

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE**  
**Of The**  
**SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE**  
**MINUTES**

A regular meeting of the Public Safety 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 August 16, 2007.

**Members Present:**

Legislator Jack Eddington - Chairman  
Legislator Kate Browning - Vice Chair  
Legislator Joseph Caracappa  
Legislator Elie Mystal  
Legislator Daniel Losquadro  
Legislator Lynne Nowick  
Legislator Wayne Horsley

**Also In Attendance:**

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature  
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk/Legislature  
Robert Calarco - Aide to Legislator Eddington  
Paul Perillie - Aide to Legislator Jon Cooper  
Lori Murphy - Aide to Legislator Losquadro  
Greg Moran - Aide to Legislator Nowick  
Kara Hahn - Director of Communications  
Diane Dono - Budget Review Office  
Ben Zwirn - County Executive's Office  
Brendan Chamberlain - County Executive's Office  
John Desmond - Director of Probation Department  
Colleen Ansanelli - Probation Department/CJCC`  
Debra Alloncius - AME Legislative Director  
Daniel delValle - Probation Officer's Association  
Michael Rando - SCDSPBA  
Belinda Pagdanganan - Suffolk County FRES  
Joe Borenstein - Suffolk County Probation Department  
Chris Saxen - Suffolk County Probation Firearms Section  
Don O'Connor - Suffolk County Probation Firearms Section  
Daniel Buckley - Suffolk County Probation Firearms Section  
Donna Vigilante - Suffolk County Probation Sex Offenders Unit  
Daniel Buckley - Suffolk County Probation Firearms Section  
Laura Ahearn - Parents for Megan's Law/CVC  
Hope Collazo - ARC/CSP  
All Other Interested Parties

**Minutes Taken By:**

Lucia Braaten - Court Stenographer

***[THE MEETING WAS CALLED TO ORDER AT 11:19 A.M.]***

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

*Okay. I'd like to bring the committee meeting to order. We'll start with Legislator Losquadro and the Pledge of Allegiance.*

***(\*Salutation\*)***

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

If we could just remain standing and keep in our minds the soldiers overseas that are giving their lives for our country, and also the police officers that have been injured in the last month or so doing their duty. Thank you.

***(\*Moment of Silence\*)***

Thank you very much. Okay. I have -- is there anybody that wanted to speak before the committee? I have no cards. Okay. Then what I would like, I have Mr. John Desmond, Director of Probation, that was going to give us an update on a program. Could he come forward?

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

He's not here.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Is John Desmond here? Is anybody from his office here?

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

Yes, she's looking for him.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

We're checking the GPS Tracking Program as we speak, not near a park or a senior citizen home.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Well, I need someone to -- Colleen, then I'm going to have you relay a message.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

He's on his way. He thought it was 11:30.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

You know what, on your way is not the same as being here, and I directed him to be here. And this is the second time I have directed somebody to be here and it was agreed upon and they're not here. That to me is disrespect to this committee and it will not happen.

**MS. ANSANELLI:**

He got the time as 11:30.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

I mean, unless he's in jail or somewhere else.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

I think there was some confusion with the time of the start of the meeting. I think he thought it was -- I thought it was 9:30, I think he thought it was 11:30. So he's obviously on Pacific Coast time, but he should be here. He should be here shortly.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Yeah. Well, I'm not pleased with his thinking. Then what we will do is go to the agenda.

## **TABLED RESOLUTIONS**

Tabled Resolution *I.R. 1409, a Local Law establishing crime prevention requirements for scrap metal processors (Co. Exec)*. I'll make a motion to table.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Tabled. *(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0)*

*I.R. 1482 - A Local Law prohibiting sex offenders from residing within close proximity of libraries (Romaine)*. I'm going to take make a motion to table.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second. All those in favor? Opposed?

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Opposed.

