

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 Thursday, **December 11, 2003.**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ginny Fields - Chairperson
Legislator Jon Cooper - Vice Chairman
Legislator Cameron Alden
Legislator Angie Carpenter
Legislator Brian Foley
Legislator Lynne Nowick.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Sabatino, Counsel to the Legislature
Jim Spero, Budget Review Office
Lance Reinheimer, BRO
Judy Gordon, Commissioner of Parks
Roger Podd, Aide to PO
Stephen V. Malo, Columbia Management Growth, Vanderbilt Museum Trust
Skip Armstrong, Suffolk Committee for Camping
Joanne Ferraro, Levy, Citizen's Advisory
Steve Gittleman, Vanderbilt Museum
Catherine Stark, County Executive

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Diana Kraus - Court Stenographer

(THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 12:12 PM)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We're going to start the Parks Committee meeting, the last meeting of December and of this year. I apologize for the glasses. My eyes have been dilated, but we're going to begin any way. We'll start with the pledge of allegiance led by Legislator Carpenter.

(SALUTATION)

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. When last we met, we discussed having Fleet come here and give us a presentation. And we invite, I think it is Steve Malo to come up.

MR. MALO:

Yes. Good afternoon. Thank you for your time. And, Legislator Fields, do you have a copy of the handout that I presented to you? I think I can cover this in relatively short amount of time in the first nine pages.

On page one of the presentation, just to quickly review the investment policy statement, this is the guideline that we follow in managing the funds. The investment objective for the account is to balance income and growth. It's a long-term horizon as far as the investment's concerned. We use approximately equal proportions invested in both bonds and equities. And we consider this to be a moderate level of risk to the account. The investment authority is granted to us by the Suffolk County resolution. The risk tolerance is, again, moderate. And the income needs are a \$100,000 per month.

On page two, legal issues are covered by the Suffolk County resolution. There are no particular unusual tax issues. The return expectations for each asset class are measured by corresponding industries. For example, the equities are measured against the SMP. Communication target, we stay in touch with Mr. Pollert's office at the Budget Review. And on going, obviously, we're more than happy to be here whenever you'd like to see us.

On page three, I'm showing the current asset allocation. We have less than 1% in cash. Fixed income for the bond portfolio is slightly over 50%. The equity portfolio is 48%. The pie chart there shows pretty much a pretty even balance.

On page four is the heart of the matter. When I was here in March last year or earlier this year, the total assets in the account on the 27th of that month were 12 million 500 dollars -- 535 thousand. The total assets as of close of business on Tuesday were 12 million 954 thousand. There's a gain in the portfolio in that period of time of \$419,000. In addition to that, we made nine \$100,000 distributions to the Treasurer's Office. And that puts the total increase in assets for the period at 1.3 million dollars. I believe you may recall when I was here in March that I felt pretty comfortable that we could sustain that payment without a great deal of difficulty providing the market did what we expected. They've somewhat over-achieved a little bit so we have an extra cushion in there. So I'm very pleased to be able to report that we've been able to fulfill our mission and also provided some additional assets for the future.

If you wish to look at the individual components of the portfolio, they're contained on pages five through eight. And it shows you all the various components of the portfolio. You'll see that we have a fairly substantial number of individual stocks to spread the risk. And we also cover quite a number of sectors in the market so that we participate in various sectors of the economy. The returns in the account are on page nine, which is the last page in this tab. And I'm open to questions. The balance of the presentation under tab one is a two-page presentation of the company and the assets that we manage, which total about 150 billion nationwide. And under the second tab is some economic information for your reading pleasure if you're so inclined later in the day.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Hi, thanks for coming down.

MR. MALO:

Sure.

LEG. ALDEN:

I just have a couple quick questions and I ask them each and every time you come down here. So the fixed income part of your portfolio, you're long-term holders of that, right, because short-term, it seems like bonds have a substantially higher risk factor because of the interest rate movement, right? So if we're long-term holders, that takes a lot of that risk out because now we're taking that income and we're going to take it out to maturity, right?

