

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

OF THE

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York on Wednesday, February 5, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Jay Schneiderman - Chairman
Legislator Kara Hahn - Vice-Chair
Legislator Tom Cilmi - Member
Legislator Bill Lindsay - Member
Legislator Kevin McCaffrey - Member

Also in Attendance:

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory - District No. 15
Legislator Rob Calarco - District No. 7
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Terry Pearsall - Chief of Staff/Presiding Officer's Office
Bob Doering - Budget Review Office
Christina DeLisi - Aide to Legislator Schneiderman
Chris DeLuca - Aide to Legislator Cilmi
Brian Sapp - Aide to Legislator Lindsay
Michael Cavanagh - Aide to Legislator Lindsay
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Bill Schilling - Aide to Legislator Calarco
Greg Dawson - Commissioner, Suffolk County Department of Parks
Greg Marafino - Suffolk County Department of Parks
Lance Reinheimer - Director, Vanderbilt Museum
Rick Brand - Newsday

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

MINUTES TRANSCRIBED BY:

Kim Castiglione - Legislative Secretary

Parks 2/5/14

(The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Good afternoon. I would like to call this meeting of the Parks and Recreation Committee to order on this 5th day of February, 2014. Please rise and join us for the Pledge of Allegiance led by our new Legislator, Kevin McCaffrey.

Salutation

Please be seated. Okay, we're going to begin our meeting with Public Portion. If you wish to address the committee you need to fill out a yellow card, available at the front table. I only have one yellow card filled out, Lance Reinheimer. No stranger to this body, he used to be with BRO and now is with the Vanderbilt Museum. Lance, you have three minutes.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Thank you very much. My purpose here today is really to introduce myself to the new Legislators and to give you a little overview of the Vanderbilt Museum, what we've done this past year, where we're going and why it's important for us to continue to get support from the County. We can't survive without the County. You invested four million dollars into our new planetarium, opened up in March. Since the planetarium opened up in March, 67,000 people have come through the planetarium; 95,000 have visited the Vanderbilt in total. We have 40,000 school children come through this year. We have children from almost every school district that visits the Vanderbilt one time or another.

I provided you with a package, a little kind of taste of what we have, some of our marketing materials. So just to go over some of the things. One of the articles that is in your packet is from The Observer. We received a \$100,000 grant, private grant, to do renovations of the Stoll Wing. This wing was built in 1970 by one of our Board members, Judge Stoll, and his family came back and they donated \$100,000 to do renovations. In addition to that, we just this past year we have a 20-year agreement with the Reichert family, Reichert Foundation, a \$1.7 million agreement. That provides us \$80,000 a year to support our planetarium. So we're working hard to find private donations, to find private funding to augment our operating budget and to become structurally sound financially.

This past Sunday, if you get Newsday, we were in the top ten, number nine. Our very popular Valentine's Dinner is sold out. We can only accommodate 100 people and we've already sold that out. We do Valentine's Dinner, we also do a holiday dinner.

One of the exciting things we have is a traveling classroom. This was a donation from the Museum of Natural History. This vehicle is ten years old. It's going out to school districts. We also have a grant from National Grid of \$13,000 to provide some of the operating expenses for servicing targeted schools. So this is going out to school districts throughout Suffolk and Nassau County. This has just started. To be honest with you, it has been a little difficult to get this off the ground, to get going, but we are going in the right direction. I think once the word gets out there, we get to school districts, this is going to take off. And this is something, too, we can do for community groups, libraries, Legislature's district offices. We can come out and visit the community and it's really a good way to introduce children to the concepts of exploring space from here on earth. And it's a perfect complement to our planetarium.

So I just wanted to introduce myself, say a few words, provide a package for you. In there is our annual report, our school brochure that we put together this year to promote our school programs. And we're very popular with schools, but, you know, with school budgets it's also a challenge, too. Transportation is difficult, so that's why this traveling classroom, I think, will pick up some of that slack.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Questions? Lance, don't go anywhere yet. We'll start with Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Hi Lance. How are you today?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Fine, thank you.

LEG. CILMI:

First of all, new to the Parks Committee, looking forward to a good year. How are we doing at the Vanderbilt financially?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Financially we're doing very well.

LEG. CILMI:

Okay.

MR. REINHEIMER:

We'll finish this year in the black. My estimate is somewhere between 100 and \$150,000 in the black. We do have a rolling forward deficit that we're still working on, but on a single standalone year we finished this year in the black, so we're doing well. The planetarium gives us that cash flow, the grants, the special funds that we've received helps us with some of our operating costs as far as maintenance and working on the buildings.