**LEG. CARACAPPA:**

Opposed.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Two opposed. Abstentions? *(Vote: Tabled 5-2-0-0)* Okay. Yes, on the motion, Legislator Browning.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

It's tabled.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Oh, right. Well, go ahead, you want to --

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Okay. I just want to make sure it's on the record. I know Laura Ahearn's here from Parents for Megan's Law. I do have a meeting tomorrow with library representatives pertaining to this bill.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Yeah. Just to add to explanation, I guess we should have done this first, there is -- this is an ongoing research project that we are checking out to make sure again that it doesn't cause an exclusionary zone anywhere in the County. And for the members, you will all be getting notification of a printout of specific -- your districts, so you'll know exactly how it would impact your district.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Just make sure you don't correspond via text messaging while driving.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Yes. Absolutely, yes. Thank you. Thank you very much. Okay. So I think this was tabled.

*I.R. 1503 - A Local Law prohibiting text messaging while driving (Schneiderman)*.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Motion to table.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Motion to table by Legislator Mystal.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

No second?

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

I'll second it. I'll second it. Cowards. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? All right. No text messaging, all right. *(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0)*.

*I.R. 1542 - A Local Law prohibiting sex offenders from residing in close proximity of senior housing (Schneiderman).*

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Motion to table.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Motion to table by Legislator Browning.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Second.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I'll second it.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second by Legislator Mystal. On the motion. I just want to add that that is also being checked out to see if that could, and in all likelihood would, have an exclusionary zone. And again, we will do that as soon as the library issue is resolved. So you will be getting updated information on that and then we'll be able to vote again. So it's been motion to table and second.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Before you --

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

On the motion, Presiding Officer.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I just want my colleagues to realize that it's my belief that both this bill and the library bill came about as a result of the policy of putting homeless sex offenders in trailers on County property. One is in Westhampton and the other one's on the jail property, and both of those bills that passed would exclude those sites for sexual offenders, homeless sexual offenders. And, you know, I wish they would move out of the County altogether and we could -- would ban them from the County, but we obviously can't. And if these pass, I mean, that means that they're moving into neighborhoods. Instead of being on County property, being observed by security people, they'll be out in the community. And just be aware of that before you have a knee-jerk reaction to vote for it.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Thank you. Okay. We have a motion and a second. All those in favor? Opposed?

**LEG. CARACAPPA:**

Opposed.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Abstentions? Did I hear one opposed? Okay. Thank you. *(Vote: Tabled 6-1-0-0)*

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

***I.R. 1690 - A Local Law requiring registered motor vehicle dealers to release vehicles only to licensed drivers (Eddington).*** I'm going to ask that motion -- that to be tabled.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

I'm working on on it. Second by Legislator Mystal. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0).***

### **INTRODUCTORY RESOLUTIONS**

Introductory Resolution, ***I.R. 1749 - Requiring all Peace Officer training to be conducted by the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department (Eddington).*** I'm going to ask for that to be tabled.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Second that.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***(Vote: Tabled 7-0-0-0)***

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

***I.R. 1797 - A Local Law enacting a Social Host Law to deter the consumption of alcohol by minors.*** That needs to be tabled for public hearing. I'll make that motion.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***(Vote: Tabled for Public Hearing 7-0-0-0).***

***I.R. 1806 - Accepting and appropriating one hundred percent Federal pass-through grant funds from the U.S. Education Department -- the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency for the recruitment and retention of volunteers for the Volunteer Fire Departments serving Suffolk County (County Executive).***

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Motion to approve and place on the Consent Calendar.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Motion to approve and on the Consent Calendar by Legislator Losquadro.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Second.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Second by Legislator Browning. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstention? It's approved. ***(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0).***

***I.R. 1807 - Accepting and appropriating one hundred percent Federal pass-through grant***

***funds from the National Association of County and City Health Officials for the Suffolk County Medical Reserve Corps (County Executive).***

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Same motion.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Same motion, same second, same vote. Okay.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Approved and on the Consent Calendar.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Approved. ***(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0)***.

***I.R. 1821 - Accepting and appropriating a grant in the amount of \$50,000 from the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services for the Suffolk County Police Department's Sexual Offenders Registration Act (SORA) (Enforcement Program with 100% support) (County Executive).***

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Same motion.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Same motion, same second, same vote. Thank you. Approved. ***(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0)***.