MR. MALO:

What's there now, yes. You may recall when I was here in March, the asset allocation was more skewed toward two-thirds bonds and about one-third equities. At that point the market had -- was actually just about having, in terms of the stock, the SMP had declined fairly substantively just about the time I was here last. From that point on, it has risen fairly well, which we expected it to do.

I indicated to you in March that it was my intention to sell a number of the bonds where it made sense to take the gains that had occurred and devote those to other things. Those sales, which I did relatively quickly after our discussions, those proceeds were then devoted toward the equities that you now see constituting close to 50% of the account. So what I did was pick those where it made mathematical sense to make the switch because you wind up long-term better off. You also see that the remaining half, yes, they are long-term, they have excellent coupons, and there is no particular reason to undo those. They're performing quite well.

LEG. ALDEN:

Now just on the equity side, is it less risky to go with something like an index fund or is it more risky to go with the index fund as opposed to owning individual stocks? Here's why -- I'll just point out a couple of things. Even on the IT, those things go up and down, you know, real fast. And usually you have rapid movements and kind of violent-type movements. And even with health care consumer discussion, like all the stuff you have in here, it almost seems like not really a weighted but just an ordinary index fund might do as well if not better and have less risk.

MR. MALO:

I would say particularly with respect to the information technology group, I think if you look through there, you'll find that there are very few, if any, instances of risky information

technology types of items. We do have things like Intel and Microsoft. We also have Dell Computer, which is really a provider of computers that, you know, has a very good business and a very good business model and is quite successful. So we have a lot of -- as opposed to fabrication or creation or invention, we are heavily into things that actually have a business plan and a good track record. And they're really more high value companies than they are speculative.

LEG. ALDEN:

So the ones that you've actually picked here, you don't feel that we're going to have another, like, scandal or some kind of meltdown, so to speak?

MR. MALO:

No. In fact, since we last met, we have also established what amounts to a strategic allocation Committee. And we have a Doctor heading that. And that's his sole responsibility with he and his staff. And we've become a little bit more active in the day-to-day management of the portfolios; so that we try to make sure that if we see something that we're uncomfortable with, it's replaced.

LEG. ALDEN:

I said you're overweight in a couple, but for the most part you're kind of just -- the portfolio looks like it's almost like even-weighted as far as individual stocks.

MR. MALO:

And to really answer your question in terms of the index fund question, we intend and expect to be able to do better than an index fund over longer periods of time.

LEG. ALDEN:

All right. That's it.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. MALO:

You're welcome. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

We have Joanna -- I'm having trouble reading so forgive me -- I think it's Joanna Ferraro-Levy. Thank you. Everything's a blur. Come on up. And this is for a member of the Suffolk County Citizens Advisory Board for the Arts. You can stand or you can sit, whatever is more comfortable. Just make sure that the microphone is on.

MS. FERRARO-LEVY:

I think it is.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

It is.

MS. FERRARO-LEVY:

Good afternoon. I'm Joanna Ferraro-Levy. And I'm from Westhampton Beach. I'd like to thank you for considering my nomination. As a member of the Suffolk County Citizens Advisory Board for the Arts, I would certainly be honored to serve. I've lived in Suffolk County for almost thirty years. And my background is in theatre, but during the time I have been -- lived out in Suffolk County, I've done a variety of things all having to do with the arts in one way or the other; sometimes with the community, sometimes with the schools. Even when I was Director of Human Services for the Town of Southampton, and I was there at a wonderful time when the Town Board decided to award grants to cultural arts organizations. And they started it back in those days and they continued to do so. And I was able to develop and administer the grants for the first few years.

I'm currently the Associate Director of the Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center. It's a relatively new organization. We've been in existence for about six years. And I've been there since the inception. And I would be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Sounds like you have a very good background. Does anyone have any questions? We do appreciate the fact that you did come down and that you've discussed with us your background.

I'm going to make a motion to take your resolution out of order.

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? Approved.