LEG. CILMI:

How has your attendance been subsequent to the installation of the new projector?

MR. REINHEIMER:

We've had 100,000 -- 95 to 100,000 people visit this year.

LEG. CILMI:

How does that compare to last -- the previous year?

MR. REINHEIMER:

It far exceeds it. You know, the numbers -- part of our new innovations is to do on-line ticketing, on-line visitor -- capturing visitor numbers, so to give you numbers for the preceding year are a little sketchy. I can break down numbers now by each individual program. So since the planetarium opened in March, March 15th, we had 67,000 people come to the planetarium. The previous year I would say we had probably in the neighborhood of 30,000 people. This year we're about a hundred. And most of those people that came last year would have been for -- preceding the opening of the planetarium, would have been during the summer for special events and summer things. But when the planetarium was closed we don't have the visitation, we don't have the school visitations. School visitations the year before was somewhere around 3,000 children. The schools like coming to the planetarium. They also do the museum side of our education programs. They get two field trips for one trip, so they get real bang for their buck. But to answer your question, financially we're doing very well.

LEG. CILMI:

Has your fund-raising and the grants been relatively consistent or have you seen an increase in that as well?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Since I've been there we've raised --

LEG. CILMI:

In the past year and a half or so.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Year and a half, well, no, it's increased. The agreement with the Reichert Foundation was this year, that was \$1.7 million. The National Grid grant was new this year, meaning 2013, was new this year, \$13,000.

LEG. CILMI:

I guess what I'm getting at is it sounds to me then like the fact that you're in the black this year, and I assume able then to sort of bite off a portion of that deficit that you're carrying over, is a function of increased success in receiving grants and other fund-raising activities as well as improved marketing and operations at the planetarium.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Correct. You know, your investment in our planetarium is the driving force for our financial success. We cannot generate visitors without the planetarium. We cannot market this property without the planetarium. Although this property is rich in history, the Vanderbilt Family is certainly an important family in our history of the United States, to go through the mansion, it's as it was left by the Vanderbilt's in 1944. It doesn't change. Our museum is the museum that William K. Vanderbilt built himself. So it's a time capsule from 1944. We don't change our exhibits, we don't change our mansion. So for people to come back, why would they come back? The planetarium, the changing shows in the planetarium drives our membership, our visitors, and is vitally important to the survival of the museum, which is why the Board built this in 1970. In going through the minutes, that was their reason. They needed a way to increase visitation and of course that was in lockstep with the walk on the moon.

LEG. CILMI:

And finally, what's the status of your efforts to, and forgive me if we've already done this, but to establish some sort of a catering operation on the facility.

MR. REINHEIMER:

That's a Board decision. At the meeting of the last Board Meeting of the Vanderbilt they are going to go forward with a new RFP to look for catering. I know personally I've received a couple of phone calls from two separate caterers. People are interest -- there's interest in the Vanderbilt for catering from my experience with these phone calls, and I think it's a good time to start to go out with a new RFP. This facility is far different than it was three years ago.

In addition to the work on the planetarium, I'm concentrating on the grounds. I'm bringing the park back to the Vanderbilt. I'm spending \$30,000 to do tree work between last summer and I have tree work being done, weather permitting, this month here, because the grounds are important, the parklike grounds are important. I've bought equipment for our grounds people to keep brush and to reclaim areas that are overgrown. So when you visit the grounds this summer they're spectacular. You can actually see the mansion in parts where you couldn't see it before. We have knocked down the brush, we have beautiful vistas.

LEG. CILMI:

Were it not for the relationship that we established with the individual that you mentioned earlier --

MR. REINHEIMER:

The Reichert Foundation.

LEG. CILMI:

Yes. Would we still be in the black?

MR. REINHEIMER:

We would. This year that agreement provided \$80,000. We're in the black by at least 100 to 150,000, so even without that we would be in the black, yes.

LEG. CILMI:

Good to hear. Thanks very much, Lance. Appreciate it.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Thank you.

LEG. CILMI:

And keep up the good work.

MR. REINHEIMER:

And thank you. I want to thank the Legislature for their support and also thank the County Executive, because I can't do -- we can't get things progressed or purchase orders without the County Executive, and we certainly can't work without the Legislature's support. And I want you to know that we appreciate it and that your money is well spent at the Vanderbilt. It's a wonderful facility. Thank you very much.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Lance, if I could ask you a quick question?