***I.R. 1813 -- I.R. 1823 - Authorizing execution of the Municipal Mutual Aid and an Assistance Agreement for local disasters and other related agencies (County Executive).***

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

***Emergencies.*** Explanation, please.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Explanation. Mr. Williams, could you come forward, please?

**MR. WILLIAMS:**

Good morning. What this agreement does is actually mutual aid agreement between us, Nassau County, New York City and Westchester County. Any large event, what it does is establish a cost for us to call up mutual aid into our own County. What it also does is puts us on for reimbursement. If we have reimbursement, we go to Nassau County and New York City, again, like we did in 9/11, what we're agreeing to is to establish fees with FEMA. FEMA establishes the fees. Talking to some people also helps us with our own reimbursement, tracking all the other counties involved, including New York City is in the process of passing the same thing. Right now, there's no -- there's no guarantee we have to send anybody. We do agree to it. But the most important thing is that the rates, if we do, either way are established. It isn't that we would pay Nassau County one different rate, if we went there, and New York City a different rate, or we'd get reimbursement. The rates are established and we had this forward.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Thank you very much. Okay.

**LEG. BROWNING:**

Motion to approve.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Motion to approve by Legislator Browning, second by Legislator Mystal. All those in favor?

Opposed? Abstentions? Okay, approved. ***(Vote: Approved 7-0-0-0)***.

**MEMORIALIZING RESOLUTIONS**

***Memorializing Resolution in support of legislation prohibiting the use of mobile phones to text message while driving (Schneiderman).***

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Motion to table.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I was going to make a motion to approve.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

To approve? Oh, okay. I withdraw mine, I don't care.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I was going to make a motion to approve. You know, I think that that's where this legislation belongs, is that the State added to the cell phone ban.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

I got a motion to approve by the Presiding Officer, second by Legislator Browning. All those in favor? Opposed? One, me.

**MS. ORTIZ:**

No, two.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Abstentions? Oh, two. Abstentions? Okay, it is approved. ***(Vote: Approved 6-2-0-0/Presiding Officer Lindsay Included in vote/Opposed: Chairman Eddington and Leg. Caracappa)***.

Before I adjourn, I just am going to make for the record --

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I'd also like to make a comment, Mr. Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. That I'm going to -- directing --

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

You want the last word?

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

You can have the last word. I'm directing the Probation Department to have the Director and the Assistant Director, Thomas Henry, here, and he will be making the presentations from now on to this committee until I inform us otherwise.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would just like for the record to express my disappointment that the Commissioner of the Department is not here. I have a number of questions. To the best of my knowledge, no progress has been made on issues that I brought to the attention of Mr. Desmond several months ago regarding the safety of their vehicles, having warning lights and sirens and radios for the personnel. I was very clear as to not only the safety concerns for the officers, but for the safety of the public when they are responding on public roadways. We are very, very careful that our police cars have full warning packages. And these individuals have to respond at a high rate of speed, and it is a danger not only to the individuals in the cars, but a danger to the public,

and, to the best of my knowledge, this situation has not even been addressed.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Here he comes.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Here he comes.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Fantastic.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Do you want to extend the meeting.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I'd be happy to.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

We haven't adjourned yet.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Huh?

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

We haven't adjourned.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

No, I'm just asking, otherwise I would.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

It's up to you.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

It's up to you, you're the Chair.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Why don't we have Mr. Desmond come forward. Just so you know, before you were here, I expressed my displeasure as clearly as I could. Once is bad, twice, as I see, is intolerable. And I said just a moment ago that from now on, I would like to have you here and Mr. Thomas Henry here, and I will be discussing the situations with him and you. So now we have -- we have a couple of questions, and we'll start with Legislator Losquadro.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Thank you. Mr. Desmond, I don't know if you heard me referring to the vehicles within your department on the way in. We had a discussion a couple or a few months back regarding warning lights and sirens and radios for those vehicles, and yourself and your Assistant both acknowledged that there were -- if there were one vehicle available in each location, that was the exception and not the rule, and that were fully equipped with a warning package, lights, siren and radio, all three in a single vehicle. I have copies of those transcripts, if I can -- if you need me to refresh your memory. Could you, please, fill this committee in on what has been done to outfit your vehicles, which are traveling on public roadways and do not have the accompanying warning package in place that other law enforcement vehicles do for our other agencies?

