

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 Thursday, June 18, 2009, at 9:30 a.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Jack Eddington - Chairperson
Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Vice Chair
Legislator Thomas Barraga
Legislator Kate Browning
Legislator Daniel Losquadro

Also in Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Barbara LoMoriello - Deputy Clerk/SC Legislature
Robert Calarco - Aide to Legislator Eddington
Kara Hahn - Director of Communications/PO Lindsay's Office
Bobby Knight - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Marge Acevedo - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Linda Bay - Aide to Minority Leader Losquadro
Paul Perillie - Aide to Majority Leader Cooper
Robert Lipp - Deputy Director/Budget Review Office
Ben Zwirn - Deputy County Executive
Brendan Chamberlain - County Executive Assistant
Ed Hennessy - County Executive Assistant
Allen Kovesdy - Director of Management & Research/County Exec's Office
Dennis Brown - Bureau Chief/County Attorney's Office
Richard Dormer - Commissioner/Suffolk County Police Department
Robert Anthony Moore - Chief of Department/SC Police Department
Jeff Tempera - Director/Suffolk County Labor Relations
Salvatore Marino - Inspector/SCPD-Chief of Department's Office
Ted Nieves - Captain/SCPD-Chief of Department's Office
Thomas Palmer - Captain/SCPD-Chief of Patrol's Office
Tracy Pollak - Suffolk County Police Department/Headquarters
Tom Spota - District Attorney of Suffolk County
Robert Kearon - Bureau Chief/District Attorney's Office
Joe Williams - Commissioner - Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services.
Robert Sheron - Fire, Rescue & Emergency Services
Jeff Frayler - President/Suffolk County Police Benevolent Association
Michael Applequist - Financial Secretary/Police Benevolent Association
Thomas Tatarian - Recording Secretary/Police Benevolent Association
Bob Murphy - 6th Precinct Trustee/Suffolk County PBA
Russ McCormack - Suffolk County Detectives/Legislative Chairman
Jerry Gilmore - President/Superior Officer's Association
Michael Sharkey - Chief-of-Staff/Suffolk County Sheriff's office
Matt Mullins - President/Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Association
Mike Rando - 2nd Vice-President/Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Assc.
Gail D'Ambrosio - President/Suffolk County Probation Officer's Assoc.

Debbie Alloncius - AME/Legislative Director
Debbie McKee - SC Police Department, Emergency Unit
Hope Callazo - American Red Cross/Director-Community Service Program
Debbie Eppel - Public Information Officer of Suffolk County
Laura Ahearn - Executive Director/Parents for Megan's Law
Robert Varese - Chief/Northport Fire Department
Tom Russo - Suffolk County Police Officer/1st Precinct Gang Unit
Jesus Faya - Suffolk County Police Officer/2nd Precinct
Pete Conte - Suffolk County Police Officer/Marine Bureau
Sean Neknez - Suffolk County Police Officer/5th Precinct
Steve Bienemann - Suffolk County Police Officer/4th Precinct
David Vlacick - Suffolk County Police Officer/4th Precinct
Donald SantaMaria - Suffolk County Police Officer/7th Precinct
Kathi & Ronnie Bertos - Residents of Mastic
Eddie Graham - Belmont Lake Civic Association
Sandra Thomas - Concerned Taxpayers of Wheatly Heights/Dix Hills Civic
Rick Brand - Newsday
Hundreds of Suffolk County Police Officers
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken & Transcribed By:
Alison Mahoney - Court Stenographer

(*The meeting was called to order at 9:34 AM*)

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

If you would please rise, we're going to start the Public Safety Committee meeting. Legislator Gregory will lead us in the pledge

Salutation

If you would remain standing for a moment of silence for all those that serve our country, both home and aboard.

Moment of Silence Observed

Thank you. Be seated. Okay. I see that everybody wants to know where the red cameras are going to be situated.

Okay, I'm going to start with the public portion and then I'm going to change and do the agenda, which is very short, and then we have the two presentations. So let's start with the public portion, and I have Jesus Faya.

