

**PUBLIC SAFETY & PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE
of the
Suffolk County Legislature**

Minutes

A regular meeting of the Public Safety & Public Information 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 **January 22, 2003**.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Legislator Fred Towle - Chairman
Legislator Joseph Caracappa - Vice-Chair
Legislator David Bishop
Legislator William Lindsay
Legislator Andrew Crecca
Legislator George Guldi

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Paul Sabatino - Counsel to the Legislature
Bill Doyle - Aide to Legislator Towle
Meaghan O'Reilly - Aide to Presiding Officer Tonna
Rosalind Gazes - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Kevin Duffy - Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Joe Michaels - Deputy County Executive for Public Safety
Bill Faulke - County Executive's Office/Intergovernmental Relations
Alan Otto - Chief of Staff/Suffolk County Sheriff's Department
Joseph Rubacka - Lieutenant/Suffolk County Sheriff's Department
John Gallagher - Commissioner/Suffolk County Police Department
James Abbott - Chief Deputy Commissioner/Suffolk County Police Dept
James Maggio - Deputy Commissioner/Suffolk County Police Department
Phil Robilotto - Chief of Department/Suffolk County Police Department
Mike Pirone - Suffolk County Police Department
Debbie Eppel - Public Information Office
Vito Dagnello - Vice-President/Correction Officer's Association
Bill Ellis - Director of Public Relations/Correction Officer's Assoc.
Tom Muratore - Vice-President/Police Benevolent Association
Ruth Cusack - Suffolk County League of Women Voters
Elie Seidman-Smith - Director/Community Service Program/ARC
All Other Interested Parties

MINUTES TAKEN BY:

Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I will call the meeting to order and if Legislator Crecca would lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Salutation

Do we have any cards?

MS. MAHONEY:

Not that I know of.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. Is Joe Michaels here? Joe, you want to come up for a second? I asked my staff to contact Joe Michaels just to give us an update on the security plan that we have implemented for the Dennison Building and for the County Center. Good morning, Joe. How are you? Good afternoon, actually.

MR. MICHAELS:

Congratulations on your chairmanship.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Thank you, Joe.

MR. MICHAELS:

At the present time, both the Dennison Building and the County Center in Riverhead are approximately 75% complete in their job of the hardware; I verified this yesterday with Lou Calderone who is apparently the Clerk-of-the-Works on the job. The personnel are being hired as they're being cleared from the -- by Civil Service in terms of the psychiatric and medical checks. The uniforms that these people will be wearing are on order and they should -- at the present time they've got -- there is one stationed in the Dennison Building, I believe that's one of the first ones that have been cleared, and he is in a make-shift uniform which is a T-shirt which just says security but that's not the uniform they're going to be wearing.

The input of the people who are housed in these two facilities, at the present time the Police Department is inputting all of the information. They ran into a glitch, they thought they could do it from one -- they thought they could do it from Yaphank but it turns out they can only input the information on the people who are in the buildings at the sites at which they're employed. It should be on-line and there should be a lock down of the buildings within two weeks. So that's where we stand on, if there any other questions I might be able to answer.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

So two weeks on the hardware and you think the staffing will be in

place by then?

MR. MICHAELS:

Well, they're hiring them as fast as they can, it's just a matter of

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getting the returns on the psychologicals and their physical examinations.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. So if you could give us, you know, a continued update I guess at each of the meetings as to where that's going. Obviously that was a keen point of interest of all the Legislators last year and obviously the fact that it's still not in place and we're, you know, three weeks into the new year I guess. That was one of the questions that was brought to my attention.

The other issue that I want to address at the next meeting, to give you some time to prep, is to cover where we are with the helicopter services in eastern Suffolk County for the new year, if we're going to continue to lease or wind up building a building. So if you could coordinate an update on that between the Police Commissioner and the Public Works Commissioner, that would obviously be helpful. I know it's a great interest to Legislator Guldi and myself and Caracappa and Caracciolo obviously as the main sponsors of that originally, along with Legislator Fisher. That is obviously an important point that we want to make sure is covered this year again so we know where we are as opposed to be sitting here on Memorial Day and not sure exactly where we're going to house the helicopter.