**MR. DESMOND:**

It's my understanding that each of my offices has a vehicle, at least one vehicle with a police

package assigned to it. The majority of our vehicles do not, because they are used for routine home visits and such, but that at least one vehicles with the police package is attached to every one of our offices. We do have the vehicles sometimes go down for repairs and such, but we try then to shift around, so that there's at least one vehicle with a police package in each office, and I believe that's where we currently are.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

This is sort of in stark contrast to the last conversation we had, which was the discussion that all vehicles, regardless of whether they're being used for routine home visits, that individuals have to respond in an emergency manner on occasion or without notice, that they could go retrieve a car, the one car perhaps in that office that does have a full package. But based on the list that I looked at from Department of Public Works, even if some vehicles did have lights and siren, it didn't have a radio, or if it had a radio and lights, it didn't have a siren. There was a real hodgepodge among how the vehicles in your department were equipped, and we had the discussion about uniformity and about protecting the public as these vehicles are traveling on public roadways, much in the same way that the Police Department does not want to use vehicles for any sort of enforcement or emergency response unless they have a full package, and they are adamant about that. And there, the department and the union have a very clear understanding that it can endanger not only the officer in the vehicle, but the public as well if those vehicles are not equipped with proper warning equipment. The last conversation we had, I was told this was going to be looked into and addressed, and this seems sort of in stark contrast to that, that you're now telling me, "Well, there's one vehicle that has the proper package in each office." And do you feel that's sufficient?

**MR. DESMOND:**

I would be very happy to have more vehicles with complete packages.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Well, the Department of Public Works informs me all you have to do is make the request.

**MR. DESMOND:**

A lot of -- yeah.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

And that request has not been forthcoming.

**MR. DESMOND:**

That comes as a surprise to me, very honestly. A lot of our vehicles that we use for the routine home visits are small vehicles, are vans, and are not really set up to have the complete packages.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I understand that not every vehicle, but to have at least a complement of vehicles that have light, siren and radio. I got a complete list of all of your vehicles and there were very few vehicles that were equipped with all three of those, very few. Some had one or two, some had two, but very few had all three. And my inquiries to the Department of Public Works, I was told that they have an outside contractor that does this work, and that all you, as a Department Head, have to do is make the request to them. They have a budget for the equipment of County vehicles, for law enforcement vehicles, and they will take care of it, and they said that this request has not been forthcoming from your department.

**MR. DESMOND:**

All of our probation officers that are field workers have their own radios, and we do not have radios in most of the vehicles for the reason that the officers have their own individual radios, the walkie-talkies that they carry with them. The emphasis in the department has always been on the lights and sirens.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Are those the rechargeable units?

**MR. DESMOND:**

Yes.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

So shouldn't they have base units, recharging units in the cars, like the police officers and the sheriffs do?

**MR. DESMOND:**

We find we have no reason to, because the officers -- we have quick chargers, gang chargers in each office. The radios are usually good for 24 to 48 hours without a recharge, which we basically don't see there's a need to have the expense of having a radio unit.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I know the radios that you're talking about, and not to bore my colleagues with the technical jargon, but hey're not lithium ion batteries, they're nickel cadmium or nickel metal hydride batteries and they have life expectancies and the cycles diminish with time. And that's the reason why other law enforcement agencies put the chargers in the car, to keep them powered up, because you don't want that to go down in the middle of the day unexpectedly, or if you didn't happen to put it on that gang charger. I mean, there's a reason why they put the base unites in those vehicles. I mean, that's for you to work out specifically within your department, but when I looked at the list of the vehicles, that was one of my concerns. The other was that there didn't seem to be a whole lot of vehicles that were outfitted with lights and siren either.

