

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Of the

Suffolk County Legislature

A regular meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on October 10, 2008.

Members Present:

Legislator Jack Eddington - Chairman
Legislator Kate Browning - Vice-Chair
Legislator Wayne Horsley
Legislator Daniel Losquadro
Legislator Lynne Nowick
Legislator DuWayne Gregory

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Barbara LoMoriello - Deputy Clerk of the SC Legislature
Robert Calarco - Aide to Legislator Eddington
Linda Bay - Aide to Minority Leader Losquadro
Paul Perillie - Aide to Majority Leader Cooper
Terrence Pearsall - Chief of Staff to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Kara Hahn - Director of Communications/P.O. Lindsay's Office
Michael Cavanaugh - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Bobby Knight - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Greg Moran - Aide to Legislator Nowick
James Montalto - Aide to Legislator Losquadro
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Montano
John Ortiz - Senior Budget Analyst/Budget Review Office
Ben Zwirn - Deputy County Executive
Brendan Chamberlain - County Executive Assistant
Ed Hennessy - County Executive Assistant
Aristedes Mojica - Inspector/Suffolk County Police Department
Christopher Bergold - Captain/Suffolk County Police Department
Tracy Pollak - Suffolk County Police Department
Michael Sharkey - Chief of Staff/Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Joe Williams - Commissioner/Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services
John Searing - Deputy Commissioner/Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services
Noel DiGerolamo - 2nd Vice-President/Police Benevolent Association
Frank Sierra - Delegate/Police Benevolent Association
Hank Mulligan - 2nd Vice-President/Superior Officer's Association
Matt Bogert - 1st Vice-President/Correction Officer's Association
Cheryl Felice - President/Association of Municipal Employees
Debbie McKee - 2nd Vice President/AME.
Debra Alloncius - Legislative Director/AME
Suzanne McBride - AME/Unit President-Police Emergency Services-SCPD
M. DiIorio - AME/Police Emergency Services-SCPD
Dave Vidale - AME/Police Civilian
Debbie Eppel - SC Public Information Officer
Johan McConnell - South Yaphank Civic Association
Joseph Darrow - TBR Newspapers
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken & Transcribed By:
Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer.

(*The meeting was called to order at 9:43 A.M. *)

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Everyone rise for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Nowick.

Salutation

If I could ask you to remain standing for a moment of silence for the fighting domestically and abroad and in particular, unfortunately, we lost another member of the Fighting 69th last week.

Moment of Silence Observed

Thank you. Okay, I'd like to begin with the public portion and I have one card, Johan McConnell.

MS. McCONNELL:

Good morning. This is a new committee for me to attend; many of you know I attend other committees, this is the first time I've appeared before Public Safety.

I'd like to come in and state my opposition to IR 1849 which is the reinstatement of the DARE Program in the public schools. I'm not sure if you're aware of it, but there is a New York State Education Law, Section 804, which is health education regarding alcohol, drugs, tobacco abuse and the prevention and detection of certain cancers. Section 2 states that instruction regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drugs shall be included in the health education provided for all elementary school pupils and should be taught by the regular classroom teacher or by teachers certified in health education. So if the DARE Program was to be instituted again and the Police Department was to come in, they would be in violation of New York State Education Law which is very clear as to who may teach this program. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you, Johan. Okay, I have a brief presentation by AME, if you guys could come forward. And Cheryl, if you could just identify everybody for the record, please

MS. FELICE:

Absolutely.

MS. LOMORIELLO:

Cheryl, just make sure it's on; it is, right?

MS. FELICE:

Yes. Good morning. My name is Cheryl Felice, I'm President of AME. To my left is Deborah McKee who's the 2nd Vice-President of AME and to my right is Susan McBride who is the Unit President of the Police Emergency Unit that covers the dispatchers and the 911 operators.

