-delivered here to this Committee, there were over 600 names of complaints; included age, gender, racial discrimination, state, federal civil rights violations and odometer fraud at the same dealer.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Now, that was in response to your website. What initiated you to institute a website?

MR. GATZ:

Just to inform the public; do my part, as I can. I'm the little guy trying to help out the little guy. So now I need a bigger guy to help out the little guy.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

But I believe Legislator Gregory's -- what he was alluding to was you must have had some personal experience initially with Otis Ford which led you to set up the website?

MR. GATZ:

I had a bad experience at the dealer, yes.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

All right. I think that much of this will become evident when we have a chance to review the documentation that you provided. And, again, we'll be distributing copies on Tuesday to all the Committee members.

MR. GATZ:

Okay. I just want to reiterate that the letter that I delivered to this Committee was dated April 26 of 2011. And I have not yet received a correspondence.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

And where was that letter mailed?

MR. GATZ:

That was hand-delivered to the lobby here (indicating).

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

I don't believe I have received a copy. I don't think anyone here -- if you have another copy of that, if you can get that to my office and I'll make sure that that's distributed as well.

MR. GATZ:

Well, if you're not aware of it, then that's not good news because I personally delivered it here on that day approximately 1:45 after I was instructed to come here.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

I actually do -- well, let's see. I have a letter with two questions. I have a letter dated April 26 and there is a note that it was to be distributed to members of this Committee.

MR. GATZ:

Yes, that's correct, Legislator Cooper. It reads: "Dear Legislator Cooper and all committee members."

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

It's a very brief letter. Would you like to read the rest into the record?

MR. GATZ:

Pretty much I did. It was addressed -- it says "massive fraud at Otis Ford, Inc hand-delivered at one PM" but the one PM time was incorrect because I was at your 50 Gerard Street in Huntington. I was instructed to come here because you had a fire. So from Huntington to here took about forty minutes so I hand-delivered it here approximately 1:40 PM on April 26, 2011. I think it was in the priority mailbox, the big giant box.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Well, again, just for the record, as I said it's very brief. You wrote: "I am one person trying to make a difference. Facts as reported to Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy, no action. If not, why not? As reported to Suffolk County Police Department, no action. If not, why not? Questions: Was Suffolk County Police Department ripped off by Otis Ford, Incorporated on repairs to its police cars." And second question "were Suffolk County taxpayers who paid for these repairs also ripped off by Otis Ford? Please help. Thank you." So again --

MR. GATZ:

Yes, that's correct.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

-- we will review all the documentation. And my office will get back in touch with you.

MR. GATZ:

Okay. Lastly I'd like to say, I think my intention for being here today is maybe you would consider a full fledge audit of Otis Ford and Suffolk County Police Department if cars get their repair there.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

All right. Mr. Gatz, thank you very much for coming down.

MR. GATZ:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

There being no further speakers, we can move onto the agenda.

TABLED RESOLUTIONS

First up tabled resolutions, **IR 1222-2011, A Local Law to sunset living wage subsidies (Cilmi).**

LEG. CILMI:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

I'll make a motion to table. Is there a second?

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

We have a second on the tabling motion. All those in favor? Opposed? **IR 1222 is tabled.**
(VOTE: 5-0)

IR 1255, Designating individual agents of the Suffolk County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals as volunteers of the County of Suffolk for the purposes of indemnification. (Cooper). I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

All those in favor? **IR 1255 is tabled. (VOTE: 5-0)**

IR 1465-2011, Adopting Local Law No.2011, A Local Law to ensure safe backflow testing in Suffolk County. (Cooper) That needs to be tabled for a public hearing so I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

CHAIRMAN COOPER:

Second. All those in favor? Opposed? **IR 1465 is tabled. (VOTE: 5-0)**

And that's it. So if no one else would like to address this Committee, I make a motion to adjourn.
Second. Thanks very much. Have a nice day.

THE MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:18 PM
{ }DENOTES SPELLED PHONETICALLY