And I will make a motion to approve. **IR 1846 - Appointing Joanna Ferraro-Levy as a member of the Suffolk County Citizens Advisory Board for the Arts.**

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? **Approved. (Vote: 6 - 0)** You do not have to come on Tuesday. We will represent that we did talk to you and here from you. And we wish you very good luck and thank you again for helping us.

MS. FERRARO-LEVY:

Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

Paul, as far as this Suffolk County Citizens Advisory Board for the Arts, can you tell me how many other openings there are on there?

MR. SABATINO:

These are Legislator appointments first of all. In terms of -- this is one of those weird ones where it ranges -- you can have a maximum, I think, of 23, if I remember correctly, and a minimum of 15. This particular one in front of us is a replacement; somebody whose term expired is being replaced. I don't know of any actual vacancies. There are several holdovers if you want to appoint somebody to replace somebody. But there are no per se vacancies right now on the Board.

LEG. ALDEN:

If I had a candidate in mind --

MR. SABATINO:

If you have somebody, you have to find -- I know there are two or three that are, like, holdovers, but you could fill the slot.

LEG. ALDEN:

Do they have an attendance requirement, too?

MR. SABATINO:

Yes. If you miss four in a row, you're automatically deemed vacated.

LEG. ALDEN:

And you've been getting reports on that. You've been kept up to date?

MR. SABATINO:

Well, I pay attention to the ones we get the information on. This one, I have not necessarily gotten the information on the attendance for this. So that would be something you could look into. I don't have this one. I have it for some of the other boards and commissions but quite frankly not for this one. But I know I did this one for Legislator Guldi. We went through the list and this was a holdover that became an eligible slot.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you:

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay. We have Skip Armstrong.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Good morning, Madam Chairman and distinguished Legislators. My name is Skip Armstrong. And 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 7,000 members. Since our inception, we have worked very closely with the Parks Department on a number of projects and issues and more importantly to promote family camping in Suffolk

County.

I come before you today to express our gratitude and our thanks for all of the cooperation that this body has extended the campers of Suffolk County during the past year. Looking back I'm sure it has been a very difficult year financially for the County. When the County Executive dictated massive cutbacks to the Parks Department, all of you stepped up to the plate and was able to find the money necessary to help keep our parks open and most importantly to keep them operating safely. While the weather has not been on our side this year, I feel it was a very rewarding year for the family campers. And on behalf of the Suffolk Committee for Camping, we thank you all for that.

I also come before you today to express our appreciation to the Parks Commissioner, her deputies and the entire Parks Department staff for working with us during the year, listening to our concerns, suggestions and recommendations and making the Suffolk County Parks one of the best systems in the state. While, yes, we could see more premium sites in the campgrounds, more park police, a more favorable fee schedule as it relates to Nassau County residents, and, yes, ultimately a dedicated parks district. You will be hearing from us on these topics in the future.

Over the past few years we have experienced an unbelievable amount of cooperation between the Legislators and the Parks Department. I do not know of any other municipality where the Parks Department would consult with user groups concerning such topics as fee schedules. We thank you for building that schedule -- for building that relationship, I'm sorry.

In closing, my term as President is coming to an end on January 1st. I personally want to thank you for all the support and cooperation that you have extended to me during my term of office. It has been a very rewarding experience in a time that I will always reflect back on. On January 1st, Bill Johnson will take over as President of the Suffolk Committee for Camping. Bill has been our Vice President for over five years and will continue to support the family campers of Suffolk County. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you, Skip, and thank you for all the work that you do. You're a very integral part of the camping group and you do a great job. Thank you for your service.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Alden.

LEG. ALDEN:

I also want to compliment you and thank you for the work you've done in the past. And I know you're still going to stick around and help the new guy, right?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I will be here while Bill's sunning himself down in Daytona Beach. During the winter I will act as his liaison between the County and the Committee.