Good morning and thank you again for providing us the opportunity to help educate the Legislature and also the public and the rest of the membership on the duties and responsibilities of the 911 emergencies. We've had a lot of debate over the last couple of months in regards to the workload, the caseloads up at 911 involving the equipment, on what's operational, what's not, and it really revolves around when 852-COPS was created and instituted over at the Police Department. And when it went up and running, the public, I think, believed that separate operators were going to be handling those calls, and it was learned by this body that the 911 operators are one in the same, they're handling both emergency and non-emergency calls. So we're going to go into it again just to

reiterate some of the information that we've already presented to you and then go into a few more issues about the staffing issues, about the staffing numbers because of some issues that have come up over the last couple of weeks that I'll explain.

But the one item I wanted to just mention before we get started, AME has been advocating about the number of understaffing within the County and the services are not being delivered. And it's appropriate at the beginning of your meeting, Chairman Eddington, that you recognize and give a moment of silence to those service men and women who are fighting and certainly those who gave of their life. I wonder if you might consider checking with the department heads and getting a list from them each month of active members in Suffolk County who are losing their lives. We just had two wakes that we went to this month; these are active members, not our retirees, that are losing their life on the job while they're working and those are stories you don't usually hear of. But we had a crossing guard, Cindy Parker, just pass away at 49 years old and a fellow from DPW, Joe {Fekavich}, at 30 years old. And I think that points to perhaps the stress level that our members are under in the work force and something that has to be looked at. And there's more names that go to this list, but those are the two who come to mind over the last couple of weeks. And I wonder if all the committees for those departments, because a Crossing Guard certainly would fall under Public Safety, might want to consider checking the names of those members who have lost their lives and pay recognition to them at the beginning of your meeting. I appreciate your time in listening to that suggestion.

So we'll get started at looking again at the comparison between the cops -- the 911 emergency and 852-COPS and we'll see if they -- there we go. Now, again, we want to reiterate that 911 and 852-COPS are two distinctly different systems requiring appropriate staffing as well as public education. It's not just a separate hold system for non-emergency calls. And again, Senator Schumer, in obtaining the grant for Suffolk County and the quote he made when the system was launched was, "Establishing a communication management system in Suffolk County is a no-brainer." For the amount of dialogue that we've had over the last two years on this system, I don't know if Senator Schumer was trying to be a comedian in there, I don't think he really knew what we would be facing. But certainly, there's been a lot of dilemmas over the last two years and dilemmas that need more extensive looking into.

Now, again, County Executive Levy, in promoting the 852-COPS, has said to the public that having a system like 852-COPS will allow Suffolk County's 1.4 million residents to route their quality of life complaints here, freeing up the 911 to better respond to real emergencies; that fact simply isn't true, it's simply not true.

You, at your direction, Chairman Eddington, had taken a tour of the facility and had a number of other Legislators join you, and on behalf of the members out there they appreciate that you came down to look at their system, but it's not true. The 911 calls and the 852-COPS calls go all to the same operator. And that's the issue that we tried to raise at the last the meeting, that all the calls going to the same number, and in this chart here separates the calls that were responsible to 911 prior to the 852-COPS were the 911 emergency calls, the 1800-220-TIPS after-hours, after normal business hours, from 4 PM to 8 AM and weekends, and also the DSS Emergency Housing and Heat Assistance line which was also after four o'clock through the morning and on weekends. But since June of 2006, two more responsibilities were given to those 911 operators and that's the 852-6000 switchboard and also the 852-COPS. That's the distinction that really has to be understood with the Legislature when we're talking about staffing issues.

Now, you may have heard AME ran a radio commercial advocating for more staffing. Because when we were at the Legislative meeting in July, we asked, through the Chair, a question of BRO for the number of vacancies that existed at the 911 emergency and we were told out of 145 positions, ten of them were vacant; we call that a critical understaffing because of the amount of responsibility that has been added to the number of members already there and the fact that those positions remain vacant. Now, we had -- now, there's a counter commercial, which you may have heard, on the radio from County Executive Levy and if I may, I'd like to read a little bit of that commercial into

the record. And this commercial just started running just this -- in September. And the radio commercial says, "Hi. This is County Executive Levy. You may have heard commercials from Suffolk union bosses trying to scare you into believing that the 911 system is understaffed and that public safety is being jeopardized. Actually, our 911 response time is better than the national average and overall crime was cut by 10% since I took office. Why are these groups really opposing my policies? Perhaps it's because I'm one official who doesn't back down to their unreasonable demands that would tax us out of house and home. I'm fighting their contracts that give these bosses six figure payouts for their sick time, gives first-class airline tickets for their business travel and taxpayer-financed, no-show jobs. Enough is enough. My reforms cut crime and cut taxes, too. So don't let their scare tactics sway you. Their interest is not in protecting the public, it's protecting their perks. As County Executive, I will continue to support our hard-working employees while protecting you, the taxpayer, from special interest bosses."