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Legislator Lindsay.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Quick question and a quick comment. On your future fund-raising events, if you could just include us or send an e-mail with a list of future fund-raising events that you have.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Sure. We should have every Legislator on our e-mail list, but I'll make sure that we update it. That's a good point, because obviously we have some new Legislators and I'm not sure if my PR person updated that.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Thank you. And just a quick question as it relates to storm damage from the hurricane. Have all your insurance claims been settled on that? I saw on your financials you had over \$100,000 in insurance payments. Are all those settled and closed, or are any of those still open?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Yeah, that was probably referring to -- we had a metal building that collapsed several years ago, and that \$100,000 was a settlement for that. Storm damage we really haven't incurred major storm damage. Our seawall did, the County Executive's aware of that. I don't know if they're claiming that for Federal funds, but we did have some damage due to the -- three areas of the seawall were damaged. We're self-insured so -- through the County for liability and damage to buildings and things like that. We do have a fine arts insurance policy on top of that, and that's what paid that \$100,000 claim, was the fine arts policy.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Don't go anywhere, I have some questions. Lance, I appreciate you coming out here and addressing the committee and meeting some of the new members of the Parks Committee. Can you -- let me start by asking you what the current operating budget is for the Vanderbilt. Do you know off-hand?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Sure. It's about \$2.1 million.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Two point one million. Okay. How much is revenue from people coming to the museum?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Our admissions is approximately \$600,000 this past year in actual revenue.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. So then the other 1.5 million is --

MR. REINHEIMER:

A combination of site use, weddings, special events, fund-raising and of course a big chunk of that is the Hotel/Motel Tax, which is around -- in 2014 is 1.1 million; 2013 was 930,000.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Right. Okay. And just maybe for the committee's edification. So the Hotel Tax a 3% tax on lodging. Of that, 10% of all the revenues collected go directly to the Vanderbilt Museum. Today that's right, in the neighborhood of a million dollars. It's significant. There is an ability within the law to cut that back by about 20% each year for five years, I believe, is the way it was written.

We went through a recession. It was a very difficult time for the Vanderbilt Museum as well, which saw its endowment greatly affected in its stock portfolio. I imagine that's rebounded considerably at this point. Maybe you can provide some information, but we, you know, that million dollar subsidy from the County is a significant subsidy. In fact, it's as much as we spend on all the other cultural venues combined. So there's 10% for, you know, every, you know, performing arts center and every other culture venue, and 10% just for Vanderbilt, which is significant.

Are you at a point where you, you know, you just spoke about a \$150,000 surplus. Are you at a point where we could start paring back that subsidy so we could provide some support for some of the other cultural art venues?

MR. REINHEIMER:

Well, the surplus is on a, you know, a standalone year basis and it's not really surplus. We ended in the black. We, you know, when you add up the expenses versus revenue we had -- we should be about \$150,000 to the black. That's a combination of management control of our cash flow. You know, when I first started our budget was 1.7 million. That's an artificial budget. Even at 2.1 million there are things that we need that we didn't buy. You know, I'm having a challenge and difficult time with snow removal because our equipment is broken. We've got a truck that's 20 years old that's rusting apart. That's our primary plow. So, you know, what I'm trying to do as we go along and as cash flow and funds permit is to start to buy the tools we need in order to manage this estate. I have two full-time grounds people taking care of 43 acres. Not only are they doing that, but they're doing restoration. We've done a lot of our own restoration, construction work, with our own people, either through the grants with the Stoll Wing or using operating funds. So, you know --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I certainly understand that maintaining one of these mansions is very expensive. You also just got a, you know, that Reichert grant which is significant. There are lots of organizations that are meritorious that are, you know, struggling to operate, too. When that Hotel Tax Law was written, it was written to help Vanderbilt at a difficult time with the understanding that we would be weaning ourselves away a little bit, paring back some of that subsidy. You know, it's not just that million dollar subsidy. And believe me, I like the museum and what it does. You know, we're carrying the debt service on everything, including that projector. That was a three million dollar projector.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Four million.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

For million dollar projector. So we're talking about debt service in the neighborhood of \$300,000 a year on top of the million-one in Hotel Tax. That's 1.4 right there in County subsidy. That's a lot.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