MR. FAYA:

Good morning, sir.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Good morning,

MR. FAYA:

Good morning. My name is Jesus Faya, I am a Suffolk County Police Officer currently assigned to the 2nd Precinct. And I wanted to touch upon briefly as to my perception of how the Suffolk County Police Department is being systematically dismantled over the last couple of years. Something that should be clear and present in your minds is the current revelation from the County Executive's Office that they want to eliminate 365 positions that were funded but that were never filled. The PBA for years has been trying to tell this committee and other bodies that we never had

the level of Police out on the streets, that you the members have appropriated. For years we've been telling you that there weren't the number of cops that you had been told were there. Systematically, over and over, you see the number of Police Officers reduced and commands are being decimated and eventually this is going to effect public safety.

I was a member of the Highway Patrol Bureau, and at one point in time we had 12 Police Officers and two Sergeants in each and every squad up on the Expressway and on Sunrise Highway protecting the people of Suffolk County; we've since been taken off and we've been replaced by a handful of Deputy Sheriffs. Now, I don't care what they tell you and I don't care how hard those Deputy Sheriffs are working, the handful of guys that replaced us are not providing the public with anywhere near the level of service that we were.

The same thing is now happening to COPE. Community Police Officers, supposedly 90 Community Police Officers are being taken off their jobs and they're being put out on patrol. Well, the jobs that those guys used to do, the community problems that they used to resolve are going to go undone and eventually the public is going to suffer for it. If you keep cutting back the Police Department, eventually, it's only a matter of time before we go from being a proactive Police Department, being able to take care of problems that are on the cusp, breaking out, into being a reactive Police Department where all that we are going to be able to do is chase 911 calls. We'll be running from one 911 call to the other and we'll have no other time for anything else other than that, and the public is going to pay for it.

Now, all of a sudden we wake up and we hear that the Police Department is going to be trying this approach where they transfer cops from one precinct to another just to get them acclimated, it's called a wholistic approach. Well, in 22 years of Police service, I've never heard of anything so asinined. It takes a while for -- once you get transferred to get up to speed in a precinct and the response is going to suffer and the public is going to suffer because of it.

It's just ridiculous what's happening to the department. And something like that will only serve to the detriment of the morale, which is pretty low as it is and it's only going to do it in even worse. Thank you very much.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you. Jeff Frayler. The next speaker is Jeff Frayler. Jeff Frayler?

MR. FRAYLER:

I think that was very eloquently put. I'd like to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to speak here today and for the job that you do year-round.

There are a few issues that are hanging out there, one of which we keep hearing about, you know, the name calling from the County Executive, how arrogant the PBA is, how this Legislative body cows down to the PBA, which is absolutely not true. So far to date, if you could believe the County Executive, \$8 million has been saved on the backs of this Police Department by removing us from the highways, another 3.2 million in taking the money out of the budget to hire a Police class, 6.8 million by reducing our overtime 50% which was implemented in April, and now they want another 6.8 million with no guarantees, no commitments, that this Police Department is going to be dismantled.

It hurts, it hurts me a lot. I have been on this job for 34 years, I have never seen it this bad, it's horrible. What can I say?

Our Commissioner, our Chiefs, have stood by while Highway was eliminated. They stood by while the Marine Bureau this year will be at lower numbers than it was last year. Now they want to eliminate our Community Oriented Policing. The Commissioner says it's because he is restricted contractually which, again, is not true. COPE has ten charts to choose from and could use all or one of them. They say that the reason is there's no coverage Sunday or Monday; if that's the case, it's

because management has elected not to cover Sunday and Monday. I have a copy of the Memorandum of Agreement here that was signed back in I believe 2002 that gives them the absolute right to have seven day a week coverage in that command.

So many things have been going on that continue to dishearten me. I read in the paper about a child being shot playing basketball /I read about the heroin endemic on Long Island, and now we're eliminating one of our most vital commands, the COPE command. What's next? When Commissioner Guido was here, COPE was pride and joy. Community oriented policing was his highest priority. He did his job to the best of his ability, he was a great Police Commissioner. He stood up to the politics in the end and subsequently lost his job. Unfortunately, it appears that our new Commissioner is more concerned with keeping his job than with standing up to the politics that are tearing it apart. It hurts. It hurts every member of the Suffolk County Police Department.