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I think that's the whole commercial, isn't it?

MS. FELICE:

That's the whole -- yeah, I wanted to read an excerpt but I was so -- I just got so overwhelmed with the whole thing, I had to read the whole thing. But you can understand our frustration. We're trying to present an issue for the Legislature to make a reasonable decision. We're bringing this information to you because our members are coming to us, that's their job. And the two members that are sitting with me are elected representatives of the bargaining unit and it's their responsibility to report to us when there are conditions within the workplace that are considered hazardous. And you've heard testimony from this union that a number of 911 operators or dispatchers have been taken out on stretchers while they're doing their job, because of the stress level. If they're not there to do the job, if the levels are understaffed -- and taxpayers are still paying the bill for those positions that are funded but not filled, and they're being given more and more responsibilities, then something has to give and that's why we bring this information to you. So I appreciate you enduring the commercial.

But the question that I have, when we asked the question in this meeting, and we were given an answer by Budget Review that there are vacancies there, nearly 10%, nearly 10% of the positions at the Police Department for 911 operators and dispatchers are vacant, that's a fact.

Mr. Losquadro, Legislator Losquadro, and I wonder what the other guy looks like.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Just a little surgery.

MS. FELICE:

I hope you're recovering well. But it was you who we quoted in this particular presentation, that you were under a completely different impression that the 852-COPS were separately staffed, and we just wanted to reinforce that fact.

Now, here's a situation that I think this particular committee really needs to look at and why you have to do an additional investigation.

First of all, Mr. Levy said in his commercial that crime is down 10%. How is it down 10%, whose numbers are being counted? And this committee has asked for a number of follow-up reports that I don't know if they've been received yet. But this particular situation, we have learned, happened in August of 200 -- of 2008 and something that this committee needs to look into. It was reported to us that the Capital One Bank on August 22nd, 2008, at 11:30 AM, this bank is located on 481 Montauk Highway, East Moriches. It was reported to us that a 40 year old female in the bank collapsed. The co-workers frantically called 911 and couldn't get through. A teller ran out of the bank to the nearby firehouse to ask for help. While that teller did that, a patrolling sector car saw her and stopped her. The both of them pulled back up to the bank and at that time the call came over the radio. It is our belief and our opinion that this body needs to investigate whether or not the

time that was lost in the response was responsible for this victim's death. Now, those are serious allegations, but some of the information that has been reported to us and the stress levels that have been reported to us by our members and why this body needs to look into those allegations.

The other issue we brought up to you was about the procedures of calling back on those members who do hang up -- I'm sorry, those residents who do hang up and it is the responsibility of the 911 operator to call them back. And one operator reported to us that when they did finally get back in touch with that resident, that that resident was so frustrated after being on hold for over 15 minutes that they gave up and kept redialing until they got through. Again, AME respectfully requests an audit of all of these issues.

Now, in the package that you were provided, it's a little hard to see on this slide, but we listed out all the staffing levels because now we're being accused of not giving the truth about the staffing levels, and the facts are there right in black and white. So if you look at the chart, just on the top line, the rest of the chart breaks down the Emergency Complaint Operators, Spanish-Speaking, Public Safety Dispatchers and their various assignments and also breaks it down by supervisors. But if you look at just the top line of total employees in the Headquarters, 911 area, budgeted for 2004-2005 was 150 and actual people on the job today, in September of 2008, is 140. When Mr. Levy took office, there were 144 positions filled, today there's 140, although there's over 150 budgeted. Next year in the proposed budget there's a request for 151 positions. And I would say that with the added responsibilities of the 911 operator, this body should strongly consider those position in its entirety.