LEG. ALDEN:

I just have one quick question. On part of your statement you said fee schedule as opposed to Nassau County. You want to see what?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I'd like to see them given a better break than -- if somebody coming from out of state -- especially during the week when the campgrounds aren't that full and we can get the senior citizens from Nassau County to come out here to Suffolk County. They only have two campgrounds in Nassau County and we've got a magnitude.

LEG. ALDEN:

Like off-peak times where it would be beneficial to us?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. ALDEN:

Okay, good. Thanks.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Madam Chair, I just want to echo --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Don't go away yet.

LEG. CARPENTER:

Yes. I really just want to thank Skip. I know he's contacted my office many times on issues. And you've really put a lot of time and energy in. And I think it's absolutely awesome when you think you have 7,000 members in the Suffolk County Committee for Camping. It really speaks to how important our parks are to the residents of the County. And there's a very interesting point you bring up about Nassau and we'll have to look forward to pursuing that in the new year.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Thank you.

LEG. CARPENTER:

But thank you, too, for your very kind comments on the Department. It wasn't always the case. I've been here almost eleven years. And there were times in my recollection that the Parks Department and the Committee for Camping were at odds.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

That's correct.

LEG. CARPENTER:

And I can remember looking out and seeing people sitting there and really grimacing and not very happy. So you've got a long history of predecessors who've really been devoted. And I think about George Broom a lot and I'm sure that, Bill, with you staying on helping will be as successful. Thank you.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Don't go yet. Just one question. If -- you know, your discussion about lowering the amount for Nassau County residents, I'm just trying to think this through. If Nassau County doesn't pay taxes and Suffolk County residents do, and Suffolk County is given a certain amount, I guess, for camping and you think maybe that Nassau -- the amount should be lowered somewhat -- is that what you're saying?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I'm saying the camping fee for Nassau County residents.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Are you saying it should be equal to Suffolk County --

MR. ARMSTRONG:

No.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Oh, okay.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I'm saying maybe split the difference between what the out-of-state fee is --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

To make it more equitable; so they can come here and utilize our campgrounds.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

And do you think that if we do that, it will increase the amount of use during with the week with Nassau County residents?

MR. ARMSTRONG:

I think so, yes. Especially with the senior citizens, yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, good. Thank you.

MR. ARMSTRONG:

Thank you. Thank you all.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much. Steve Gittleman? We don't have any other speakers. We'll just move right on.

IR 1838 - Establishing Task Force to study need for ATV Park in Suffolk County. I did speak with Legislator Crecca. And he was going to make some changes. So I'm going to make a motion to table.

LEG. NOWICK:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? Tabled. Yes?

LEG. CARPENTER:

I'd just like to table it to a date certain in January, the first Committee cycle in January.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, fine.

MR. SABATINO:

Just so you know, what's going to have to happen is it has to be tabled on the floor of the Legislature. Okay. Only the full Legislature can waive that rule. So if you want to make that recommendation here, that's okay. But then --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Would it be easier to re-file it because it's going to have changes any way?

LEG. ALDEN:

Paul, you tell us.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Right?

MR. SABATINO:

There's going to be about five or six -- this comes up every odd-numbered cycle because the rule's a little crazy the way it's set up right now. But if you want to keep things alive, then all you can do is on the floor of the Legislature.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Then, I'll make a motion to discharge without recommendation.

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRMAN FIELDS:

Great. All in favor? Opposed? **Discharged without recommendation. (Vote: 6 - 0)**

The next one we've already approved.

IR 1871 - Adopting local law no. 2003, a Charter Law to abolish division of sports and recreation. I will make a motion to approve.

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? **Approved. (Vote: 6 - 0)**

IR 1952 - Appropriating funds in connection with the revitalization of the William and Mollie Rogers Waterfront at the Vanderbilt Museum.

Do you want to come up now?

LEG. COOPER:

Motion.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

You have to be on the microphone, Steve. Just put the microphone on.