MR. MICHAELS:

Certainly.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Any other questions from the committee? Okay. Last call for anybody appearing before the committee. I don't think we have any cards this morning, this afternoon; I keep on thinking this morning, I don't know why.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Are we going to hear from the Commissioner?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Commissioner, you want to address us on anything this afternoon? I was going to let you off the hook but Legislator Lindsay wanted to know if you were --

COMMISSIONER GALLAGHER:

No, I have nothing specific to address with the calendar.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. Why don't we move on to the agenda then, I guess.

Tabled Resolution

Resolution 1832-02 - Adopting Local Law No. 2002, a Local Law implementing volunteer fire fighter and ambulance worker County real property tax exemptions (County Executive).

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Motion to table.

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CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion to table by Legislator Caracappa.

LEG. BISHOP:

Second.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Second by Legislator Bishop. Was there a reason it was tabled at the last -- or has been tabled?

LEG. LINDSAY:

We were waiting for some State legislation, right?

LEG. CARACAPPA:

That's right.

LEG. LINDSAY:

I don't know what the status of the State legislation is; does anybody else know?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

If Counsel is in the building and he could join us, that would be helpful. I'm under some understanding that it actually passed. You know what, if you guys wouldn't mind skipping over this one, it would give him a chance to get here. We only have three resolutions on the agenda.

Moving on to 1878-02 (P) - Appropriating funds in connection with the renovations & additions to Police Precinct Building - 4th Precinct (CP 3184) (County Executive).

LEG. LINDSAY:

Now this was being held up because of the master plan for the North Complex

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. So we'll table this. Motion by myself, Legislator Caracappa second on 1878. Any discussion? There being none, all those in favor? All those opposed? 1878 is tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).

TABLED SENSE RESOLUTIONS

We have a Sense which was also tabled, I guess, Sense 69-2002 - Memorializing Resolution requesting the United States Congress to enact joint resolution authorizing use of force against Iraq (Binder).

LEG. BISHOP:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Motion to table by Legislator Bishop. Did you say subject to call or just table?

LEG. BISHOP:

Just table.

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CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Is there a second?

LEG. LINDSAY:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Legislator Lindsay. Any discussion? All in favor? All opposed?

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Opposed to table.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Opposed, Legislator Caracappa to tabling.

LEG. CRECCA:

I'm opposed.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Yeah, put myself opposed, too. So three opposed, three for, right?

LEG. GULDI:

I'm going to abstain, I don't have the resolution in front of me.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay, so Legislator Guldi is abstaining. Two for tabling, three against, the motion to table fails. Do we have any --

LEG. GULDI:
That was for tabling?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Yeah, that was for tabling.

LEG. GULDI:
No, I will vote yes.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Okay. You sure now, you're supporting tabling. I know it's a very controversial vote so I don't want you to be recorded inappropriately.

LEG. GULDI:
It's a Sense Resolution.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Yeah, that's exactly my point. Okay, 3-3, it fails for tabling.
Is there a motion to approve?

LEG. CRECCA:
Motion to discharge without recommendation.

LEG. CARACAPPA:
Second.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Okay, motion to discharge without recommendation I'm hearing; is that

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what we're doing? Okay, we got a motion by Legislator Crecca and seconded by Legislator Caracappa to discharge without recommendation. On that motion, any discussion?

LEG. BISHOP:
On the motion.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Legislator Bishop.

LEG. BISHOP:
I don't think it is the --

LEG. GULDI:
Foreign policy?

LEG. BISHOP:
I don't think that the Suffolk County Legislature should be making

foreign policy, and particularly without any meaningful hearing process to discuss --

LEG. GULDI:
Information, knowledge.

LEG. BISHOP:
-- information, knowledge.

LEG. CRECCA:
Well, yeah, I'm going to withdraw my second --

LEG. BISHOP:
It makes us look silly.

LEG. CRECCA:
Withdraw my second to the motion to discharge and I'm going to make a motion to reconsider the tabling motion.

LEG. GULDI:
Second the motion to reconsider.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Okay, so now we have -- this is pretty good, I'll tell you, amazing controversy on the first day of the committee. Okay, right now, Counsel, we have a motion to reconsider the tabling motion that failed. Legislator Crecca was on the side in which the bill failed and Legislator Guldi seconded the table. You were going to say something?

MR. SABATINO:
I was about to say, you need a corrected copy because it's dealing with the old Capital Budget, you have to get yourself to 2003.

LEG. BISHOP:
No, he's on a different resolution.