And the next slide and the last slide talks about the issue of numbers and whose numbers are correct and how we come up with those numbers. Now, we took an analysis, we did a brief analysis of the Highway Patrol numbers. And this is not an enforcement of Highway Patrol one way or the other. I'm an employee of the Sheriff's Department and I'm also the Co-Chair of EMHP, our health insurance, so I represent all unions on that committee and I respect and I value the relationship I have with each and every one of those union leaders. That debate is between you and their bargaining units, this is in no way an endorsement of one patrol or another. But what it is is the opportunity to speak to the Legislature on the numbers that you're being provided by the County Executive in his own budget and the base salary of a top -- a top-step Deputy Sheriff, according to the BRO report, is 75,194. The average top pay of a Police Officer, also by BRO, is 98,722. Now, the difference per officer, going across the first line, is 23,528, but in Steve in Steve Levy's budget, printed in black and white on page four and five and then again on page 792, he reports the cost-saving annually is going to be 42,000; so he over-estimates the savings by \$18,000 which is a 71% error.

Now, if you go to the Deputy Sheriff II, which is the equivalent of a Sergeant, you see the same figures run across the chart, 89,741 for a top-step Sergeant -- in the BRO report for a Sergeant, and then the average Police Officer salary is 98,722; again, comparing it to the same Police Officer. The difference between those two salaries, 8,981; again, Mr. Levy's budget states that savings at \$42,000. The overstatement per officer is \$33,000 -- \$33,019 for a 367% error.

And finally, if you look at just to the overall numbers to transfer the patrols, BRO estimates the annual savings at \$424,000 while Mr. Levy estimates the annual savings at \$2 million, which turns out to be a whopping overstatement of 371%. Now, I see that's causing a lot of dialogue between the Legislature and those numbers are very disturbing and they're very disturbing to us as well. Because we're talking about establishing a budget, and you'll hear us at many other committees, this membership not only is concerned about the workload and the stress load level for this particular unit, but we're concerned about the layoffs that stand, the potential layoffs that stand to happen for January 1st with another particular unit in the John J. Foley Nursing Facility. So we want to be comfortable that our County Executive is using the right numbers. And we appreciate the Legislature taking the time to do an additional analysis of both the Highway Patrol and John J. Foley in the budget process. This union has always been available and remains available to sit and discuss

and work out whatever conditions we have to work out so that we can assure you services are being delivered to your constituents as they should be and as you expect them to be. But when over statements like this are given to the public and then commercials are run to say that crime has been reduced by 10% and we have no substantiation as to where those numbers came, we have a concern.

I was driving up here this morning and I was listening to 1010 Wins and 1010 Wins was talking about the market crash and the one issue they were raising was the fact that when the market is in a recession or when the economy is in a recession, what's the first thing that goes up? Crime. Crime goes up, especially in those areas of property and robbery. And I heard that -- you know, if I heard that yesterday it would be in this report today, but that's what I heard on the way up here today. So this Legislature for this County really has to be concerned. There's no question that the economy is struggling right now and with numbers like this, we're going to be even more vulnerable to putting the public safety at risk and that's what we're here to report to you today.

So again, I thank you for your time and we'll be available to answer any questions that you have.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you, Cheryl and company. You know, you're talking about fuzzy math; I mean, I can remember in the 80's hearing about that on the Federal level. And I think Legislator Horsley and Legislator Losquadro and I have all, at one point over the last year, said all we're interested in is getting the truth, give us the facts and we'll make the decisions. But my limited experience of three years shows me that I seem to get different pieces of information from each side and when you try to do the right thing based on whatever information, both sides are mad at you because you didn't advocate just their way.

And so that's, I think, been the hardest thing for us. We're never sure what is the facts and we have to spend a good amount of time doing what you're suggesting; let's go back and check the facts. I mean, we're really trying to do the right thing, and I'm going to let the other Legislators speak for themselves, but we've got to get the facts. And my Irish grandmother said you never, you know, do -- put your dirty laundry out in the public. And of course I've heard a number of different advertisements from both sides that are, you know, I don't think good for Suffolk, but I hope that will end very shortly.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Jack?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Yes, Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. And no, the injury was not a result of lack of Police presence, it was just simple shoulder surgery. Legislator Eddington restated the position that I've been saying for years now, actually probably since I took office. I've had many discussions regarding trying to get an accurate assessment of where we are in various departments, and this is just the latest example.