MR. GITTELMAN:

My name is Steven Gittleman, President of the Board of Trustees, Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum. Thank you for letting me speak to you. There are two pieces of legislation in front of you. One is for the renewal of the endowment. Steve Malo has just presented to you his financial viewpoint. I would only suggest that I can add nothing more to what Steve had to say unless you have questions.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Why don't we go in order. The next one is about the William and Mollie Rogers Waterfront.

MR. GITTELMAN:

Okay. Three years ago William and Mollie Rogers made a contribution of one million dollars. What has happened is that they predicated that on the waterfront project being moved forward. This is the planning money for that waterfront project. And a number of you have come down and have seen the waterfront. We have provided you with photographs. We have made remarkable progress. This is the project that will create a boardwalk connecting the two critical components on the waterfront, that is the boathouse and the seaplane hangar with a boardwalk. We feel that this will provide us with a world class facility.

The infrastructure for the boardwalk going south is gratuitously provided to us by the sea -- the retaining wall that was put up. It was constructed so that we can lay a boardwalk on top of it. And we have provided you with photographs for that. Mind you, this is the planning money. It's \$145,000. I'm going by memory. 125,000. Thank you. And at this point I would ask that if you have questions, please ask me. It's a critical part of completing the vision at the museum. Yes, there is an end.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Legislator Nowick.

LEG. NOWICK:

Not in the way of a question, but I think from what I understand about this William and Mollie Rogers endowment, if you will, we really need to move on this because I believe they want to see something happening. And we don't want them to come back and take the money away. Is that correct?

MR. GITTELMAN:

Well, I think -- that is correct, but it goes beyond that. The museum has a history of not being able to raise money. Private money. And here we finally have somebody who says I'll give you a million dollars.

LEG. NOWICK:

That's right.

MR. GITTELMAN:

And you have three years to make progress on the waterfront.

LEG. NOWICK:

But I think, I believe, they thought it was going to be finished in three years, which of course --

MR. GITTELMAN:

Yes.

LEG. NOWICK:

-- the County doesn't do in three years.

MR. GITTELMAN:

Right. It hasn't been started. So it's not a question of being finished. It has yet to be done. This is just the planning money.

LEG. NOWICK:

I think we need to do this. You can't walk along the beach if there's no access to the beach. Well, there is now. But at one point it was hard to get to.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Any other comments? Okay. Okay, what do we want to do?

LEG. COOPER:

Make a motion to approve.

LEG. FOLEY:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? **Approved. (Vote: 6 - 0)**

Okay, now we move to **IR 1993 - Modifying new investment policy for Suffolk County Vanderbilt Museum Trust Fund.** Legislator Cooper, your name's on this.

LEG. COOPER:

Motion to approve.

LEG. FOLEY:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor?

LEG. ALDEN:

On the motion?

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

LEG. ALDEN:

Just for the record, Paul this would just extend what we've done last year? In other words, would allow them to take capital gains and cut a check each month for operating expenses.

MR. SABATINO:

Yes, this is that 1.2 million dollar concept. Then it would take you out through December 31st of 2004.

LEG. ALDEN:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, we have a motion and a second. All in favor? Opposed?

Approved. (Vote: 6 - 0)

MR. GITTELMAN:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

IR 2013 - Appropriating funds for construction of Suffolk County Police Athletic League Fields, Town of Islip. I'm going to make a motion to table.

LEG. COOPER:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

All in favor? Opposed? **Tabled. (Vote: 6 - 0)**

We have some discussion with the Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I wasn't leaving.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I had two things that I wanted to bring up, also.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Go ahead. You know, actually there was a letter that we had forwarded to you.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, there was.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Do you have any response to give us on that one?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes, I just wanted to make some comments. Over the course of the summer, I've gotten probably more letters of complaint regarding Smith Point than we've probably gotten in the last, I would say, three or four seasons. And I think part of the problem is, as you know, we had a problem there in January of this year. And we had some turnover of staff. We do have a whole new management team at the park. And I think part of the issues that we've heard about has been the transition or the new management team acclimating to the site.