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CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
No, we're on the Sense, going to war with Iraq. The County Legislature has declared war on Iraq. Okay. The President hasn't made up his mind but we have. Okay, we've got a motion to reconsider the tabling. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? It's before us to reconsider the tabling motion. Motion by Legislator Bishop, second by Legislator Crecca to table. Any discussion? There being none, all in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Sense 69 is tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).

This is going to be an interesting year. Okay, let's go back to Resolution 1832 which is the questionable resolution. There was an

issue that we were waiting for State legislation, some thought maybe it passed, some thought maybe it did not. Before we moved on this, I guess we were looking for your guidance.

MR. SABATINO:

As of December 31st, there had been no action taken on correcting legislation; I don't think anything's happened in January because they haven't even organized.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

If we were to move on this, we can't do it because we don't have State approval or --

MR. SABATINO:

Well, the --

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

What's the implication if we move on it? Let's start with that.

MR. SABATINO:

If you do it on the -- if you act on the basis of what's in front of you right now, then there will be a \$14 average benefit as opposed to what was contemplated which is the -- I think it was 44 or \$46 is what was anticipated. But you have -- it's based on the existing formula. Legislator Cooper who had a competing bill had developed different language which basically said whatever the State legislation wound up being is what would be implemented, but that bill is not before you so.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Why could we not approve this now and then if the State takes action go with it at that point?

MR. SABATINO:

You could, too. My next sentence was going to be you have choices, you can either do them in seriatim which is pass this one and wait, or you can wait for something to happen or you can pass the third version which is to have language which says whatever they do you take advantage of it; those are the three choices.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. CRECCA:

Second.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

On the motion.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Second by Legislator Crecca. On the motion, Legislator Caracappa.

LEG. CARACAPPA:

Personally I think we should wait, to be quite honest with you. Because in the past committee, even though that's the past committee, it was the consensus that we didn't want to be disingenuous to the people who would be receiving this benefit that they were getting something that they really weren't. Ten percent of your property tax bill is something that everyone automatically thinks is going to be 10% across the board, we would like to see that and that's why we'd like -- I'd like to wait and give them that benefit and not be so disingenuous with relation to the number that is presented in this bill as it relates to the overall tax bill of the Suffolk County taxpayer. So I think it would be a better service to those people receiving this benefit if we do wait and give them that full benefit when it does become available for us to give it to them.

LEG. BISHOP:

And if I may.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Legislator Bishop.

LEG. BISHOP:

In discussions I've had with volunteer firefighters, they felt that without the cooperation of the other levels of government it was essentially a meaningless gesture. And again, you end up making it look like we're being political and pandering rather than trying to come up with a program that will actually induce more volunteerism. So my position is that we should link our adoption of this program to the other levels of government as well and have it have meaning rather than have it appear that it's something that it's not.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Some levels of government have already passed this, actually, some school districts.

LEG. BISHOP:

Which ones?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Actually I received a call from the Town of Riverhead asking me what we were doing on this resolution, that they were looking to take action and some of the school districts on the east end had already approved this, so I've been told.

LEG. BISHOP:

Maybe we should have a hearing.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

And my thought is on this, for what it's worth and I'll give you my two cents and then I'll recognize Legislator Lindsay -- you know, the

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State ought to get their act together; if they're going to do something they ought to do it. You know, for us to sit here and wait, we could be sitting here till September or November or December, or never for that matter. I mean, some things in Albany just go there and die and whatever it turns out to be, \$14 or whatever the discount is, it's a little more in an effort to try to help encourage and involve people and recruit people and do what you have to do in that category. Legislator Lindsay.

LEG. LINDSAY:

The other side of the whole argument is that maybe if the County steps forward it might be some kind of incentive for the other layers of government to jump in. And in all deference to the State, the State doesn't meet as often as we do, I don't think they have had any working sessions yet. What if we table this for one more round until next month or something like that, by then the State will have a time to go back into session; if they don't move on it I'd be all in favor of passing this with the \$14 or whatever it's worth.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Legislator Guldi then Legislator Crecca.

LEG. GULDI:

Yeah, just by way of suggestion. I think it's clear we're all on the same page, we all want the same result, but what strategy could we adopt to it rather than taking the \$14 action to ratchet up the attention on the other layers of government that need to act on this to see to it that we enact the across the board meaningful tax relief that's the goal and objective here? I mean, we can do Sense Resolutions, we all know the difference between Sense Resolutions and constituent letters in some layers of government is that we get circular filed faster than constituent letters do.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Legislator Guldi, we could declare war on the State instead of Iraq.