Basic accounting, basic common sense tells you that somewhere there are units within departments that are either understaffed, have been done away with, nobody knows. Because you only have a finite number of bodies to be able to tasks, and you can switch them, you can transfer them, you can put them into -- back into precinct practice, you can do whatever you want with them, but it's not as though those individuals were doing nothing the day before. So the work that they were doing somewhere now isn't getting done, so this is the problem that we face. And the problem that we face is that we can't get a clear assessment of where those individuals have been coming from and what units are being underserved because they seem to rotate throughout the different areas that they're being pulled from.

Now, we had an extensive conversation at the last committee meeting requesting very specific

information, I don't know if the Chairman has gotten any of that information but I certainly have not. So I will reiterate my request to various departments; the Police Department, Sheriff's Department, the County Executive's Office. When individuals are transferred within various units of public safety, where have those individuals come from, what functions were they fulfilling prior to being transferred, what was the staffing in those units prior to the transfer and what is the current staffing? Those are basic questions, they're simple questions that I haven't been able to get an answer to for almost five years. This is very frustrating. We put it in writing, we've put it on the record. Perhaps it's time to seek an alternate recourse and find what powers this body has to compel that information to be brought forward into the public realm.

So I look forward to working with you, not only on this issue but on many issues that face this County right now. Because I think you're exactly right, this is something that is unfortunately a truism when you look at economic factors, that when you have situations where on the overnights you see things coming over that Russia and France suspended trading because their markets were in a free-fall. What do we think is going to happen when our markets opened up this morning? I didn't even want to put my computer in front of me today for fear of being distracted.

So in these type of economic times, like I said, it is unfortunately a truism that crime rates increase, and sometimes significantly, and we have to be prepared for that. That is the most important function chartered to any County across this country is public safety; of course, public health following a very close, if not equal, second. But those are the two basic functions chartered to any County in this country, and I'm afraid we just won't be prepared, if we are prepared now. Not that we can get an honest assessment of where we are, but moving forward in a time where we may need additional staffing to protect our public. I don't believe we have the adequate answers to be able to make the decisions that we need to make as a body. So again, I look forward to working with you on this.

MS. FELICE:

On behalf of the members, and especially those who work at the Police Department, I thank you for your comments and your support.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Horsley.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Good morning, Cheryl.

MS. FELICE:

Good morning.

LEG. HORSLEY:

I was approached by one of your members over the weekend. He was -- I and I've got to tell you, he was doing voluntary service out in the community street fair and he worked for the fire department and stuff like that and he apparently was one of our 911 operators. And he was telling me a harrowing tale about the graveyard shift, you know, that when Legislators came in to check out the place that, you know, that we put additional people on for that day and stuff like that. But that -- I was concerned, have you -- what do your numbers show for like from the twelve to eight o'clock in the morning shift, Saturday nights in particular?

MS. FELICE:

As far as how many are staffed?

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah, because that -- they said, "You've got to come in 12 to eight o'clock in the morning, that's when you'll see really the problem".

I don't know if that's true or not, I just wanted to, you know, get a second -- you know, I believed

him because he's a constituent.

MS. FELICE:

Well, I'll ask Susan McBride, the Unit President, to assist me because she does work that graveyard shift.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Is it a particular problematic time period, period of time? It in every business but, I mean -- go through the numbers for me.