Generally at the beginning of the season, we have a slow build up to our busy season, but as

you all remember we had horrible weather. And we really didn't have very many people in the park up until the July 4th weekend. And the manager at the beach really was not used to dealing with the mass influx of people. I think all in all they did a good job. Do we need to make improvements? Yes, we absolutely do. I, through my staff, you know, had sent out information to them over the course of the summer. But we all sat down -- as a matter of fact we just did it this week -- to discuss the situation there. Part of the issue, I think, is that over the last several years we've been lax in our management. You know, we do have certain rules and regulations that we like people to follow. Do we bend the rules on occasion? Yes. Should we continue to bend the rules on occasion? Yes, I think so. I think we need to maintain some flexibility when you're dealing with public.

But I think there are areas where maybe the rules have been bent too much in the past. And I think, you know, it's difficult for people that have used that facility for ten or fifteen years to come in and encounter these new rules and regulations and need to -- and be demanded that they conform to them. So I think that was definitely an issue with the staff. And was the staff a little bit too firm on occasions? I think they probably were. But again, it's been a learning curve with them. And, you know, we have -- what we also did spend some time doing in the last couple of months, and this was also with the help of the Committee for Camping as well, we went through all of our campground rules -- campgrounds rules and regulations as well as outer beach rules and regulations and made some changes. We are in the process right now of making those changes, making the public aware of those changes, we put it on our website. We are putting together a new little brochure that we are intending to give out at all the campgrounds. We don't have the ability to mail those brochures because of the costs involved. But we do intend to get those out to all the campgrounds early in the season so that people know where we're coming from as well as what we expect of them. And, you know, that's certainly an ongoing process. It's a very important ongoing process.

We also -- we meet with the Committee for Camping on a regular basis. And we've already shared with them these new rules and regulations that we've come up with. And I think that they look favorably and several of them were at their request. And I was just having a conversation with Skip and Bill prior to the meeting. I think it was really just a matter of us sitting down and taking the time and spending that time to put this process together. But, again, were people gruff with the public? Yes. You know, Smith Point, as I am sure you are aware, especially Legislator Foley, is a unique place. We have people from all over the County that use that facility. Do we have our problem people? Yes, we do have our problem people.

Are they in the minority? Yes, I'm happy to say that they are in the minority. But they can be trying and they do test the patience of the staff. And I'm not making excuses for them because I tell them, you know, you can hang up the phone and scream at the wall, you can deal with somebody who maybe is distasteful in terms of how they're dealing with you, but you can't get into a shouting match with them. Has that happened on occasion? I'm sure it has. And I've told the staff, you know, we've got to minimize that, you know, we got to step back from the situation, take a deep breath. Somebody walks out of the door after they've registered, again, you can mumble under your breath.

But, you know, I've made a concerted effort to impress upon them the importance of customer service because these people are our customers. And while they're not all easily dealt with, they are still our customers and we have to do the best job that we can to do that. I have not responded, Legislator Foley, to that particular letter because it was addressed to you. But I drafted something but it hasn't gone out yet.

LEG. FOLEY:

Once you have a written response, I'll then contact again our constituent and then we could go over this and whether in the same amount of detail or however your letter frames it. But, your remarks today are encouraging. And I speak for a number of patrons who utilize either the outer beach or the beach itself, the pavilion area. And when you mention the fact that there was a -- there's another term -- terminology -- a learning curve for the new management, you put it very diplomatically. But the fact of the matter is there needs to be an improved way in which this management team at Smiths Point relates to the public. And today's response from you indicates that they understand that; and that they will be dealing with the public in a fashion as a bit more respectful and also more responsive.

As you also said, and I'll finish with this point, Madam Chair, it's a very eclectic group that uses Smiths Point. And the management people, people who work there, have to know that, appreciate that and respect that. And that hasn't always come through. So now that they're on the right path, we expect better for the next season. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. You said you have a second --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

LEG. CARPENTER:

If I just could --

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Yes.