And that's only one Capital Project. There's many others.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So it's certainly a valuable place, there's no question about it. It has its historic place, but it seems to me like as we struggle in -- every, you know, artistic historical venue is struggling to, you know, make ends meet, that maybe now is the time where we could start pulling back from a million dollar subsidy to maybe an \$800,000 subsidy, something. Of course you're going to fight that. That's a decision that we as a body have to look at. You are telling me that you, you know, had money left over last year and I'm thinking well, maybe if we gave you a little bit less you would have broken even and a lot of other venues would have been able to be subsidized or supported.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I'm certainly not arguing. You know, your logic has merit, it absolutely does. I just want you to know that we're managing all our funds, whether they're operating funds through the Hotel/Motel, whether they're Capital Projects, we're managing the funds that we receive in a way to bring this facility back to where it should be. One of the things, and you asked about the endowment. The endowment went down to almost the corpus, 8.6 million. For those of you that are new, when William Vanderbilt willed the mansion or the estate to the County, there was a \$2 million endowment, and then another Vanderbilt member, family member, contributed 6.2 million, so that the corpus is \$8.2 million. That in 2008 was almost down to the corpus.

Right now we're up to probably, you know, it's around 10.5 million. This past year we only took out \$100,000 from the endowment because of the Hotel/Motel Tax, because the intent of the Hotel/Motel Tax was to give the endowment a rest, to grow it, so that when the Hotel/Motel Tax sunsets that we'd have a -- our endowment would be back in a place where it could provide us with the funds we need. So --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's an interesting point. If that's your intention, then how do you -- because the Hotel Tax ends next year, December 31st, 2015.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Correct.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Are you willing to move forward without that subsidy in 2016.

MR. REINHEIMER:

We can't survive the way we are today without it.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

*(*Laughter*)*.

MR. REINHEIMER:

And let me explain why. One of the problems with endowments, and since the crash of 2008 and the crash of 2001, and looking at the volatility of the stock market is the old adage was, you know, 8%; 4% distribution, 4% growth. Just a 5% distribution from our endowment's \$500,000. We're short \$500,000. This is still an artificial budget. There's still things we could do. And I'm not argue -- you know --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

No, no, it's interesting, because the stock portfolio obviously has bounced back, but you're not taking it to subsidize operational expenses. At this point you're still building it, even so you're still running, you know, positive in terms of cash flow. The Hotel Tax likely is going to get reauthorized. Whether it gets reauthorized with the same allocation for Vanderbilt or not I don't know, that will be up to our State representatives. It sounds like you are saying you still need the Hotel Tax. You're not ready to go without it. So my question then is really what level can you -- can you run with?

MR. REINHEIMER:

And that's a question I think we'd have to sit down and I certainly would be happy to discuss with you. You know, the Vanderbilt is, like you say, one organization of many that are worthy of support from the Hotel/Motel Tax. So, you know, we can have that conversation and we can make choices as to where we are and what we need down the road.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Another area, and I'm sure this is going to come up a lot in this committee, is the condition of our other County buildings, you know, Vanderbilt being one, but we have a lot of historic buildings. Right now the way the Hotel Tax is written, if we peeled away money from Vanderbilt in terms of subsidy it wouldn't go to those other buildings, it would go to cultural, but maybe that's something we can look at, having it become a dedicated fund for the restoration of other County buildings. So it would stay in the same type of use, but maybe a smaller proportion of it would go to Vanderbilt then currently goes, and we could have some money available for, you know, Sagtikos Manor or Third House or whatever it might be. There's lots of them.

LEG. HAHN:

*(*Laughter*)*. Saw that coming.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

The schoolhouse, we got lots of buildings all over the County, so. All right.

MR. REINHEIMER:

This County certainly has a lot of assets that need support and need renovation on the historic side, you're absolutely right, and that's choices. I'd be happy to sit down with you and work with the Legislature and come up with a plan that's best for the County, the Vanderbilt, the Legislature, absolutely. You know, and your support in the past has been wonderful. We would not be where

we are today without the support of this committee.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I appreciate that. I'm trying to just recognize really the reality is that things have gotten better.

MR. REINHEIMER:

Absolutely.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Things have gotten better and --

MR. REINHEIMER:

I wouldn't have stayed if they didn't get better.

*(*Laughter*)*

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

-- maybe, you know, the level of subsidy that was established when we established it at the height of the recession, you know, really needs to be looked at now, and maybe we can wean ourselves a little bit off of that and make funds available for other really important, you know, as well as the Vanderbilt. You know, County buildings or other functions, so. Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Just --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I figured my conversation would have sparked discussion.

