

**PARKS, SPORTS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
of the
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Parks, Sports & Cultural Affairs 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, Smithtown, New York, on **March 6, 2003**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Ginny Fields - Chairperson
Legislator Cameron Alden
Legislator Angie Carpenter
Legislator Lynne Nowick

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Legislator Jon Cooper - Excused Absence
Legislator Brian Foley

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Sabatino, II - Counsel to the Legislature
Mary Skiber - Aide to Legislator Fields
Alexandra B. Sullivan - Chief Deputy Clerk, Suffolk County Legislature
Judith Gordon - Commissioner of Parks Department
Fred Pollert - Director, Budget Review Office
Sean Clancy - Budget Review Office
Lance Reinheimer - Budget Review Office
Nicole DeAngelo - County Executive's Office
Greg Lauri - Parks Department
Stephen Raptoulis - Parks Department
Lauretta Fischer - Suffolk County Planning Department
Lance Mallamo - Vanderbilt Museum
Steven Gittelman - Vanderbilt Museum
Michael Iadevair - Vanderbilt Museum
Ming Liu Parson - Suffolk County District Attorney's Office
Stephanie Galteri - Suffolk County Attorney
Steve Malo - Sr. Vice President, Fleet Management Services
Joe DeLorenzo - Suffolk Campers
Skip Armstrong - Suffolk Committee for Camping
Darell Miron - LIRV.Com
Denise A. Miron - LIRV.Com
Paul Red Cloud-Owen - President, Double Fives Camp Club
Kira Fagan - Camp Coleman
Lori Koob - Camp Coleman
All other interested parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Ana Grande - Court Stenographer
Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

TRANSCRIBED BY:

Eileen Schmidt

(THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 1:10 P.M.)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I'd like to begin the Parks Committee meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Alden.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We have quite a few things on the agenda today, but because of the weather, I'm going to try to move us as quickly as I possibly can and I think everyone would agree that that would be the choice. Let's begin with Parks Recreation and Conservation budget reduction of services closing of Suffolk County Parks and Commissioner Gordon, could you come on up? If anyone would like to address the Committee, you can fill out a yellow card and we will hear what you have to say.

Go ahead, Judy.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

In terms of the situation with the park closings, I would just like to preface any remarks I have and then I'm sure you will have questions saying that we're not, this is not something that we wanted to do, I don't think it's something that any Park Commissioner be it myself or anybody else sitting in the chair would ever want to do. Somebody, a member of the media asked me a question yesterday, don't you think that maybe the timing of this is wrong? And I said well, actually I don't think there's ever any good time to do something like this. So I just wanted to preface my remarks by saying that we understand that Suffolk County parks are there for use by the public, we promote that every opportunity we have and we're not at all pleased with the situation the way it is. Having said that, I also have a responsibility when I came before this body in August of last year I made a commitment to you, one of my commitments to you was that we would have safe, clean park facilities for the public. And sitting here today with the staffing that we have in the department today, I can't make that commitment that we will have safe, clean park facilities. In particular, we've got two large parks out on the east end, Theodore Roosevelt County Park in Montauk and Cedar Point County Park in East Hampton. At Montauk we've got capacity for up to two hundred outer beach campers on the beach during that camping season. At Cedar Point County Park we've got up to a hundred and ninety camp sites. At both of those facilities today, I have two full-time employees. If one of the employees gets sick, I don't know what I would do. It might be a choice that myself and the deputy commissioner parks our self out

there and I don't think that that would be a good situation. The retirements that we experienced last year had an effect on us, obviously. The parks supervisor at Montauk was one of the retirements, we lost another, we lost a position at Cedar Point County Park to a retirement and we had several resignations/terminations that occurred last year also. And I know as a part of the retirement incentive that was offered last year, there was a cost savings attached to it and with the hiring freeze that we're under right now, I can't replace those staff. The way we looked at the situation, it didn't, it was not, the choice was not to close either one of those facilities where we are short staffed because of the size of those facilities. We also looked at where parks are and we zeroed in on Sears Bellows unfortunately in Hampton Bays, because by closing Sears Bellows, we could lock the gate, we would have control over the use of the site by closing that facility we could divert staff out to other parks. However, the staff that's at Sears Bellows now, would not necessarily be enough to cover that. And we didn't want to necessarily, we are trying to spread this around the negative impacts on this we don't want to just hit a certain area. We also looked at Lake Ronkonkoma and we made the decision to close Lake Ronkonkoma also because we felt we could lock the gate and control that situation and move the staff out to other locations. And everybody keeps asking me how much are you going to save by doing this and my response is it's really not a matter of savings, it's not having the staff. There's one other point to consider also, and I don't know whether any of you are aware of this, but chronically in the Parks Department, we have over spent in our overtime budget and we've also overspent in your seasonal budget that the temporary and seasonal people we hire throughout the year.

And generally what has happened in the past is we'll get to a point during the summer season when we realize that we are going to over spend and we go back to the Budget Office and it's always been looked at well if it's a matter of hiring staff, hiring more staff or putting additional monies into those two pots, it's always, you know they've been able to find additional money to replenish those, both the overtime budget and the seasonal hiring budget. And we don't have that this year. So, we are faced with the situation where we've chronically overspent and now this year we have to live within those guidelines, so it's kind of like a double whammy. So I can't sit here and necessarily say we'd be saving a whole heck of a lot of money. Certainly when you close a park facility, you know one of the big savings that we would have is there would be little, very little garbage pick up, so we maybe saving in the, in terms of that expense.

Also on the revenue side, at both, at Sears Bellows last year we took in about four thousand dollars in parking fees, parking use fees and at Lake Ronkonkoma we took in about thirty-one hundred. We probably will lose those. To

some extent people may go to other facilities, but I don't know that.

In terms of the camping revenue that we took in at Sears Bellows, that was in 2002 that was approximately forty-nine thousand and that, we don't think we'll lose that completely because we think if people want to camp they would go to another camping facilities and Indian Island in Riverhead is not that far from Sears Bellows, so that could be a likely place, although they might choose to go out further east also. Does anybody have any questions of me?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I think before we actually ask you the questions, we didn't get the card until after I asked you to come up, but there is one person and I think he probably has something to say about this. Skip Armstrong. So maybe you could come up, Skip, to the podium and just address us and then we'll ask our questions to the Commissioner.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Good afternoon, Madam Chairperson and distinguished Legislators. My name is Skip Armstrong, I am the president of the Suffolk Committee for Camping. The Suffolk Committee for Camping was formed back in 1992 to act as a liaison between the campers of Suffolk County and the Suffolk County Parks Department. We presently have a membership of over four thousand members. Since our inception we have worked very closely with the Parks Department on a number of projects and issues most importantly to promote family camping in Suffolk County. I come before you today to discuss the recent cut backs in park closings that are happening here in Suffolk County. While we understand these cut backs are strictly for safety reasons and we agree with that, I would not want to camp at Cedar Point knowing that there is only a staff of two full-time people on a holiday weekend. But our concern is the future of the Suffolk County parks. Staffing needs to be brought back to at least past levels so we can camp safely. This past year has probably been a year where we saw attendance levels broken at all parks. Suffolk County RV dealers sales have skyrocketed twenty-two to thirty percent for each dealer, that's a lots of additional sales tax monies, but more importantly, the money that the campers spend in the local communities when they are camping whether it's just to go out to eat, visit local stores, shopping centers, factory outlets or visit the many attraction that's we have here in Suffolk County such as the wineries, Splish Splash and Atlantis Aquarium, Suffolk County campers do spend a lot of money on local tourism. We would hate to see Suffolk County campers leave Long Island to camp, purchase their rigs elsewhere or visit a favorite tourism place somewhere else besides Suffolk County. We the campers of Suffolk County urge you to be innovative and creative and explore other ways to fund our parks. Ways such as possibly putting back the sales tax on clothing at times, leasing rights to install cell phone towers on County property and I am sure that there are many other ways to fund our prestigious park

system. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. Legislator Alden. Skip, can you come back, Legislator Carpenter, has a question directed at you, for you.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Yes, ma'am?