LEG. CARPENTER:

I just want to commend you for taking that approach of letting the staff know that these are our customers. And that kind of thinking or that kind of policy and sharing with your employees is something that really should be shared with other departments in this County because I think sometimes people forget that; that when people are calling the office of Social Services or the Health Department or whichever department they're calling, that these are our customers and need to be treated with respect. And that isn't always the case. And this is the first time in my memory that I can ever remember hearing a Commissioner say what you've said, that I've told the staff these are our customers and we have to be respectful. So I appreciate that.

LEG. FOLEY:

As a matter of fact, I don't think any other Parks Commissioner in the past, particularly two Parks Commissioners go, have ever said that. Three or four. So you have one over on them.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Get a copy of the minutes today. Okay, the second issue?

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Well, actually I have two other things. You're going to have a resolution in front of you on Tuesday regarding the National Audubon site in Islip. And part of the process for that was to get the trustees to approve of that. And we didn't have a meeting but we polled the trustees this week and they are in favor of the acquisition so I wanted to make that known on the record. So that information is available for Tuesday.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

In addition, I'm hopeful that you will have a CN in front of you on Tuesday regarding the

infamous Smith Point sand replenishment. You approved of a resolution, I believe in October -- I think it was in October, I am not specifically sure of when it was approved of. And that resolution was for 1.4 million dollars to get sand from the Moriches dredging project that the Army Corps is doing. The Army Corps bid the project. The bids came in too high. It was then determined that they couldn't take the sand from the Moriches Inlet project, that they were going to take it from the Shinnecock Inlet dredging project. And then that fell through because they didn't have the proper equipment to use as well as the costs being too high.

We have been meeting with the Army Corps, the State Department of Environmental Conservation, with the Department of Public Works in terms of finding an alternate solution. And the alternate solution is to take it from one of the Fire Island Erosion Control Districts. That's a project that is going on right now. DPW is in the process of fast tracking a bid that they intend to have back fairly quickly for the same amount of money in order that we can go ahead with the project. The way the resolution will change is where the sand is coming from. The dollar amount doesn't change. The funding source doesn't change. That doesn't change at all. It's just where the sand is being gotten from. So I'm sitting here in front of you today asking for your support of that resolution when you see it on Tuesday.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

So the only thing that is changing is where it's coming from.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Everything else is exactly --

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Okay, good. Thank you. And on behalf I think of -- and I'm sure they'll all join -- this is our last meeting. Thank you very much for your cooperation and for your work and Happy New Year.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

And I want thank all of you, too. Really, we have sometimes had very spirited discussion but I

always leave here with a very charged battery. And I think all of you have a very good understanding of what the department does and I want to thank you for your support. It's really given me a boost over the last year.

LEG. FOLEY:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you.

LEG. CARPENTER:

I just -- I know that this is the last meeting that the Chair will be chairing the Parks Committee. I don't know who's going to be sitting on it, but we do know that she will not be here in January. And I just want to thank you for your dedication to the residents of this County especially with their parks. There have been many, many issues that have come before us. And you've really been passionate in advocating for the parks and the park users. So I thank you for that.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER GORDON:

I echo that, Legislator Fields. I think you are a very dedicated public servant. And I've appreciated the input that you've given us in the department.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Thank you very much.

LEG. FOLEY:

Madam Chair, I'd like to also echo those complimentary remarks; and also add the fact in the near future no doubt you'll be in the position whereby the resources of the state government will be able to help the County Parks System and the new County Executive's administration. I'm sure that you'll be in a position to realize some of the goals that you've been trying to achieve on a County level and to do so through the state.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

As they say, from your lips to God's ears.

LEG. ALDEN:

Madam Chair, I've only been here six years, but actually I think I chaired the Parks Committee at one time. And you've been one of the better Parks Chairman or Chairwoman.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

How about best?

LEG. ALDEN:

No, because I chaired it at one time.

CHAIRPERSON FIELDS:

Oh, okay. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you all for your cooperation. I think it's been a wonderful Committee. And I've very much enjoyed serving. Thank you. Motion to adjourn.

(THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:53 PM)