Like I said, when we had this discussion last time, you told me that you were going to do, you know, a comprehensive examination of which vehicles were in which offices and that this was going to be addressed. So do you now feel that one vehicle per office is sufficient? That's what I'm asking.

**MR. DESMOND:**

We have at least one vehicle per office. I would prefer to have as many vehicles as possible with lights and sirens where appropriate.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Can you confer with the Department of Public Works and confirm what they told me, that they have this money in their budget and that you, as the Department Head, can make the request and have these vehicles outfitted?

**MR. DESMOND:**

I'd be more than happy to.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Please, look into that, and, please, report back to this committee with the status of that.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

And, Director Desmond, I'm going to be reaching out to the rest of the committee here, our fellow Legislators on this committee, because I'm hearing recurring things, and Legislator Losquadro was very clear on what he's asked for and hasn't gotten. I'm going to be working in concert with the other members here to make sure that the probation officers are fully trained and equipped and ready for duty starting day one.

We don't send police officers out unprepared, we don't send sheriffs out, we don't put correction officers in our jails, but I'm getting the sense over the last 18 months that we are not putting out Probation as fully functional and ready to go. And I will be working on that, and I don't think I'm going to have any problem on this committee getting cosponsors to do that, so I'm letting you know

in advance that we're going to be looking into doing that.

**MR. DESMOND:**

I appreciate the concern.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay? Any other questions?

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Well, I just had a question --

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Legislator Lindsay.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

-- for the Commissioner, if I could. How often do you folks, would you say, have to respond in an emergency situation where a vehicle will need flashers and sirens and -- I mean, is it something that happens frequently or not frequently?

**MR. DESMOND:**

I would say it's a rare incident.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

And what would be the nature of that?

**MR. DESMOND:**

The nature of that would be where we'd be responding to a situation where we perceive that someone's life was in danger, that there was a serious threat to community safety and that it required us to use the package. We don't, by departmental regulation, we don't engage in car chases, we back off. We request assistance from the Police Department, but we do not do that kind of activity.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Is there some kind of line of delineation between when a police officer responds as opposed to a probation officer?

**MR. DESMOND:**

Generally, probation officers walk into situations and have to take an action and will request backup. The backup can come from another probation officer or from a police officer, depending on who's available and how close.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Okay.

**MR. DESMOND:**

We just generally do not use the lights and sirens very often. We use more of the lights at traffic accidents that we come across, or something like that, or if we have some sort of operation going, and generally, that's in coordination with other law enforcement agencies.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Okay.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Legislator --

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Mr. Chairman, I just was reviewing the list and I'll just give you a couple of examples. Here's a 2006 Ford Crown Victoria, no lights, no siren, with a radio. Another, a 2003 Crown Victoria, lights, siren, no radio. So one has lights and siren with a radio, the other has no lights and siren -- excuse me. One has no lights and siren with a radio, the other one has lights and siren, no radio. There doesn't seem to be a lot of rhyme or reason with this list. When I'm looking at lights, siren, radio, it's no, no, yes, yes, no, yes. It's really all over the map with all these vehicles, and like --

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

It would take three cars to respond adequately.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Like insurance, it's there if you need it. You hope you don't have to use it, but you hope for the best and you plan for the worst, and when you don't have something is the one time something bad is going to happen and your liability exposure is massive. For a small investment of equipping vehicles properly, if one of their officers is involved in a collision on that, you know, maybe not-too-often occasion of having to respond at high speed to a violent parolee and they get into an accident with a member of the public and it comes out that that vehicle was not equipped with warning devices, we're in trouble.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I'm not disputing, Legislator Losquadro. If I could through the Chair.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Yes.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

About your request to have a certain amount of vehicles equipped for an emergency situation, I just could not imagine, I mean, if you -- I probably missed a prior conversation, but if somebody said to me that a probation officer is involved in a high speed chase, I'm just --

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

It's not a chase.

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

I'm just trying to find out what circumstances would that happen, because I don't -- I don't think of probation officers in that light.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

I think the Commissioner stated very clearly they have a policy on that. I'm not talking about a high speed pursuit of a subject, although I imagine in some circumstance, you know --

**P.O. LINDSAY:**

Or a high speed response.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Right.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

How many were there in the last few years?