LEG. CARPENTER:

The statistic you quoted, twenty-two to thirty percent increase in the sale of RV's?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. CARPENTER:

From the dealers on Long Island?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

In Suffolk County.

LEG. CARPENTER:

How many dealers are there?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I bet you there's twelve or thirteen.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Okay.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

There's only one in Nassau County, everyone else is here in Suffolk County.

LEG. CARPENTER:

That's an incredible statistic, really.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

They had a great year. And I think a lot of it was because of September 11th, people didn't want to leave the island.

LEG. CARPENTER:

You're absolutely right, you're absolutely right. One other thing, in your experience chairing the Committee, do you find that in the past there have been times not just on holidays, but other times during the camping season that people could not get in to the, the camp sites in our parks were we over subscribed?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I, I've been to campgrounds on holiday weekends in particular where the full sign is out on a Wednesday or a Thursday.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Okay.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

On a three day holiday weekend.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Okay.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

And that's been that way for the last couple of years that I've witnessed.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Do you know that if during non-holiday times that's been the case.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

At times yes. Cedar Point Smith point that's a constant, that's a tough one to get into.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Okay. Thank you.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Okay.

LEG. ALDEN:

I had a couple of questions if you stay up. Are you part of the committee that actually is the liaison with our Parks Department.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. ALDEN:

So prior to these closings, the announcement of these closings, what was the input from your committee?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Prior to -- well, everything seemed to be going pretty well. We were happy with the increased attendance, family camping coming back to Suffolk County, it disappeared for a number of years, campgrounds weren't at full. And over the last eight or ten years, camping, family camping has come back to Suffolk County.

LEG. ALDEN:

Specifically when you were told that these closures were going to be made.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. ALDEN:

Did you look at park attendance and the appropriateness of closing these facilities as opposed to other ones and whether we can move campers over to a certain facility and accommodate as many as possible under this circumstance?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I didn't have input into that. Although I can't disagree with the closings the parks that they suggested to close for safety reasons.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. So basically you're saying that you do agree with the ones that have been selected and that the other parks that we're going to keep open can probably handle most of the flow?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Well, you know, staffing levels are very low right now as I'm sure everybody knows and if the attendance is there again, I hope they can keep up with it.

LEG. ALDEN:

At the existing facilities.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. But the Commissioner just testified that she's going to transfer some personnel from the closed parks to the ones that we're going to keep open, so that should eliminate any need for, you know, added security or something like that being purchased which we're not going to be able to do this year though.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I understand that. Sears Bellows is a very popular campground. I'm sure everybody has their favorite campground and if you turn people off, they're going to leave, they're going to go back Upstate, they're going to go to Pennsylvania, they might go to Jersey, they're going to get mad and just go. They might not, you know, Sears Bellows was their place and would they go to Indian Island, I don't know.

LEG. ALDEN:

Some of them might, some of them, okay thanks.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

You have to fill out a card. Why don't you come up and give us your name?

LEG. CARPENTER:

In the meantime I have a question for the Commissioner. How many camp sites are there at Sears Bellows?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I believe we have forty. Forty camp sites and I believe room for thirty tent sites.

LEG. CARPENTER:

And is there electric at Sears Bellows?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Are there waiting lists for camp sites?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, we -- generally people can reserve camp sites a hundred and eighty days prior for using it and generally we sell out say a site like, a spot like Smith Point will sell out definitely for the holiday weekends. Well, for the holiday weeks generally we do sell out. So, in terms of a waiting list for that, yes, there are.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

If there are, if there are waiting lists and you close the site, then how on earth can they move from one site to another.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, it's not every, we're not filled up to capacity every camp ground all the time, it's the more popular campgrounds like Cedar Point is a very popular campground, Smith Point is a very popular campground. And generally when we do sell out, it could be on the holiday weekends, but I do not believe that all of our camp sites are filled for those holiday periods.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Alden?

LEG. ALDEN:

We have an analysis of the closings or the savings from closings of parks from Budget Review and I have just a couple of questions on when

you decided to close certain parks, you took in the revenue, you took into consideration the revenue that was generated from those parks.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

And your analysis shows that that revenue wouldn't support overtime to keep the park open or is it just strictly a safety point of view?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, my problem as I said, Legislator Alden, is we chronically over spend in two specific areas, both overtime and seasonal and it's really to handle the responsibility that we have for the summer season, for the most part. And when we have in the past, we've gotten an infusion of money to fill that gap. I, I'm told that that, there is no additional money to support that. So again as a manager, I have to look at the situation realistically and manage appropriately, I mean, I think that that's the charge that I've been charged to do.

LEG. ALDEN:

Didn't you say it was a monetary target, what was your target for savings then, how much?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Again, it's not, I'm not hanging my hat on the savings, I'm hanging my hat on the fact that I don't have enough employees.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Weren't you told by the County Executive you had to make a ten percent cut.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So wasn't your cut based on that?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No. I lost these employees in 2002. We knew last year that, you know, we knew last year that we were going to have a serious problem in '03 if we were not able to replace these employees.

LEG. ALDEN:

Is there a ten percent cut coming on top of this then?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

There is a ten percent cut in our discretionary spending, which is the non-personnel accounts. The eleven hundred accounts in the budget are

employees, temporary employees, overtime, those were not, those were not cut by ten percent, it was the discretionary spending that was cut by ten percent.

LEG. ALDEN:
Discretionary would be.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
All of our other expenses.

LEG. ALDEN:
Supplies, equipment things like that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Exactly.

LEG. ALDEN:
Non personnel costs.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Yes, yes. And we can, am I going to sit here and tell you that we would operate the way we did in 2002? If I were given additional staff that brought us to a comfort level that we felt that we could reopen the two places that we've closed, we still may need to cut back a day or two a week across the board in order to stay within our budget, but I think that may be more palatable to people than closing completely. But I can't do that without the additional staff.

LEG. ALDEN:
Most of this is triggered by you said, early retirements?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
It was combination of early retirements and terminations and resignations last year.

LEG. ALDEN:
When did those take place as far as when would we have known that we had X number of positions that --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
That took place probably, well, it took place a good part of the year, but I would say probably from August to December.

LEG. ALDEN:
Because I just feel as one Legislator, I would've appreciated that information when we were going through the budget process or even at the end of the year.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Well, when we went through the budget process I wasn't told that I

couldn't replace people. Well, we couldn't.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's early retirement though you can't replace people.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes. But in terms of the additional employees, I mean I didn't know last year that we wouldn't be able to replace them.

LEG. ALDEN:

So when were you told that you couldn't replace them?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

As of January.