MS. McBRIDE:

I actually work midnights, 12 to 8. And our staffing for the 911 operators in particular, the operators that we actually have assigned to those shifts do not even meet the minimum required for the staffing levels to answer the phones. I forget the exact numbers because they changed the minimum staffing levels from summer to fall and I know they just changed, but I don't have the exact number of what the minimum number of operators is right now. But a lot of those positions have to be filled by overtime, particularly on the weekends because they do raise the staffing levels.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah, he was citing Saturday night as the --

MS. McBRIDE:

Friday and Saturday night are our busiest times on the midnight shift. A lot of times they have to be filled by people mandated to stay over and work the overtime. Another problem area we have, not just on 911, but is in Teletype. We only have one operator assigned to the midnight shift, she only works five days a week, so that position must be filled by overtime at least two nights a week. So the staffing levels are a problem. We have lower staffing levels on the midnights than they do on the day tours for dispatchers and for 911 operators and it is a particular problem. And Friday and Saturday night, again, it gets very busy with the holidays coming up, with holiday parties.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Do you think this is -- the problem is that, you know, that Saturday nights are just going to always be problematic when you have a 24-hour operation. Do you think that's -- is it coming from that or is it becoming because we're putting too few people, we have too --

MS. McBRIDE:

There -- for the normal call volume that we would get Monday through Friday, we barely have enough operators. For the normal call volume that we would get on a Friday and a Saturday, we do not have enough operators assigned to the shifts.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah, that's plain and simple; it's just not enough for that particular --

MS. McBRIDE:

Yeah, it has to be filled by overtime.

LEG. HORSLEY:

So what this gentleman was telling me you would say was accurate.

MS. McBRIDE:

Yes, yes. And I would highly recommend that any of you come take a visit on a Friday and Saturday night. During a storm --

LEG. HORSLEY:

That's what he did, he said, "Come in at 12:30, one o'clock," and I'm saying, "Oh, good God."

MS. McBRIDE:

Yeah. During a storm, I mean, two o'clock in the morning the dispatchers had to be pulled from their side of the room to answer the phones, they couldn't take breaks, they were supposed to head off to meals.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Yeah, he was telling me harrowing tales. You know, he went on for -- I couldn't -- you know, he was in the middle of community service out with the Lindenhurst Fire Department and he's telling me these stories, "I've got to tell you this," you know.

MS. McBRIDE:

Yeah. It gets to be a little bit busy, a little bit hairy. And on the midnight shift, a lot of times the calls we get for people breaking into homes and such and robberies, they're real. On the day shift you'll get a few more that aren't quite, you know, really happening. On the midnights, a lot of times those calls are real and it takes a little more to handle them.

LEG. HORSLEY:

Okay, thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Anybody else? We're good? Okay, thank you very much for your presentation.

MS. FELICE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, I'd like to start the agenda.

Tabled Resolutions

We have **IR 1499-08 - A Local Law to require the Probation Department employees use County vehicles while conducting County business (Losquadro).**

LEG. LOSQUADRO.

Table, Public Hearing.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

This has to be tabled for a Public Hearing. Legislator Losquadro made the motion, I'll second it. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).**

Introductory Resolution

1810-08 - A Local Law to amend Probation Department fees (Presiding Officer). Table for a public hearing. Same motion, same second. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).**

1841-08 - Amending the 2008 Capital Budget and Program and appropriating funds in connection with the purchase and replacement of heavy duty and specialty equipment for the Department of Fire, Rescue and Emergency Services (CP 3421)(County Executive).

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to approve by Legislator Losquadro, second by Legislator --

LEG. NOWICK:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Brown -- or did you say something?

LEG. BROWNING:

Yes.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Browning, second. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 6-0-0-0)**. Could we just have a second so that the Chief -- so that the Commissioner could just clarify what it's going to be used for? Just for Legislator Browning.

COMMISSIONER WILLIAMS:

Good morning. What this piece of equipment is actually replacing is at our Fire Academy right now we have a 1988 dump truck that we use for a number of services besides the Fire Academy. The truck is actually under repair, it's unrepairable right now. What we've been looking to do is buy a new dump truck which will enable us to drive safely with it, use it at the Fire Academy. In addition, six months ago we purchased medical hospital tents through a Federal Grant; this vehicle will be one of the vehicles we'll be using to transport those tents. The specialty equipment on it is a simple thing as a snow plow that enables us -- in the wintertime we have 18 trailers on the property that if we need to get them out for an emergency during a snow storm we can start the process before DPW gets there, and that's the specialty equipment. It's really needed, this piece of equipment.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, thank you for your explanation.