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Mr. Zwirn, I don't recall someone asking you a question. We're speaking to the Commissioner of the Department here.

**MR. ZWIRN:**

Yeah, but I'm a member of the public, I'm just trying to get to the point. How many times do you

think you'd need the lights?

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

Could you -- could you address this?

**MR. ZWIRN:**

I'm out of order.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

I'd rather have the Director respond. And what I'm hearing is, and you can -- you guys can help me with it, but what I'm hearing is they don't respond to -- you know, like the police do. But if there's an officer needing assistance and there's a probation officer, you know, a few blocks away, they're going to need the whole package. And what I'm hearing right now is to supply -- unless that car's around, you've got one-third of the package or something. And I guess what we're going to say to you is that we want to make sure that there are enough vehicles fully operational. How many is that? I think we've got -- we have to determine that at another time. But certainly, there has to be -- you know, we can't have one with this and one with that and a couple with this. I think that's where you have to work on it with maybe us and let us know what you have and we'll talk to the probation officers. We'll get an evaluation from everybody and then we'll find out how many vehicles really have to be totally equipped. I mean, does that sound like a fair way of dealing with it?

**MR. DESMOND:**

I appreciate the interest very much. I just want to point out that the officers also use their own vehicles, and if we have some sort of an emergency situation, the chances of one of the police package vehicles being nearby, even if we doubled the number that we have, is still going to be small. And we count very much on the officers using common sense to try to get to the location as quickly, but as safely, as possible. We just are not set up as a normal law enforcement agency to respond to those types of emergencies. Those officers that we believe need these packages most often are the ones that have the most of them, and that would be the Warrant Unit, the GPS Unit, our Detention Transportation for Family Court. We try to utilize the resources that we have as effectively as possible, and I appreciate any other resources that we can get.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Legislator Nowick.

**LEG. NOWICK:**

Just quickly, just because I think we can put an end to this soon.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Thank you.

**LEG. NOWICK:**

You're the boss of the department. You certainly know what vehicles need to be equipped the way Legislator Losquadro is pointing out. I think that you already said you would go to Public Works and you would request. That's good. I understand that. Sounds good to me. I think that we all understand it. He said, yes, he would go to Public Works. You're going to come back and report to us; is that what I'm understanding? I think the --

**MR. DESMOND:**

It will be my pleasure.

**LEG. NOWICK:**

Okay. Thank you. I just want to make sure that you have already said that, not to belabor it any further. Good.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Thank you, mediator, I mean, Legislator Nowick.

**LEG. NOWICK:**

That's what I do.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Then I understand that you did -- you did come prepared to give us a two-minute evaluation of, I think, the Alternatives for Youth Program?

**MR. DESMOND:**

Right.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay, go.

**MR. DESMOND:**

And allow me to express my apology for not being here at the appropriate time.

In April 2005, Suffolk County and the rest of the State were kind of shocked by a change in State Family Court Law. At that point, they changed PINS, Persons in Need of Supervision, dramatically. Up until the previous year, this had been directed at children under the age of 16. That previous year, they had upped it to the 18th birthday.

In April 2005, the State now suddenly, for the first time, mandated that all PINS cases had to be diverted from court, that we had to make a significant and serious effort to do so. While this was a big surprise to every municipality in the State, we were remarkably well situated on this one, because the various departments in the County had been working together for the previous two years on the whole question of the PINS problems. Suffolk County has historically had an extremely high rate of placements of PINS children into both in and out of State residential placements.

As a result of the Health Department, the Department of Social Services, the Youth Bureau, Probation, County Attorney's Office, the Law Guardians, the Legislature, all working together, a plan was already about 80% completed to begin a new program that we thought would have a significant impact on the problem of PINS placements. The changes in the law in April 2005 just fed beautifully into our existing plans, because instead of diversion being something that was voluntary, that parents could agree to, it was now a mandatory step on the way to Family Court.