LEG. ALDEN:

And that's by the County Executive?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

There was a hiring freeze put on, put in place.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Do you have authorization to hire anyone?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We have one of the criteria was if we could make a case for saving in Overtime there's another issue here is last year you may have remembered that the park police, my predecessor and a committee came before you to appeal about the low pay of the park police. Well, the park police happily got a two grade increase last year I think in August, I think it was the latter part of August that that came Through. And when we were preparing, when the Operating Budget for 2003 was prepared, we didn't factor that in and we are short staffed with park police and so now the park police are, we are eating up our overtime a little bit more because of the up stepping of the park police. But what we have done is a appealed to the Budget Office indicating that if we could hire additional park police staff, it would save us in that overtime, that there would be a real savings and we just got, we're hoping that we may be able to put '03 very shortly if we can reach people on the exiting list.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So if you can make a case that you can save money by hiring more park police, you have authorization to hire?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, we have to, you know, in each circumstance we have to make a case for it and then, you know, then it's determined based on that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

But it would be very simple to make that case.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes and we have, with the park police we have.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So it's possible that your park closings won't happen?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No, that's park police. The park police don't operate the campgrounds. I still don't have bodies for the campgrounds.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. So when the early retirement came and the positions were gone, did you plan at that point to replace any of those people when you knew they were going to retire?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, that -- I think we were, we probably were able to reduce, we were able to replace at a lower level and in some circumstances we made a case to do that, but I'm down more staff than that with the additional resignations and terminations that occurred.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Did you try to hire new people after the retirement happened? I mean did you put out a call to replace those positions at a lesser salary?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, I believe we did. I believe we did request that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So they if you had authorization to do that then --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We requested I didn't say that we had authorization.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Because it was, maybe someone else can help me out on this, it was my understanding that if you, if someone retired and you were in the process of replacing them, you could continue that hiring, does anyone else know anything about that?

LEG. ALDEN:

Yeah except that I think the total freeze took precedent over that policy.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. Legislator Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

Commissioner, I'm just trying to, I'm just trying to think of ways it seems to me like this Sears Bellows is a park that they want, everybody wants open because of the revenue and because of the camping. When you say you have two people in every park or --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, both Theodore Roosevelt County Park and Montauk and Cedar Point in East Hampton.

LEG. NOWICK:

What are their titles, they're not the park rangers, right?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No. It's at Montauk we have a parks supervisor two and an AEO, an automotive equipment operator. At Cedar Point we have a parks supervisor two and an automotive equipment operator.

LEG. NOWICK:

Okay. Now when this gentleman talks about safety and you talk about safety, these two people, how does that make the park an automotive equipment operator, that's not for safety or what does he do.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

These people are responsible for the operation of those park facilities.

LEG. NOWICK:

Of the park facilities.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Which entails camping, hunting, hiking.

LEG. NOWICK:

You know what I'm trying to figure out I'm wondering I'm trying to figure out ways to reopen the Sears Bellows, because it seems like that's the major problem and maybe I'm barking up the wrong tree, is there any way that you would have any authority to fill in other positions with seasonals and part-timers, which are much less expensive because --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

They are.

LEG. NOWICK:

And move other people into this position of safety.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

The problem that we have especially on the East End, because we don't

pay very much for what, they are, it is labor that comes in much less expensive, but we've got a lot of competition. We don't pay very much per hour for our, in our seasonal titles.

LEG. NOWICK:
What do we pay?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
I think the most we pay is nine dollars and that's after you've been with us for a couple of years. We start at seven dollars per hour. But in terms specifically on the East End I'm with the department almost seven years now and my entire seven years we've always had a problem finding employees on the East End, because of the competition that we have out there. The municipalities out there pay more than we do, the restaurants pay more, there's a lot of competition and it's very difficult for us to find seasonal employees. It's very typical, I've worked in other park operations where it's very typical that a lot of what you do you do with seasonal help and a lot of what we do we do with seasonal help too. We have, if you look specifically at our park operations, now that's excluding our maintenance people, excluding our park police, excludes our administrative staff, we have thirty-five people in our park operations. They are supplemented by a staff of over three hundred that we hire in the summertime in seasonal operations. It's not a lot of people. It's not a lot of people for what we do. And when I, you know, when I've been going through this exercise in terms of determining where we close and preparing information for this body for the media, etcetera, and I look at it on paper and I said, my God, how do we do what we do.

LEG. NOWICK:
Right. No, I understand closings and why you have to close.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
I'm sure you understand.

LEG. NOWICK:
And everybody has to sharpen their pencil, but it just seems like from what I'm hearing this Sears Bellows seems to be the one that we're targeting.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
And I have to agree with Mr. Armstrong, there's probably people out there who that's their favorite place and we could lose them.

LEG. NOWICK:
And you say there's like forty-nine thousand dollars worth of revenue.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
We took in forty-nine thousand there.

LEG. NOWICK:

So I'm just wondering if there's any way.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Can I just interrupt? I'm going to burst.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

If we had more staff we could open.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

A while ago I found out, and maybe Fred can jump in on this, that we -- that there was a County Executive resolution to place cell towers on County properties and that there would be a potential of let's say putting a cell tower on the Dennison building and getting maybe five vendors and they would do the work free of charge, we wouldn't pay for it. So let's say the cell towers on Dennison and Verizon and MCI and Sprint and two others, five vendors hook on to that tower. They pay the County a rental of thirty thousand dollars a month times five, 150 thousand dollars per month per site. Cashin Associates did a -- filled an RFP, got the contract, went out and looked at site selection and so forth recommended to a committee something like twenty-eight or twenty-four sites. The Committee took eight or ten of those sites and put it on Eric Kopp's desk to say go ahead, negotiate, let's get the revenue. It's not a one shot revenue, it's an ongoing revenue, we don't have to do anything for it and just in the January and February since it was other Eric Kopp's desk it would be enough money to replace what you're losing and you would not have to close the parks. And, Fred, I'm correct on this?

MR. POLLERT:

The last time that we had updated the information for you, the Cashin Associates and the Committee had signed off on eye group of sites. They were forwarded to the County Executive's Office. Those sites at the time I had updated I think about two weeks ago had not yet forwarded it to the Law Department so they can begin the negotiations. It's not just those sites but there's a variety of other things that can be done as well. The Committee also found that companies like AT&T have a way of embedding a cell phone antenna inside of flag poles so that you can put them in front of municipal buildings and get the revenues out of those as well, to the best of my knowledge that hasn't moved forward yet. I don't know quiet what the hold ups are.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I'm sorry for interrupting both of you, but that's driving me nuts, because for a revenue that will be recurring to make enough money to allow the Suffolk County taxpayer to utilize the property that we take their money to buy and preserve and put in parks and then turnaround and say, no, you can't use it even though you paid for it and continue to pay for it and then have something sitting on the County Executive's desk for now three months, because I found out about it

last month, to me is very puzzling at best. I'm going to continue to speak out loudly about this. I don't want the parks closed and I don't think there's anyone that wants the parks closed. I don't think you want them closed, but I think that we have to do something to get them reopened and if it means putting dynamite under someone and saying get going and do your job and let's get this job done and do the right thing for the taxpayers, then that's what we have to do, but I think maybe if you didn't know about the cell tower thing, maybe you can reach out to your colleagues on the 12th floor and ask --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I can't necessarily comment on it Legislator Fields, but if, if this income is coming from the Dennison Building or another County municipal property, you know, somebody would have to determine that that, that income should be deferred to the Parks Department. I don't know how that would happen.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I'm sorry, go ahead, Lynne, and then Legislator Carpenter and then Legislator Alden

LEG. NOWICK:

The revenue thought I just had another thought and maybe since I'm new here maybe this has already been, is there any chance in order to get enough money to open up a park like Sears Bellows, we could do almost an advertisement kind of thing with all of these SUV places, maybe say you want to advertise in front of the park a thousand dollars a year, we've got twelve SUV places that's twelve thousand for one park, I don't know is there anything like that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We've had thoughts like that Legislator Nowick, we have had thoughts.