Okay. **IR 1849-08 - To re-establish the DARE Program in Suffolk County (Alden).**

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to table by Legislator Browning. I'd like to make a motion to table it subject to call.

LEG. GREGORY:

I second the motion to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Seconded by Legislator Gregory. All those in favor? Opposed?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Opposed.

LEG. NOWICK:

Opposed.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Two opposed, four in favor, motion carries. **Tabled subject to call (VOTE: 4-2-0-0 Opposed: Legislators Losquadro & Nowick)**.

IR 1865-08 - Establishing the Police Fund Review Committee to examine the impact of escalating Suffolk County Police Department personnel costs on the fiscal stability of the Police Fund (County Executive).

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Can we get an explanation? It sort of sounds like a Sense Resolution. I thought we weren't allowed to do those anymore.

MR. NOLAN:

Well, it's not a Sense Resolution because it actually does do something. It establishes a five-member committee that is going to basically look at the -- I guess, describe in detail the compensation packages for Police Officers and then make recommendations of actions that might be presented to the Governor, State Legislative leaders for State or local legislation to address what's described as escalating costs to pay the compensation packages for Police Officers.

The committee is going to have five members, three of them are going to be appointed by the County Executive, one of whom is going to be the Police Commissioner, one of whom is described has to be independent of any Police Department or Police Collective Bargaining Unit; one member going to be appointed by the Presiding Officer, again, who is supposed to be independent of any Police Department of bargaining unit; one member who's going to be appointed jointly by the County Executive and the Presiding Officer and shall be a ranking -- high-ranking official of a Suffolk County Police Bargaining Unit.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

As I said, maybe there's a bit of structural difference but, in essence, we're sending our opinion to the State, which to me sounds like a Sense Resolution.

MR. NOLAN:

Well, it's setting up this committee.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I understand what you mean, it's actually establishing a task force. I don't know why Budget Review wouldn't be included, I see a whole host of questions regarding this. Anyone else have any comments on this?

LEG. GREGORY:

Mr. Chairman?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

I'd like to make a motion to table. The jurisdiction of collective bargaining agreements falls under the Committee of Budget & Finance, with the exception of the Community College. So this committee that they're looking to establish would usurp the jurisdiction of the Budget & Finance Committee, so I will not support this.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I'll second that motion.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, we have a motion by Legislator Gregory to table and a second by Legislator Losquadro. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Okay, thank you. **Tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).**

IR 16 -- 1868-08 - A Local Law clarifying the use of forfeitures upon conviction of the misdemeanor crime of reckless driving.

MR. NOLAN:

You have to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Table this for a Public Hearing.

LEG. BROWNING:

Second.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Browning. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Tabled (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).**

IR 1887-08 - To establish a policy for continued Police Officer presence in the Police Athletic League Program (Presiding Officer Lindsay).

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to approve by Legislator Browning.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 6-0-0-0).**

Okay, with no other business --

MR. ZWIRN:

Mr. Chairman, may I have an opportunity just to speak? I've waited until the end of the meeting.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Oh, well, I appreciate that. Thank you, Mr. Zwirn. Yes, go right ahead.

MR. ZWIRN:

Yeah, thank you. I have a letter that has been prepared by Connie Corso from our Budget Office with respect to the numbers that were bandied about with respect to Highway Patrol and the savings with the replacement of Deputy Sheriffs, and I've asked Barbara LoMoriello to pass that out when she gets a moment, after doing the paperwork for the Clerk's Office.

I'd also just like an opportunity just to respond briefly to the presentation today and some of the comments from Cheryl Felice, Presiding of AME. Now, we have great regard for Cheryl and her job as the President of the AME and the people that she represents. And when she comes up here and is fighting for more bodies to do work within the County, we understand that's her role and we have no quarrel with that. I think the County Executive really gets upset when you have scare tactics, and we heard some of them mentioned today. A DPW worker died, a young man in his 40's, a crossing guard died, and that's somehow related to, you know, the work that they're doing, the stress that they're under because of the workload that they have to maintain because we're short-staffed, we're allegedly short-staffed in different departments. That's crossing a fine line. I mean, when you blame, you know, the County Executive and the way the County is being run on the loss of life of

people working in the County with no justification whatsoever, no family background, no Medical Examiner's report, blaming the County, putting the County in a position that it may have to defend lawsuits that are absolutely absurd; we think that's a little bit much.