What we put in place, and this began in October 2005, is what's called the Alternatives for Youth Program, AFY, and I just want to go quickly through that for the benefit of any inquiries you may get from your constituents. All a constituent has to do to become involved in this program is to call the Probation Departments telephone numbers for the program, they don't even have to come in. The whole thing is done by a telephone screening. If the person is found appropriate for the program, if there have been some incidents recently of PINS behavior, the parent is immediately told they are going to be referred to the AFY Program. Within 48 hours normally, an AFY worker will come and visit the child and the parents and begin providing services. They do a quick assessment and they initialize the types of treatments and assistance that's necessary.

The AFY Program itself, the AFY workers are available 24 hours a day with beepers and cell phones, and they work with a family for three to five weeks, arranging services that are necessary. After that point, approximately 50% of the families are then referred for additional case management services, as well as additional other types of services, and that can be substance abuse, it can be mental health issues, it can also be things like mentoring or community programs of various sorts.

The reason why the program has been as successful as it has been is because of all the resources that both the County Executive and the Legislature have put into this program. As a result of the resources that were committed for most of the time that AFY has been in existence, there have been

virtually no waiting periods for the majority of the services. The one area where we continue to have intermittent problems is mental health.

Now what's been the result of the AFY Program? Since the AFY Program has been instituted, we've had a more than 50% reduction in PINS placements. We're providing high class services to families immediately, where before they were faced with months of waiting, and sometimes there was no services provided, the child was instead immediately placed residentially by the Family Court. I provided you with statistics on how the program has worked so far in terms of the reductions in placements, and I feel that it speaks very highly to what can be achieved when the various departments in the County can all cooperate together. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Okay. Are there any questions? Legislator Mystal.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Good morning, Mr. Desmond.

**MR. DESMOND:**

Good morning.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

Looking at your chart, it seems that what you were telling us, to make it a short sentence, is that your program have been very successful.

**MR. DESMOND:**

(Nodded yes).

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

And looking at the last chart that you have, the pie chart that you have, it seems to refer that you have five -- you had 581 youth that were -- that completed -- that successfully completed the program that were diverted from placement, as opposed to only nine enter in the placement category.

**MR. DESMOND:**

Yeah. It's very close to that, right, that generally what we found with PINS prior to the institution of the program was that about 25% of the children that went into PINS, either diversion or full to Family Court, at one point or another ended up in some sort of placement. I have to point out that the PINS AFY Program is directed toward parent PINS. We still have a school PINS component. But that those cases which did not end up being diverted to court immediately, we only had -- we had less than ten cases that eventually ended up being placed, and it truly -- we were stunned by this result.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

The other question that I have is, in the past two years, we've had some problems in terms of out-of-state placement. And I'm looking at Page 2 of your graph, or at least the spread sheet, that right now -- well, right now, we haven't placed anybody, we only placed two people out of state from this year, from the beginning of this year to now.

**MR. DESMOND:**

Right.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

And you're looking to reduce that number to zero, I suppose.

**MR. DESMOND:**

Well, we would like to, but I think that there's always going to be some cases that will wind up going

out of state because of the lack of resources in state for children with extremely severe mental health problems, and those are the one that we're placing now. The average cost a year-and-a-half ago for an out-of-state placement was between 180,000 and 200,000 dollars a year. So it's just been amazing that we've been able to provide the services to these families locally to keep us from having to do this.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

You kind of touched on my last question, which was, you know, how much money have we been able to save by having -- not having those kids going out of state at the cost of 180 to 200,000 dollars?

**MR. DESMOND:**

The County Executive's Budget Office is working on that question right now. I'm not sure we've saved any money. We may have saved some, but what we did was we really upped the resources available for these families, so that came at a price. It will be up to the County Exec's Budget Office to let us know if there's been any savings. I think what you can safely say is that there's been a redirection, so that services are being received locally and appear to be very effective.

**LEG. MYSTAL:**

All right. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Any other questions? Then I'd ask for a motion to adjourn.

**LEG. LOSQUADRO:**

So moved.

**CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:**

Motion by Legislator Losquadro, second by myself. Okay. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you very much.

***[THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:00 P.M.]***