LEG. NOWICK:

Maybe we can just get at least this one park open.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

That I think it's unrealistic to think we can get anything like that in place for this season but we are having that conversation for future and at a point in time that will come back.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

That's under our alternative parks funding meetings that we've been having for maybe six months and that is part of the taking the funding out of the General Fund for parks and putting it into a district or an authority and then using other revenues just to pay for parks support.

LEG. NOWICK:

Is that an alternative meeting?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Alternatives park funding is the idea behind it.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We have a meeting tomorrow at nine o'clock if you'd like to join us.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

It was a bill that we passed, I think you probably voted for it.

Alternative parks funding meetings.

LEG. NOWICK:

Every Friday.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Not every Friday, but I will reach out to your office and give you the dates. Legislator Carpenter.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Commissioner, when the decision was made to close Sears Bellows, I'm sure a lot of thought went into it. My question to you is there any way to revisit it to at least look at the feasibility of opening the park to the campers on the weekends and during the holiday weeks when you know you've almost got a guarantee that you're going to sell the spots?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

The problem, Legislator Carpenter, is I don't have the staff to put there and everywhere else. That's the problem. If I had the bodies, you know, if somebody said to me tomorrow, Monday, okay, go ahead and you know hire these additional people, then we could do it, we could definitely do it. I can't do it with the staffing that we've got now not even for just a weekend or a week out of the year. Because I need them, you know, I need them in three places.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Is it practical or realistic to think that perhaps you can alternate weekends between Sears Bellows and --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I think that might be too confusing for the public.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Because I mean Skip made a very good point, that once you close Sears Bellows for the season to those that really prefer that park, you may lose them not just for the season, but for the future, because they may wind up you know finding another park that now becomes their favorite park. I just, I can't believe that there isn't a way to move people around to perhaps look at innovative ways of trying to come up with some people and perhaps supplement the staff with the seasonals and maybe even try something innovative like camping rangers, where

you'd get members the Suffolk Committee on camping who might be willing to supplement the staffing that you have, because they're there any way.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I would in terms of utilizing any kind of volunteers for, you know, twenty-four seven operation would make me very nervous, and I think would make the rest of the staff nervous and I think the park police would look at me like I had twelve heads. I think it would, I think that that would not be a safe situation.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Well, I'm not talking twenty-four seven use of volunteers by any means, but what I am suggesting to you, because I haven't thought it through, what I am suggesting to you is that we need to find ways, we can't come up with reasons for why we can't, we need to look for ways to say we can and the parks are a very precious commodity for the taxpayers.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Absolutely.

LEG. CARPENTER:

In this County.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's the quality of life in Suffolk County.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Absolutely. So, for the burden to fall on the Parks Department to address any shortfalls is very short-sighted in my mind and we have got to find a way to make this work. And, you know, from this Legislators perspective, I will do anything I can see to see that we do do that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

I just have a couple of quick questions. What's the overall Park budget?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Eleven million five hundred thousand.

LEG. ALDEN:

What are revenues from golf operations and camping fees and parking fees?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's approaching eight million.

LEG. ALDEN:

So it's a three million dollar net cost to the County.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes. Approximately, I'm probably off a little bit.

LEG. ALDEN:

I know.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Three or four million probably.

LEG. ALDEN:

What's the biggest non-producing asset that we have in the Parks Department.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

The biggest non-producing.

LEG. ALDEN:

Yes. Because basically if you have a campground you're going to have to fees generated there, if you have a beach you're going to have some fees.

A golf course has fees. Is there some huge portion of the Parks Department that doesn't generate fees and actually costs us money?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, all of the land that we have that we have to maintain and make sure people aren't dumping on and there's no illegal ATV use and etcetera.

LEG. ALDEN:

Right. So we don't charge people to go on to those properties, but yet.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No. But they're not improved either.

LEG. ALDEN:

They're not improved, but the Parks Department expends.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes we do.

LEG. ALDEN:

A ton of money just making sure people don't go on them and abuse it.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

To quantify that number that would be difficult for me to give you a number on what it costs us to do that.

LEG. ALDEN:

That would be through policing, right.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

You also have to have maintenance crews and those types of things.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Plus you have to appropriate a certain amount of administrative costs to it.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Right.

LEG. ALDEN:

And I don't mean today but if you could try to get me that number, you know, just an approximation of that number.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Okay. Try, we'll underline in bold try, because I'm not sure how we'll quantify it, but I'll go back and we'll try to do that.

LEG. ALDEN:

Give me, even if you break it out the X amount for police, X amount for maintenance men and then we'll assign it a number you know because I think that would be a very important thing that we look at when we're assessing even our budgets and things like that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, I think that you've had people come in front of this body too when we've made acquisitions in the past saying, well, this is a great acquisition to make but are you going to provide the staff along with it.

LEG. ALDEN:

Well, that was my point. We have a resolution or we have a number of resolutions that's call for X amount of park police I believe per acre of property that we buy and we're way out of compliance with that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, we do.

LEG. ALDEN:

Now if it's, and I want to find out for myself and make this

determination whether I think that's fair to assign that cost to the Parks Department and have parks closed while we're policing you know the hundreds of thousands of acres that we've bought to preserve, you know, strictly just to preserve, you know, open space in our County. So if that's the trade-off that I've got to get, I want to be able to assign, you know, that cost possibly to some other portion of County government.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Okay. We'll try real hard to quantify that.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Judy, what do we specifically need to open the parks, staff? Quantify it in money, what are the costs?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, I need six staff. In addition, you're aware of the situation that we have at Smith Point, we would need to replace the park supervisor at Smith Point.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

That money is already in the budget, because you were paying him.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So you can't count that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

And actually probably most of this money could be in our budget, it's just a matter of, you know.

LEG. ALDEN:

The freeze.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So how much are we talking about? Six staff at how much, what does that equal?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, if we went with the lowest level, which is a laborer, there probably twenty three thousand dollars a year, we're already somewhat into the year also.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Per staff, six times twenty-three.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Go ahead.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

The parks supervisor, again that salary is right in the budget. I think that salary was somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty or sixty.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Fifty-one.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

So that's sitting there And then --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

You're saving since he was fired.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

He hasn't been fired but there's somebody not on the payroll right now.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Not getting paid.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

There is someone on the payroll right now?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Right. So he's not getting paid so in reality the County's saving money while he's not getting paid.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Exactly. And I'm faced with another retirement at the end of this month and I would like to replace that person as well. So I'm looking at eight positions.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

No, you're looking at seven positions, because that one is already in there.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Smith Point is already in there.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

But it's still we go through the process of requesting to replace these people, so I'm looking at it as eight positions, but it's not new positions, these would all be replacements that had been on the salary schedule, you know, in '02 and '03.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Who is retiring? Who is the one retiring now?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

One of our area supervisors.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Who is that?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Arthur Comstock.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

From?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

He works in the middle part of the County.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So we're talking about a hundred and thirty-eight thousand dollars for six staff plus the replacement of this other person?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

But again, that person is already still in the budget, it's not that

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COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's not necessarily new positions.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

You didn't cut that yet so that's not part of your savings. Fred, let me go to you. How do you evaluate?