A few weeks ago they came in here, the 911 operators, and said that the sky is falling. And to your credit, Mr. Chairman, you said, "Look, I've heard one side, I've heard the other. I'm going to go out there myself and see if the system is working", and members of your committee went out there. Legislator Gregory was taking phone calls, as were you, Legislator Losquadro. You saw with your own eyes. You didn't have to believe what the Police Department said, you didn't have to believe what AME said, you saw the system working. The system works.

Now, we're always going to have an argument over how much staffing in each department; Legislator Losquadro, everybody has made those arguments and wants the answers. The stock market went down 700 points yesterday.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

It's back up today.

MR. ZWIRN:

Well, at some point --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Not much.

MR. ZWIRN:

I'm just saying. But we're in free-fall, we're in uncharted territory in this country and around the world that we may have never, ever, ever seen before. We have really tough decisions that we have to make going forward.

The County Executive represents the entire County and has to look at everybody's situation and is trying to maintain basic, core services in a time of real trouble, a time where people are in tax delinquency in this County at record levels that we have never seen before. The most conservative estimates for revenue for a government is your real estate taxes, because people don't want to lose the largest investment they have, their homes. But there are certain districts out here, certain towns which can't -- the people can't make their tax bills. They're trying to pay their oil bill, they're trying to pay their credit card bill, they're trying to buy food, they can't pay their taxes and our delinquency in taxes is at record levels. And under the Suffolk County Tax act, everybody else has to make up the difference; if they have to pay their schools, their Police Officers, whatever they have to pay for and their local services are paid for by everybody else in the County. We have to look at that when we examine all of this.

Again, we're going to have the debate over staffing, how many people, how high should taxes be, where can we get revenues from. Many of you, and just about everybody on this board who sits here on this committee has already made tough decisions and those tough decisions -- and the County Executive is appreciative because you've all crossed party lines to do that. Not everybody has done it, but everybody sitting here today has, and there are going to be tougher decisions ahead. Look, we work in the pluralistic system where different types of interest groups come in and make their case. We're going to have the day-care workers in here, we're going to have social -- every program, every individual, we could probably say that we should have more staff. We're going to have to go back to core missions trying to do the best we can with a lot less than we've ever had and we just ask you to bear that in mind.

And we just ask, even with the unions. You know, when you make your arguments, please -- you know, everybody is welcome to make your arguments. There were demonstrations at the dinner the

other night with John J. Foley Nursing people, they were very well behaved, they made their point; I mean, that's part of the American way, it's a Constitutional right and we respect it and it's part of the system. Your jobs will be difficult this year beyond anything that you probably ever imagined when you took this job. You're going to have to -- it's going to be a major job of leadership and staffing and doing this budget, it's going to be -- you're going to have to have the wisdom of Solomon this year. I just ask the union and everybody to draw their fire, make your arguments based on facts, try not to scare people with those tactics. And I think Chairman Eddington made that point this morning.

Look, you can make your arguments without being irresponsible and we just ask everybody to take a deep breath and try to get through this process as civil as possible based on as many facts as possible. I have numbers here today that will breakdown how the County Executive Office arrived at the \$42,000 difference between the Deputy Sheriffs and Highway Patrol Officers, I'm glad to make that available. And any other questions that -- I know Legislator Losquadro said he had some questions, I think he was talking about civilianization in the Police Department. I know we've had the Commissioner -- that's what I was assuming. If not -- look, you can always invite the Police Commissioner to come back to go through those numbers again and he'll be glad to come. And I appreciate the opportunity to be able to just respond this morning. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Does anybody want to -- no. Okay. Thank you very much. Then with no other business, I'll call for a motion to adjourn.

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Browning and Legislator Gregory and everybody else. Okay, thank you.

(*The meeting was adjourned at 10:29 A.M.*)

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