The men and women of this department work very hard, 24/7, to get the job done for the people of this County. They need to be supported by this Legislative body because in speaking to them, they don't seem to be supported anywhere else in the County. The County Executive and the management of this department seems to be tearing it up without standing up for the men and women and it hurts. The pain is there, it needs to be corrected. Thank you for your time.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Mike Applequist. Mike Applequist?

MR. APPLEQUIST:

Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank you, Chairman Eddington, for this brief time. Again, I've been before this body before and I'm not going to go into a bunch of he said/she saids or numbers again, as I did the last time I was before you. I am going to ask you to reserve all your decisions on the items that are discussed today. And if you have any questions, I know there's probably going to be a bunch of numbers or if you need explanation, our office has received calls in the past and we will work diligently to get you what we believe to be the true numbers, the true answers. And wherever they fall, as my wife says, it is what it is, and we are committed to that, but we are so confident in our efforts that we are going to be found right 98% of the time.

We have a Commissioner who is taking the bidding of the County Executive. Historically, we have the records of what he was when he was a Chief, he wanted to dismantle this Police Department. And I just can't believe he still claims that Dan Guido was his mentor because Dan Guido, although he was tough with us unions, we was a fair man, an open-minded man. And we understood he had a job as the manager and the leader of the Police Department maybe to do things we didn't like, but he did it in a professional manner, the numbers were upfront, his voice was upfront and he was willing to have a dialogue. We no longer have a dialogue in this County with the head of our department and with the various unions, and that's important. The only dialogue we get is from you ladies and gentlemen up there because you're looking for the answers. And what we give you, you may believe, you may not, but at least you're going to get a response, and an honest response from our part.

And I just ask as you go forward, again, after all the debate is over and you have questions, feel free to contact us. We will give you the hard truth even if it hurts our members because if they're right, they're right; it's that simple. We're not just union demagogues that scream we're a hundred percent right all the time. And unlike the County Executive, I'm very offended of his comments that all he likes to say about the PBA is "the union bosses"; it sounds like we're in Chicago in the 20's. It's outrageous, his behavior, and he's nothing but a demagogue up there who has his ball and wants to take it home and have his way. Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you. Kathy and Ronnie Bertos.

MS. BERTOS:

My name is Kathy Bertos, I live in Mastic on 53 Terapin Street. I'm from the street where the gentleman shot the people at William Floyd High School. I'm obviously not from the Suffolk County Police Department, but this does directly effect, it seems, what is going on today, and that is that we tried to start a neighborhood watch because we were told that was the first step towards making our neighborhood more safe. And upon coming to our first meeting, we were met with a Police Officer that was unprepared for the meeting because our COPE officer was no longer there to help us. We, as a neighborhood, feel that without our COPE officer, we are left once again without guidance, without someone to go to specifically about our problems.

Nine Terapin made the news, it's what made us central, but our block and the blocks surrounding us have many problems. We have a lot of working families that want to be safe. We really want to be safe in our homes. I specifically had my house shot at with a hunting-grade BB gun and it seems as though there's no cohesiveness and people that we can go to as a community to find answers when things like this happen and nothing comes from it. And we were told that the COPE officers were the people that can direct you and can make things more specific to your specific problems, and now we're left with no one again. The man that was supposed to be at the meeting who knows about our block, knows about our problem, wasn't there, and it was highly disappointing and apparently we don't have COPE officers anymore. I've heard that we're still going to have COPE officers but yet it's a rotating kind of a situation now, which when dealing with neighborhoods, you need gentlemen on the street that know the specifics of that area, and I'm told that COPE was those people and now we don't have them.

I represent lot of people on my block, obviously most of them are working, this is a 9:30 in the morning meeting. So the 20 or 30 people that are behind me could not make it, but definitely let me let you know that there are people that are concerned that our COPE officers and other officers that know what they're going in their specific job descriptions are not there anymore and they're being shifted around.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Yes, thank you very much. Could you just hang out, Legislator Browning would like to just ask you a question.

LEG. BROWNING:

I just want to say thanks for coming. It's nice to see you this morning. I did show up at that meeting towards the end it and it was a very upset number of people, I think there was probably, you would say, about 25 people that were in the room?