MR. POLLERT:

Frankly, I'm not quite sure exactly how to evaluate it. We recently went through this with the Department of Social Services. The funds that were cut in the Parks Department and across the County were in supplies, material, not in the permanent salary accounts. So, it could well be that there are sufficient funds included in the permanent salary accounts to, in fact, hire the positions that the Commissioner is talking about. In particular, if you look at the potential loss of revenues the net cost to put them back when you factor out the potential loss of revenue is not that significant. What we found in our analysis of the Department of Social Services was that because social services has backfilled one hundred percent of all the people that have left under the early retirement incentive program, it becomes a zero sum game so departments like the Parks Department and other departments have to have their vacancies frozen to achieve that eighty percent cost number that the County Executive was shooting at. Nevertheless, there could be sufficient funds in the Parks Department to be able to fill the necessary spots from a technical point of view, when I met with the Commissioner of social services, we found that she still had about one point two million dollars left in her salary account in the budget, and yet she wasn't able to get anymore signed 167's. So what we really have to do is a line by line item price out in the Parks Department to whether determine whether or not, in fact, they could do the necessary hiring within the available appropriations that's the Legislature provided to them.

The broader issue is even if they do have a surplus, it could well be that the County Executive's office like in the Department of Social Services won't sign off on anymore 167's even if the money is there. At that point it becomes almost counter productive to add more money to the Parks Department, because if he's not going to fill the vacancies, if there's currently a surplus he's not going to fill the vacancies if you come up with let's say two hundred thousand dollars worth of new revenues from a different source with the SUV's or trying to privatize portions of the Parks Department something of that sort. So there really needs to be an agreement with the County

Executive's Office with respect to what are his priorities with respect to parks, because frankly their budget has not been cut in the personnel area.

LEG. ALDEN:

I have a question of Paul Sabatino. In the process that we go through when we purchase open space and you don't have to give me an answer on this now because you might have to do some research, is there a possibility of including the cost of security and other types of ongoing mainly security or maintenance of those parcels?

MR. SABATINO:

Well, you wouldn't, you wouldn't be able to capitalize operating expenses if they're infrastructure things or items that are being

paid out of the Operating Budget, you might be able to deflect some of those expenses, but you basically would be substituting capital for operating expenses. If you were going to do it in the context of the acquisition.

LEG. ALDEN:

Yeah, because right now we have, we have our own law that requires us to have X amount of security personnel for each amount of acreage that we have and we're way out of ratio there, so we're not at non-compliance and my question would be can you bond any of those.

MR. SABATINO:

I'm thinking as you're talking, the only place where there's Operating Budget money in what you kind of colloquially think of it as being land acquisition and it's currently being tapped now for the vector control plan and also for Public Works to get some personnel to administer the water quality component, that's that section of the Pay-As-You-Go quarter percent program that's devoted to 11.25%. I don't know if there's any, now it would take some study, but if you can find some park like activity that fits within the criteria of that 11.25% section, then you can do what's being proposed right now for like the vector control plan and I think we're creating six or seven positions in Public Works to administer the quarter percent program. I just don't know. The chances are something in parks would fit in, whether it would be a lot of money or not, that I couldn't tell you for certain, but that would be something to look at. The controversy on that is that, and they're wrong, but some of the Legislators think that that particular quarter percent portion of the program is limited to new things. They're wrong because that was a restriction that was placed on a different part of the quarter percent program. So the answer is there is money available there, but you have to find some activity in parks that would fit within one of those categories and it might be doable.

LEG. ALDEN:

Is that a legal question or would that be a question we should have parks give an answer to you.

MR. SABATINO:

It's really factual. They know what they're doing in terms of day-to-day operation if they could find something to fit within that, it's all set forth in the charter, if they could find an activity that fits within something that's described there, even if it's something just to facilitate or implement one of those activities, which is related to land that we've acquired, then that would be a way to find some funding for staffing. But it goes back to what BRO said though, which is that you can find, you know, the funding, but if there's unwillingness to implement what you've done is you've just basically made the surplus greater.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We are currently using some of the water quality protection funds now to help us to maintain the golf courses, specifically for the organic maintenance program. So we are currently in the process of hiring staff and we've bought a substantial amount of equipment specifically for the golf courses and the organic maintenance program.

LEG. ALDEN:

The Legislature supported that and I believe that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes that came through this body, yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

So I think that's an appropriate use of the money and I think that what I was going to say Legislator Sabatino, I mean, our Counsel Sabatino just pointed out that it would be an appropriate use of the money if we could find something, an activity that the Parks Department expends money on for this open space. And we've purchased the open space basically to protect groundwater and things of that nature. So I think it would be an appropriate use of those funds, because those funds are basically going to sit there, it's not really part of something that's been committed in County government already. So I think that that is a link I'd like to explore with you on a further basis.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We can certainly look into that.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. Good.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Is Sal Pentecoste here to talk about parks closings or is that Lightning Bugs? What is that?

MR. PENTECOSTE:

We're Lighting Bugs, we light the way for all other campers. My name is Sal Pentecoste. I've been camping a lot. I have four grandchildren I'm a typical camper, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We have all the four grandson's and two granddaughters and take them to whatever park we get into. Lately I have become an Arab, because I can't get into quite a few campgrounds I've been going to Shenago Valley State Park Upstate. I've gone as far as Niagara Falls, I've gone to any place north of Westchester that I can get into and my grandchildren when I take them camping, they're twelve, nine, seven, six, five, four, and now a four month old. If I take them to Indian

Island Park where we've been going mostly because that's the only place I know I can get in if I get there early enough, I can get there. Our club is the Lighting Bugs; we try to go as a group, most of the time we're there, four five six seven campers. I've been going camping I spend a lot of money in Riverhead. Your Genovese, the ice cream parlor,

the King

Kullen, all my money is spent every week because my wife does the shopping there instead of bringing all the food with us we shop in the town. So the town is getting my benefit of the money that I'm spending. I find it hard to get into Smith Point; I find it hard to get into Cedar Point. I would love to go swimming one day if I can bring my trailer there but with this reservation bid I'm always out of luck so right now it's either Sears Bellows or Indian Island Park. And as I say, one of the things our camping club is doing because of the expenses incurred for picking up garbage, we take-home our own garbage. I have a big gigantic black plastic bags and you have two or three wonderful people at the Indian Island Park the receptionist the one who signs you in and the park police and your sanitation man that that come in every day to pick up the garbage. We have no faults with the parks, but I'm at a point now where I have to start looking elsewhere, but now where I'm going to stay now gasoline now is a dollar seventy-nine regular, I can't afford anymore to go up to Shenago Valley or any place else. So Sears Bellow and Indian Island Park and any other place that's in Suffolk County, you're going to get my money, my time and I'm looking forward to stay here in Suffolk County. We had a meeting the other night and we say well, where are we going to go this year? Well, we knocked out Shenago Valley, we knocked out Upstate, New York, we knocked out north, we go to North South Lake up at Watkins Glen, so we have to eliminate them now because the high cost of gas. In my GMC I'm only getting nine miles of gas now pulling a trailer, so guess where I have to stay, folks? I want Sears Bellow and I want Indian Island Park and if I can get into Smith Point, that's it. That's all I have to say.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I'm going to speak on behalf of those who are here present today on this Committee and those who are absent, because I think we're probably all of the same thought and that is we will do everything we can do to get them reopened. And I think that Legislator Carpenter made a very good point and that is that we can always find reasons why not, but now we have to think out of the box and do some innovative planning and thinking and bite the bullet and move forward and get them reopened. It also brings me to the same thought that this individual, Mr. Pentecoste that just spoke that he's not any different than anyone that has ever contacted me that was upset that the County closed Suffolk Trap and Skeet because they went out there with their families and they spent money etcetera. So, let's go visit that right now and tell me where you are on trying to get Suffolk Trap and Skeet reopened.