LEG. CILMI:

Just to briefly debate. You know, I would say that the economic recovery that we may or may not be experiencing is tenuous at best, I think, at this point, and given the fact that it's one year that they have seen of this positive cash flow, it may be premature to talk about reducing our subsidy just yet. I'd like to see them go through another year or so, maybe more, of positive cash flow and then I think you're right to say that, you know, we do need to wean them off of that subsidy. I just think to do it too prematurely might, you know, we might waste everything that we've done so far, and I'd hate to see that happen.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

You know, if you really want to take a full look at their financial picture you have to look at that stock portfolio, which is now in the ten million dollar range.

LEG. CILMI:

Absolutely, but that stock portfolio is just -- if we haven't seen in the past couple of days, it's as volatile as it has been.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I understand that, but they made a decision to not use any of that -- to reinvest all of it rather than use some of it to cover operating costs, which is how it was originally set up to do. So, you know, where they set the threshold now for that portfolio, it's like the State pension fund. Where do you set that threshold?

LEG. CILMI:

Right.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I don't know the number, whether 10.5 million is enough or 20 million is enough, who knows. That's something that they're going to have to calculate. I think you have to look at that in terms of their financial health and say, okay, yeah, they had \$150,000 in, you know, additional funds this year left over plus they had a couple of million dollars growth in their stock portfolio.

LEG. CILMI:

No doubt it has to be considered, my only point is that I think the facility is, you know, just on the cusp of recovery let's say, and the stock market is still in a place where it's very, very volatile. And had they used some of the -- some of the gains that they saw in their market portfolio, they might have done so at some, you know, they might have done so prematurely because of the fact that the market is so volatile. We've seen it go down a couple of hundred points, a few hundred points, in the past week or two.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

It's a good conversation to have. Anyone else? Legislator Hahn.

LEG. HAHN:

I think we have to wait. I would support extending that, because you have to wait until you're at a place where that stock portfolio is giving you what you need to run it, and you're clearly not there yet. You have to grow it so that it's big enough to give you the subsidy that the sales tax is. So I think we have to wait a little bit longer and, you know, that number is not something I can determine, but it's a discussion that we should continue to have and we should find what that is. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Anyone else? Okay.

MR. REINHEIMER:

I do. Just, you know, talking about the endowment. It was at a high at one time of almost \$18 million before 2001. And, you know, the number that we -- you know, my opinion, a comfortable number is \$20 million, and that's why we aren't using those funds. And that's another discussion that we should have with the Legislature is the investment objective. Right now it's 50-50, and as you know, bonds are holding back, but that's a good hedge against a volatile stock market. The fund, considering we haven't taken many, or we only took \$110,000 out this past year, really didn't do as well as I thought it would. When you have 30%, you know, increase in the stock market this past year, we certainly didn't experience a 30% increase in our fund, because part of it's in bonds, and that's the investment objective and that's, you know, that's a policy that was made and it's a very prudent policy. You don't want to be in a volatile, you don't want to be all in stocks. You have to be conservative, and that conservative aspect of the fund does, in a growing stock market, lag your growth. But I thank you again for your support.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you.

MR. REINHEIMER:

And I do invite everybody, new and old, to come out when the weather is better and see firsthand what we're doing out there. I'd be happy to have all of you come out, you know, on your own and take you through the property so that you can see the merits of supporting the Vanderbilt. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Thank you, Lance. Okay, so let's move on to the agenda. First let me welcome the new committee as well as the newly elected Legislators, Legislator McCaffrey and Legislator Lindsay. Welcome.

It's also a new Chairmanship for me although I was Parks Chair some years ago. We have only two bills on the agenda.

Introductory Prime

We'll start with ***IR 1001-14 - Repealing Resolution No. 726-2013 and authorizing the use of Smith Point County Park by the Long Island 2 Day Walk to Fight Breast Cancer, Inc., for Breast Cancer Walk in 2014 (Browning).***

Commissioner, if you will come forward.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Sure.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

That's Commissioner Dawson. Welcome. Thanks for coming out this snowy day, this icy day. Do we have a motion?

LEG. HAHN:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Motion by Legislator Hahn to approve. Is there a second?

LEG. LINDSAY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Second on the motion. Commissioner, you are all right with this?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, that's fine. I think the Legislator is going to put another resolution forward. The event is going from a three day event down to a one day event. Historically it's been three days, so she's going to put a new resolution in.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. Any discussion? All right, I'll call the vote. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Approved. ***(Vote: 5-0-0-0 - Presiding Officer Gregory is included in the vote)***

IR 1002-14 - Authorizing an agreement to revitalize Cedar Island Lighthouse (Schneiderman).