MS. BERTOS:

Twenty-five. And probably, if you want to count everybody that couldn't make it, it's probably like 40 people on our block, but yes.

LEG. BROWNING:

You know, I do want to say thank you because I know your husband has decided to become the block captain for the neighborhood. You know, we'll continue to work with you no matter what, but I truly understand and I heard the voices of the 25 plus people that were in that room. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Hello. Good morning.

MS. BERTOS:
Good morning.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you for coming out this morning, especially on this particular issue which is very important. Although you're not from my district, I think your concerns carry throughout Suffolk County. So are you involved with the neighborhood watch?

MS. BERTOS:

We're trying diligently. We are trying to find out what the specifics of it are. But yes, my husband is going to be the block captain and we're going to try to meet again with the Police because we need a little more guidance. We're not the professionals, they are, and if we don't have their help, then we can't help either; you know what I'm saying?

LEG. GREGORY:

So as Jack would say with his social work background, so what I'm hearing you saying is as a community leader, you would prefer to have a specific person, some continuity in who you interact with with the Police Department --

MS. BERTOS:
Definitely.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- because that would give you consistency and I guess the feedback in the relationship that the community is looking for? Am I putting words in your mouth?

MS. BERTOS:

Absolutely not. That's very eloquently said and perfect.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. My ex-wife wouldn't agree with you, but I think -- I'm glad that you do. Thank you.

*(*Laughter From Audience*)*

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you. Did Ronnie want to come up?

MS. BERTOS:
No.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MS. BERTOS:

Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Next is Pete Conte.

MR. CONTE:

Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here this morning. I'm a Suffolk County Police Officer assigned to the Marine Bureau for 20 years. Last week several of you received some frantic phone calls from me. I know, Legislator Gregory, I spoke to you, some of the others I spoke to their aides.

The Marine Bureau last week was about to lose 21 jobs over night, hard and fast, the same way Highway Patrol lost 52 jobs. Instead, what happened was we lost the Babylon sector of the Marine Bureau, which constitutes Oak Beach, Gilgo, all the way west to the Nassau border. In 1991, we were given this sector from the 1st Precinct, because it did not work for the 1st Precinct to have this sector. It's on the beach. Their backup is the Marine 3 which is a sector that works Islip in the Marine Bureau. They gave that sector to us to make it work, made it work for the public and made it work for backup and safety of the Police Officers. As a last-ditch effort, we lost this sector last week, now that sector goes with one Police Officer. The rest of the 1st Precinct is on the mainland, you have to actually drive through the 3rd Precinct to get to the Babylon area. Okay?

I have been there, as I said, for 20 years. When I first got there, every car was doubled on the beach, we had a contingency of anywhere between 12 to 22 Police Officers who would come to work for the summer. This year, and I'll give you an example, this past Saturday there were two Police Officers on the beach, on Fire Island. Okay? We lost the Babylon sector. All of Fire Island, two Police Officers, Saturday morning. At ten in the morning we made an arrest, now there was one. To put a second officer an hour-and-a-half later on the beach, we shut down the boat that I was on. So I cover the west end boat, Legislator Gregory, and that's your area.

I don't -- I understand Mr. Levy knows numbers and has his agenda, but people have to understand that public safety is at risk here. Police Officer safety is paramount and we are all being put in jeopardy. It used to be ten years ago, if I had a problem, one of the guys got into trouble, I could go and talk to a Chief, or if I had to I could talk to the Commissioner and make it right. These days are gone. The person that runs the Police Department now has no concept of what it takes to run a Police Department, he knows numbers and that seems to be it. Three weeks ago we had two officers in the middle of the night get into a roll-around with someone in Davis Park, it took 20 minutes for backup to arrive, 20 minutes. These two officers were thoroughly exhausted; they were actually laying on top of this man, they had nothing left. Does anyone know what it's like to fight until you have absolutely nothing left? That's where they were, 16 or 20 minutes for a response to help.

We're not going to get through the summer without someone getting hurt, the public being put in jeopardy or Police Officers getting hurt. We need more people on Fire Island and we also need that Marine 1 sector back because it makes sense. Does anyone have any questions?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you. Legislator Greg does.