LEG. GULDI:

Well, actually they have declared war on us, why not?

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Well, what is the pleasure of the committee? We have a motion and a second. Legislator Crecca, I'm sorry.

LEG. CRECCA:

That's fine. Mr. Chairman, I agree with Legislator Lindsay. And I'd also say that what we need to do between now and the next meeting is, you know, just contact Ray Bennardo from the County Exec's Office, also contact -- we all have our own connections to State representatives, I certainly will reach out to my Assemblyman and my State Senator and find out -- because, you know, my State Senator and I have such a great relationship, so; we actually do, though. So I will reach out to him and find out if there's going to be some action on this, sort of try to get the inside scoop so that by next meeting we can take some meaningful action.

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CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

I'll withdraw my motion and make a motion to table for one more meeting.

LEG. GULDI:

Second.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Second by Legislator Guldi. Any further discussion? There being none, all in favor? All opposed? Any abstentions? 1832 is tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).

LEG. BISHOP:

Excellent job.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

We do have one speaker before the committee, Elie Smith. Elie, why don't you come on up. Elie, as you're coming up, I just want to ask Counsel one thing because you were out of the room also. Have we -- have you got any update on 1878? I know Legislator Caracappa said he's going to address it in Public Works; you haven't heard anything, right?

MR. SABATINO:

No. What I was saying before is I thought that's where you were when I came in, I apologize. That was just a question of you need a corrected copy to get it into the 2003 Capital Budget.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. The County Executive's Office I assume is doing a corrected copy on that?

MR. FAULKE:

(Shook head yes.)

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Okay. All right, Elie, you're up.

MS. SEIDMAN-SMITH:

Okay, I have about a minute, not even three I can give you. First and foremost, I wanted to thank you tremendously for keeping the program intact and for letting us do what we do best which is community service. Thanks for returning the program. On the first day, January 2nd, 2003, we were out actually doing roadside clean-ups and that was before the snow, in-between the snows actually. We had 112 hours of service we completed just on one day with our adult crews. On January 4th, our four juvenile crews with 21 mandated youth completed 110 hours in churches, Salvation Army and Goodwill, and now we're going indoors because it's pretty cold outside. We thank you for your faith in us, for your undoubting support and knowledge that moving this program into a County Department would not have saved the County money.

But we do have a little bit of a problem with the additional loss of 10%. The 10% cut which is an additional \$60,000 for us is making a difference in the way we're going to be operating the program. We

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must -- we will not turn away any court ordered eligible referrals, no judges will have any of these cases that they send to us turned away, nor will we jeopardize public safety but the cut will force us to stop and completely eradicate our Graffiti Eradication Project and also we must cut our Saturday crews which we know that in the spring time they're very, very important to get all those clean-ups going out, but we just don't have staff to supervise those crews. If the 10% cut in any way, shape or form could be restored to us, we could then again increase our numbers getting ready for the spring and continue to ensure public safety at all costs, and that's our big concern within the next few months. And I thank everybody for having the faith in us to continue.

I just gave you the Newsday article that came out with really -- I thought it was probably the best article on community service in Nassau and Queens and Suffolk County that's ever been produced by Newsday. Very right on the mark and showing what we can do at our best when we work as a team effort throughout New York City, Long Island in community service. And thank you very much again.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:

Thank you, Elie. Any questions? There being none, the committee stands adjourned at 1:30.

LEG. LINDSAY:

Just an observation.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
Legislator Lindsay?

LEG. LINDSAY:
This meeting lasted 15 minutes and the prior meeting was two and a half hours, three and a half hours. What are you doing --

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
I promise you, Legislator Lindsay, if Legislator Guldi doesn't let his committee drag on, we will be out of here by 1:30 every day if we start at 12:30 on time; guaranteed never more than an hour.

LEG. GULDI:
We weren't exactly dragging on, though I suspect that some of our agenda -- we had 60 items on the agenda, not three, some of which was substantial, some of which with new committee members required extensive tutorial.

LEG. LINDSAY:
The record still stands.

LEG. GULDI:
What I'd like to do is suggest that if our agendas are going to stay like this maybe we can start this committee a little later.

CHAIRMAN TOWLE:
I'll let you know about that.

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LEG. GULDI:
Okay.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M.*)

Legislator Fred Towle, Chairman
Public Safety & Public Information Committee

{ } - Denotes Spelled Phonetically