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

I'll make a motion to table. Do I have a second?

LEG. HAHN:

Second.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Second by Legislator Hahn. Commissioner, I don't have Michael Lahey from this organization that is interested in running, you know, revitalizing or rebuilding the building and running the bed and breakfast there. I would rather have him in the room and I'd like to have a conversation with you as well. So if you don't mind we'll table that for a cycle.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Any discussion? All right. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? So tabled. *(Vote: 5-0-0-0 - Presiding Officer Gregory is included in the vote).*

Anyone else for the Commissioner? Legislator Cilmi.

LEG. CILMI:

Just quickly. I know, Commissioner, you're not prepared to discuss this today, but maybe if you can think about it for our next meeting. I've gotten some complaints, which I can't even really specify, reference our on-line green key operation reservation system, etcetera. This is irrespective of what you and I spoke about the other day. And I'd sort of like you to kind of talk to us a little bit about that system and where we're going with it, what some of the challenges are now, and maybe for a later meeting or if you are prepared to do it now.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I think we'll present at a later meeting, but just for your own knowledge, the current reservation system that we have, the USE Direct expires at the end of this year and we're currently working with IT to go out for a new, completely new reservation system.

LEG. CILMI:

Oh, good. Okay, so maybe then you can talk to us about some of the things that went well with the current system, some of the things that you feel could be improved with the new system.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Absolutely.

LEG. CILMI:

All right. Thank you.

LEG. SCHNEIDERMAN:

Commissioner, while I have you. Last year we ran a pilot program of reduced fares for golf for veterans. How did that go? Because I'm hoping to make that permanent.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Well, I can give you more detail at the next Legislative meeting, but just at first blush I think we had about a thousand golfers.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

People did take advantage of it.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Did take advantage of that, and we'll do a -- when you put your resolution --

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Interestingly enough, when we did the BRO analysis of it we predicted actually even though we were lowering the fees we'd end up with more revenue. Did that turn out to be the case?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

It's difficult to determine that, because a lot of those golfers, they got the resident fee anyway. When you put that resolution forward we changed the fee structure. Some of the veterans went and actually brought in their DD-214's and signed up for that program. So, again, we had about a

thousand golfers.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

So would you say it was fairly successful based on your --

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yeah, I would say so.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay, good. That's good. So, yeah, I will be looking toward trying to make that permanent then as a fee.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Okay. We'll work with BRO when the legislation comes forward to give them a good indication of what the financial impact is going to be.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Maybe this is for the next meeting, but how in general are we doing with parks in terms of -- you know, I'm not one to, you know, believe that parks have to be self-sustaining. I think that parks are for people to recreate and there's a cost to operating parks and, you know, I don't want to necessarily have advertising or high fees at all of our parks. I want people to use our parks. But how -- was 2013 a pretty good year in terms of our revenues?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

I'd say considering the effects we had of Sandy. We had a loss of revenue with some of our golf courses. Obviously we're weather dependent. We had historic rains in the month of June last year, so revenues were down slightly, but I'd say all in all we had a pretty good year. We're looking forward to opening day.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Pretty well put together, Meschutt is back in action and the breaches at Cupsogue are fixed, Smith Point.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes, I mean, I'm happy to, we discussed this last year. We sustained considerable damage from Sandy. We worked with the Department of Public Works. We closed the two breaches, the one at Cupsogue and the one at Meschutt, but we had a tremendous amount of -- I'm sorry, at Cupsogue. We had a tremendous amount of damage at Meschutt Beach, which the Department of Public Works came in and fixed up, so we were open on time. We had all the facilities ready to go for Memorial Day last year, which is quite the feat. We had thousands of trees down in the parks, so.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Are we still waiting on sand at Smith Point through FEMA?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes. I mean, I think that's more of a question for Commissioner Anderson. They're working with the governmental agencies, Army Corps of Engineers, Fish and Wildlife, National Seashore, to get those projects moving.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. And revenues, other revenues, concession revenues, everything pretty much in line with expectations?

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

Okay. We can explore these things in more detail at, you know, future meetings when you are prepared. I'm sorry to catch you off guard. Any other questions for the Commissioner? All right, thank you, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DAWSON:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SCHNEIDERMAN:

All right, anything else? All right, there's nothing else on the agenda so we are adjourned. Thank you.

(The meeting was adjourned at 1:41 p.m.)