MR. POLLERT:

Just before we break into that topic, we have done a very quick and dirty price-out that Lance did and it appears that the Parks Department would have sufficient appropriations within the personnel accounts within the salary accounts to hire the spots that the Commissioner was requesting to keep the parks open, it then becomes a function of dealing with the County Executive's office to sign off on the 167's. But it appears that there are sufficient appropriations within the Parks Department permanent salary account to be able to fill those titles.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So we blame it on him. Where are we with Suffolk Trap and Skeet?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I believe we had the representatives from Camp-Site store in the office last Friday to begin the negotiation process. And I don't know if the Deputy Commissioner has any further information other than that.

MR. RAPTOULIS:

Yes. We met with them last Friday and we have instructed them that they need to give us a sound mitigation plan advising us how they plan to do that, the cost, so that we can work on that. We also, we advised them that they have to go through the license agreement which we provided them to have them look at that and say, okay, they agree with this, they don't agree with that. Coupled with what they brought to our attention that they want to form a new corporation to do this and we reached out to the County Attorney's Office to say okay we have issued an RFP we issued an award to the to the Camp-Site Store can they form another corporation, so that's where we are right now and we're waiting for them to reach out and come back to us.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

You're waiting for Camp-Site to call you and say they want to have another meeting?

MR. RAPTOULIS:

Yes. Because they had to bring this to their attorney for the license agreement to come back to us with the sound mitigation program.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And the County Attorney have they given you an answer?

MR. RAPTOULIS:

No we just reached out to them on Monday we sent over the memo.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Can you call them and ask them where they are on that?

MR. RAPTOULIS:

Absolutely.

LEG. ALDEN:

The sound mitigation, that program was part of the RFP wasn't it.

MR. RAPTOULIS:

Yes, but they gave us a sketch of what they wanted to do and it involved in that now we've asked them to give us a formal presentation on that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. Anyone else? Okay. Thank you, Fred, for that information. I guess I wanted to ask while the Commissioner is here, contracts. My office today spoke to somebody in your office about the contracts for the contingency funds that were presented during the omnibus and was told that, that they haven't been told that the budget was adopted and with the ten percent cuts they're not sending any contracts out.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I know that this issue came up yesterday and I believe we didn't have a complete list of who the grantees were and I believe that there was some discrepancy what we had in our office indicated a different number for one organization and I think maybe we didn't even have the other organization on our list. So we're in the process of trying to get that information right now.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

She told us that she was not sending the contracts out, that it had nothing to do with any discrepancy but that she's been told not to do that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No. I don't believe that's the case. I think we just don't have the proper information right now.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Well, how about I have my office call your office and we get you the proper information.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Sure but I know we're in the process of looking into that and hopefully we'll get it straightened out by next week.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Because this is March and I know other departments have sent their contracts out in January.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Judy McEvoy, I want to give the Committee a quick update. Judy McEvoy spoke to us last Committee I believe regarding the Cultural Affairs termination of that position and gave me an update that, let me just get it, they put an advertisement in Newsday and in the New York Times and my understanding was that she received one hundred and ninety-six resumes. She's brought it down now to something like ten and they're in the process of doing the interviews to hire someone to get them involved in the job as the cultural affairs director. She also told me and this is for the benefit of Legislator Carpenter too, I don't know if you'd want to be there, but they are in the process now of looking at all of the cultural affairs monies that were requested and that that meeting will be on March 27th at nine o'clock in the morning in the conference room. One hundred and five resumes going back to Judy McEvoy's the position was what they received. She also had promised me that she would give us a report every quarter which is something that we've never had in the couple of years, four years I guess that I've been on the Parks Committee. And she said by April 10th, she will give us a report for the first quarter and then every quarter thereafter. The next thing I had on here was Smith Point County Park. I guess we need to address the arrest of the supervisor, I guess his name was it a supervisor position?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's a parks supervisor two.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Because this is an ongoing criminal investigation, I am very very hesitant to say anything, because I don't want to compromise the investigation. So, I just think that it might be better not to discuss it until that investigation plays out. I should tell you, though, that the individual has been suspended.

LEG. ALDEN:

We can go into executive session if you wanted to do that on that, but before you do that I have some general questions on cash controls.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Probably the same questions we all have. Go ahead you go first.

LEG. ALDEN:

Just to get back to Legislator Caracciolo's initial resolution to use that as a starting point, he called for possibly surveillance cameras

which would have given us a one check and balance system on cash controls and possibly even employee controls. You did send a report to my office and I believe to all the Legislators that outlined but it was in very basic forms.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I think it was incomplete Legislator Alden, I don't think we did sent the full report.

LEG. ALDEN:

Right, that's what I was going to say, do we have an update, because we're going into the season now and again some of us have questioned cash controls like at even at Smith Point where we send, you know, young seasonals out there and basically there's no cash register, there's no electric in the booths, but have you done a specific, you know, like we need to put a cash register here or we need to, there's this check and balance that we can put into place, that type of thing.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We do have cash registers at most of our facilities currently. And as a matter of fact, coming before this body last year and this being a topic of conversation, when I became commissioner, I wanted to try to tighten up our cash control policies as best as we possibly could given what we have in place now and we were in the process of doing that. We started to look at that before the end of last year and meeting with our parks supervisors and in January we put in place some additional controls where there would be checks and balances that two employees had to count out the money and agree upon it and sign the form, etcetera, and it was as a result of that is how we found this discrepancy in this particular instance.

LEG. ALDEN:

Now, we use Smith Point parking field as an example, that's an electronic cash register.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

It's a toll machine, yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

So.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

The cash register, yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Electronic.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

And we do have a toll machine at the gas to Smith Point also.

LEG. ALDEN:

So the toll machine will tell us how many cars that came in.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Independent of the cash register receipts.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

And then the cash register, is it a modern type to sell you how many no sales were hit how many times the cash register drawer and how long it was left open and it wasn't closed immediately.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I don't know if it tells you how long the drawer was left open but it tells you no sales, yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

All the new electronic ones, not all its not even new, it goes back when I had stores which is twenty something years ago they will tell you how long the register was left open.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I can't tell that you it does, it may, but I'm not sure.

LEG. ALDEN:

Because those are key controls and then somebody, you know, like on a regular basis has to actually look and compare on those, you know, the register receipt that actually is generated to see if that drawer is being opened with no sales or if the drawer is just left open and people are making change out of it how many times it was and.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

That's something I would like to see an analysis of, because even, you know, like a decent cash register will tell you what time the sale was made and even if it's only a one button cash register, you know, a parking fee, three dollars but it's got to be a couple of different categories.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

As a result of this incident happening, also, I did reach out to the Comptroller and requested some assistance from the Comptroller's Office and we actually had a meeting with them this morning and they are going to move forward with an audit and as part of that audit

probably give us some recommendations of how we can continue to tighten up our cash handling also.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. And are you confident that between your office and the Comptroller's Office that you can, you know, get some actual, you know, solid cash control procedures?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, I am confident.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. Because there's firms that that's all they do is give recommendations on, you know, cash controls.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I am confident that we can come up with some further controls to safeguard the revenue.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Commissioner Gordon, have you seen the audits in the past that pointed out that we had a major problem in the Parks Department for that kind of --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, the ongoing problem has always been that we need additional staff.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

It's been my understanding that there are actually companies, I don't know Legislator Alden if that's what you're talking about, that there are actually companies that you can hire and they send patrons through and they, it's kind of almost like a sting, I know I spoke to John {Norbeck} in the State parks.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

There are some things that we can do in house too that I think have not been done in the past and I am going to insist that we do that this year, absolutely. And I can consider it a priority.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And then in addition to, we talked about volunteers, in national parks service, my husband and I were both part of it ten, fifteen years ago, they have a problem called VIP's and it's Volunteers in Parks.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Right. Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And it allowed the public to do a lot of the work that, you know, that

maybe personnel might do and I know that you said twenty-four seven, but during the day when parks are open, perhaps some of the personnel can do other jobs while you utilize volunteers in parks and actually institute a program called volunteers in parks, because of the fact that we're in the situation that we're in and maybe that could be something that we start as immediately as tomorrow in gathering those kinds of -- because I think from the general public that uses our parks and doesn't want to go upstate anymore, I think they'd be more than happy to give a certain amount of time, they're all nodding their heads in the audience, they'd be more than happy to give a small portion of their vacation time or their time off to make sure that we keep our parks open.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I'm sure they would, I'm sure they would.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So maybe you can put something together.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

That's certainly something that we probably should consider. I don't know how much staff time it would take to do that, but we will absolutely look at that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Maybe you could reach out to the National Parks Service and maybe they could just give you --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

We use volunteers in other areas of the parks.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

They have a criteria it's already written out and you wouldn't have to spend that much time reinventing the wheel.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

No. It's a matter of managing those volunteers, that's what I meant by staff time.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. Legislator Alden and then I'm going to, I've been told that the roads are getting really bad and I'm going to try to get to Fleet very quickly and then. I'm sorry she did actually raise her hand.

LEG. NOWICK:

It's just a quick question I was just curious, the County doesn't have any type of Easy passes or we're not tied into the --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Easy Pass, no. But we have been investigating the Easy Pass, but it

seems to me that the cost of putting in the infrastructure might be prohibitive.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

How much is that.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

As a matter of fact we did reach out to them and I know initially they sent us information on you know if you were an individual, that was the application that we received.

LEG. NOWICK:

I was wondering if you can tie it in any way.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, yes, you can, but there's a cost involved with it and I don't know if have, I don't know if we've gotten all that information, but we will continue to haunt them to get that information.

LEG. NOWICK:

Yes, I would love to see that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Judy that's been going on for months, you told me that same thing three or four or five months ago that they sent you the wrong thing.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Easy Pass is just another government agency and maybe they're not getting it out to us so quickly, but it's a matter of us having to hasn't them.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Please, you know, if McDonald's can do it, Suffolk County can do it, and you can drive into McDonald's and pay for your hamburger.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

McDonald's has money to pay for it.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I don't think it's that difficult to find out exactly what the form is and the cost is exactly.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, and we are, we'll continue to haunt them Legislator Fields.

LEG. ALDEN:

Who in parks is in charge of the golf operations?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, we --

LEG. ALDEN:

I'll tell what you I want to try to do. Nassau County just made the announcement they have a PGA event that's going to take place at one of the Nassau County facilities, I would like to because have I a number of friends still in the PGA that I'd like to try to coordinate something where maybe we can lure it to one ever our County courses some type of PGA event.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I think let's -- I don't know whether we want to get into that conversation today, but I would love to discuss that with you because I think there's both positives and negatives to it, but I would love to talk to you about that.

LEG. ALDEN:

I'll talk to you then.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Sure.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. I'm going to invite Fleet Bank to come up and give us just, thank you very much don't really go away, because I think we'll need you.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Do you want me to leave the table?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

No. Fleet is going to give us an update on the Vanderbilt.

MR. MALO:

Madam Chairman, distinguished Legislators. First, I'd like to tell you how much I appreciate the organic maintenance. The fairways and greens have been wonderful the last couple of years.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Just state your name for the record.

MR. MALO:

Steven Malo, M-A-L-O.

LEG. ALDEN:

Repeat the compliment.

MR. MALO:

The comment was I appreciate the organic maintenance, the greens and fairways have been wonderful the last couple of years.

LEG. CARPENTER:

What course do you play?

MR. MALO:

West Sayville.

LEG. CARPENTER:

It's in great shape.

MR. MALO:

Very nice.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Try Timber Point.

MR. MALO:

There is a presentation letter that I've got there if you care to I can go through that very quickly and give you kind of an overview of who we are and what we're up to at the moment with the fund and I think it will give you a fairly clear picture from which to ask whatever questions you may have. If you'd like I'll proceed under tab one it's a minor commercial, only that I want you to know that the fund is being handled by the 7th largest financial holding company.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We don't need to you do that, because in the interest of the snow, let's get to the bottom line on how we're doing.

MR. MALO:

Well, if you go to the second tab, essentially this account is managed in accordance with an asset allocation that calls for a moderate risk, moderate income viewpoint which essentially means we look to have a approximately equal amounts of stocks and bonds in the portfolios. We're certainly looking at long term at managing this account. There are income needs on a monthly basis, so we do require a moderate amount of liquidity. The legal issues resolve essentially around the County resolutions which we follow, there are no particular tax issues in this type of account or any other unique issues and communications are typically with Mr. Pollert's office on a fairly routine basis and certainly with the County authorities anytime that you care to do so. The following page shows a diagram of the current asset allocation as you can see there is a higher proportion of bonds at the present time in part that's due to the deterioration in the equity markets over the last three years and we've chosen not to increase the proportion of equities at this time given the current turbulence in the market. The following pages outline the individual holdings within the account at the present time. The cash component currently is four hundred and fifty thousand, the total of the bond funds at the moment in the individual bonds is about seven point nine million dollars and the equity

proportion with the individual listings amounts to another four hundred and forty or fifty thousand dollars. There are different categories there that aggregate these. The current total balance on the account as of close of business yesterday was twelve million four hundred and thirty-eight thousand dollars.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All right. Legislator Alden has a question to interrupt you with.

LEG. ALDEN:

I have a question on bonds right now we're at the lowest, pretty much the lowest interest rate that I can remember ever, and what I perceive

as a danger here or actually can cause a further erosion of the value of this fund, if the interest rate ever rises, what does that do to the price of our bonds.

MR. MALO:

The price of the existing bonds will decline.

LEG. ALDEN:

Decline.

MR. MALO:

As they have been rising as interest rates fall existing bonds with fixed coupons are going to have a greater value, because they were issued at a higher rate circumstances.

LEG. ALDEN:

Approximately when were these purchased?

MR. MALO:

I beg your pardon?

LEG. ALDEN:

Approximately, when were these bonds purchased?

MR. MALO:

Many of these came with the account originally when we took management responsibility for this in December of 1996, many of the long term bonds had already been purchased and they have been kept where appropriate.

LEG. ALDEN:

So these unrealized capital gain that we have in some of these do we have any actual risk to original capital that these were purchased with.

MR. MALO:

Not to the original capital not to any great extent in most cases

they were purchased at or near par value and so you're aware we are always looking to see whether it is more appropriate to sell them establish the gain and do something else with the proceeds that would increase the earnings and, in fact, that is the case in a couple of situations if you'll notice on the cash side there's a pending transaction that hasn't settled yet. It's from a bond I sold the other day, because I can it's relatively short term and the premium of it was high enough that it reduced the total return between today and maturity below a threshold where I can actually get a better rate. So I expect that in the course of the next several weeks, I've identified other bonds that have that same potential and as that becomes possible, I will be selling those and exchanging them for something else that will return a greater return. So we do look to capture gains where it makes some sense, but for the longer bonds, typically the premium that's currently available to us, if I were to take that I could not re-deploy all those funds at higher interest rates.

LEG. ALDEN:

What is strips, six percent? Can you get, is that what --

MR. MALO:

Treasury strips.

LEG. ALDEN:

Yes.

MR. MALO:

You can get returns of not six percent, I think you're looking at a thirty year treasury now is probably paying close to five and I don't think we'd like to lock the money up that long.

LEG. ALDEN:

So what's your target though no as far as what do you like to see as far as the return especially on the bonds side of this portfolio because I feel there's a huge risk to it, but what target would you like to see as far as return.

MR. MALO:

We're always looking to maximize the return without extending the maturity so far that you put yourself at risk for a long period of time. If you lock in those rates in current, in the current market environment, I think you'll see some fairly significant deterioration overtime.

LEG. ALDEN:

Long bonds less risky though and traditionally has less movement according to like short term rates, doesn't it so the long term would probably be a less risky transaction than going to try to lockup short term rates that are higher or even what you're getting on these.

MR. MALO:

The short-term rates at the moment are not good at all.

LEG. ALDEN:

Under one, right, one percent?

MR. MALO:

For a good high quality treasury or agency, you're not getting paid more than one percent for three or four years anyway, yes. That's correct. And that's one of the reasons we've kept those other bonds is the mathematics of the bond each of the bonds in the account tells me which ones it makes some sense to switch to some other vehicle at the present time and that's, that's what we're doing and that will increase the income in the account. It's not going to affect the risk because we don't take great risk with bonds.

(SUBSTITUTION OF REPORTER: ALLISON MAHONEY)

LEG. ALDEN:

No, but -- see there's overall type of risk though. The numbers of our Account right now are at X amount and if that falls much lower, you know, we've got major problems as far as supplying the income to keep the Vanderbilt running so if I'm and I'm not saying it's going to happen tomorrow, but the risk of an interest rates increase probably right now if you have to predict with way interest rates are going to go you're going to have to say that eventually they're going to have to go up.

MR. MALO:

Yes.

LEG. ALDEN:

Once they go up that means the overall value of our funds they're going down.

MR. MALO:

The value of the bonds will go down, but in real practice what will be a happening is one of the reasons the bonds will be falling is because equities are rising and the two should help to balance off. A cash flow from the bond won't change because the coupon is a fixed rate. So regardless of the current value of the principal of the bond the cash flow will not be effected so your interest income should be as good or better regardless of what the principal value of bond is.

LEG. ALDEN:

But say for instance if you had a two point increase in interest rates the value of this of our whole total fund could decrease by two, three million dollars.

MR. MALO:

2% increase I don't think would cause that much damage unquestionably that would be deterioration in market value of the bond principal, but it still would not effect your cash flow.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay. I'm not going to take up much time, but I have to pursue that a little bit further as far as, you know, your defensive strategies and things like that I like to find out about.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Only I think because of the weather it's getting really nervous and antsy so you are probably are not even getting a full thought process.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Tension.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Right attention span is probably outside so I would ask that you revisit us and maybe I will put you first on the agenda so that you don't have to sit through the whole rest of this.

MR. MALO:

That's fine.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

But I think we would all like to know a bit more how precarious we are with the Vanderbilt and if it's going to be a problem for us.

MR. MALO:

In maybe 30 seconds let me say and I will talk to Mr. Pollert and his colleagues if you are wish, but I expect that the course of this year the cash flow is sufficient to meet the needs of the museum as we stand today if there are no other market changes I would not expect there to be a problem and making all the payments we expect to make and still ending it fiscal year in pretty shape with the rest of the fund, particularly if there's any resolution to Iraq.

LEG. ALDEN:

I just have to direct one quick, Fred, last time we met we were very, very, very close to that I guess we established a little bit of danger point where if the total market value of our portfolio falls....

MR. POLLERT:

That was actually a value point that was established by Fleet of approximately 12.2 million dollars. What the thinking was with the long-term rates of return they needed approximately 12.2 million dollars to be able to return long-term to the museum \$1.2 million. So the correspondence back and forth between Budget Review Office and our investment advisor was what would prudent man do with respect to establishing a threshold because clearly you can bring the fund down to what the original request was which was in the neighborhood of six to seven million dollars so you could bring it down there will also be sufficient funds to make a distribution to the museum of 1.2 million

dollars. The question that we had posed what is a reasonable threshold so that you insure over the long term that you can provide 1.2 million dollars which to the museum which appears to be a good solid number that the museum requires ongoing type of basis and their response was with approximately a 10% long-term rate of return 12.2 million dollars is good threshold amount. Part of what we were concerned about is obviously with the continuation of the deterioration of the market was starting to approach that 12.2 million dollars.

LEG. ALDEN:
Okay.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I'm going to put this on for the next meeting but this concerns Greg Lauri and Judy Gordon that is that there was a public information note put out on the Internet regarding a Suffolk County Parks offering sport fishing instruction. The cost was a hundred ten dollars per person. It was held at the beginning February 25th in the H. Lee Dennison Building. I want to know during the next meeting how we allow use in our buildings and where that hundred and ten dollars goes. Is the person Captain McGrath getting the money; is the County getting the money and then we advertise field trips on charter boats are optional with an additional fee. Is this done with an RFP so that you open it up and it's all fair to all captains of party boats? So I would ask that the policy be given to the whole committee next time around on how we do those things and how we utilizing public building I'm not going to spend time on it now cause everybody wants to get going. I'm going directly to the agenda. IR1953

LEG. ALDEN:
Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

I will second the motion. All in favor -- opposed? Tabled.
(VOTE: 4-0-0-0) TABLED

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
2152.

LEG. ALDEN:
Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Motion to approve do we have a second?

LEG. ALDEN:
What's the difference?

LEG. CARPENTER:
Motion to table.

MR. SABATINO:

Just as a technical standpoint in order to approve there has to be a selection of one of the three.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Motion to table. I would bring this up next meeting, but I think we need to move on this and I'll give more background information.

Motion to table by Legislator Alden, second by Legislator Carpenter. All in favor? Opposed? Tabled.

(VOTE: 4-0-0-0) TABLED

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

2234.

LEG. ALDEN:

Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Second the motion. All in favor? Opposed? Tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-0)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

2253. Tabled.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

2286. Authorizing transfer of certain properties. Is there a corrected copy of this taking out the two parcels that I asked to have taken out do you know, Counsel?

MR. SABATINO:

(Inaudible)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

2286 County Executive Office here?

MR. SABATINO:

Let me just -- it deletes two parcels correct, it was filed February 20 first.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Motion to approve.

LEG. ALDEN:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? Approved. (VOTE: 4-0-0-0)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

1028. Motion to table.

LEG. ALDEN:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
All in favor? Opposed? Tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-0) TABLED

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
1034. Motion to table.

LEG. ALDEN:
Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
Tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-0) TABLED

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
1075.

LEG. ALDEN:
Motion to table.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
Second the motion. All those in favor? Opposed. Tabled. (VOTE: 4-0-0-0)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
Motion to adjourn.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
Oh, just one more thing.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
Yes.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
In front of you on Tuesday you're going to have a Certificate of Necessity from the March of Dimes to do a fund-raiser. I think part of the problem why this was late was because we were trying to determine how we were going to staff the Show Mobile and so we didn't get it over to IR on the most timely, but I think that was what will what the holdup was. A representative from my department will be at the meeting as well as probably a representative from the March of Dimes. I just wanted you to know that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:
I think when it comes to us I would want to know how much they're paying to supplement the Show Mobile and how much they're paying for utilizing the park.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:
That information will be given to you on Tuesday.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. Motion to adjourn. Second. All in favor? Opposed?

Adjourned.

(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 2:40 P.M.)