MR. CONTE:

Yes.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Conte, for coming today. When we spoke, was it before or after the meeting? I'll give you a hint; it was after.

MR. CONTE:

Thank you. It was after.

LEG. GREGORY:

I just wanted to make that clear because I know I was accused in a statement that I'm speaking or

spewing PBA talking points but --

MR. CONTE:

No.

LEG. GREGORY:

-- I spoke from my heart and then we had a conversation afterwards and you had given me the historical, I guess, history behind everything after my conversation, which reiterated what I think for me what I had stated in the Public Safety meeting. So thank you for coming today. It's finally nice to meet you and thank you for what you do for your members.

MR. CONTE:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. CONTE:

Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Jerry Gilmore. Jerry Gilmore, please?

MR. GILMORE:

Good morning, Chairman Eddington and members of the Public Safety Committee. My name is Jerry Gilmore, I'm President of the Superior Officer's Association.

Many of you asked this organization to agree to a ten-day deferral with the County, which we accomplished just two weeks ago. The same week our membership agreed to the deferral, the department moved to eliminate 21 Police Officers from the Marine Bureau. If you question them, they will say they never considered this course of action, but it is true. What resulted was the Marine Bureau was left in tact by their standards and the 1st Precinct was given the responsibility of another sector, totally separated and disjointed from the precinct with no additional personnel and you were told this was a smart move. Again, you were not -- we were not given accurate information.

The main part of the 1st Precinct is now working with seven less Police Officers and the administration is threatening to cut back the PBA's overtime. How will these cars be manned? After the Marine Bureau incident, we are now facing a disbanding of COPE. The COPE supervisors have been assigned back to Patrol and will fill normal supervisory positions in those squads. Do not believe these supervisors will be assigned to COPE, they have lost their positions. They are filling the vacancies of Sergeants that we should have. We're back down 33 Sergeants, no one has been promoted from the Sergeant's list in almost two years. Do not believe the smoke screens.

We have a dedicated group of officers and supervisors who continue to do their job day-in and day-out with less support and less resources, and it's because of these Police Officers and supervisors that the job gets done and nothing to do with anything called smart policing or smart government. This Legislature has had a long and good history of supporting the Police Department and its Police Officers. When the COPE Unit was disbanded in March of 1991, it is this Legislature, your predecessors, who never gave up the fight and fought to have COPE restored. It was important then and it is even more important now. Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Is there anybody else who wanted to address the committee? No? Okay, seeing -- would anybody else like to address the committee? Yes, come forward and identify yourself.

MR. NEKNEZ:

Good morning. My name is Sean Neknez, I'm assigned to the 5th Precinct; up until last week, I was assigned to the 5th Precinct COPE Section. I take pride in my job and I know, Legislator Eddington, you're obviously in our district and we deal with you a lot. We come to work every day and most of us have worked very hard to get to this position where we're at. Our initial assignment when we get in is we speak to our Inspector or Deputy Inspector, we find out whether or not any of you or any members of our precincts have contacted our COPE Section to find out if they have a problem in the neighborhood, whether it be speeding cars, stop signs, drug activity, loud music, volleyball games, anything of that sort. We contact the Legislators, we contact your office, we contact these people when they leave their phone numbers, we go to their house, we actually a rapport with people. I have a hundred people's cell phone numbers that we have in the office of just people who are taxpayers in this County; we come to work every day and we work for you, we work for them.

We're now -- and we're told that we're going to be reassigned to the Patrol Section. I got into work yesterday for my first shift in my new squad and I realized that I am no longer a COPE Officer. I've been transferred to the 5th Precinct Patrol Section and I'm told that I'm going to be performing both duties. Now, you have a watered down effect of what the old COPE team was. My unit was consisted of seven members and a COPE Sergeant, which many of you probably know Sergeant Tom {Hull}, he's our supervisor; we have assignments and I think we carry out those assignments pretty well. I don't have statistics, I don't have summonses, I don't have arrests, I don't have numbers to produce for you right now, but we have a high volume and we have a very aggressive unit. We perform to a high level. Not only do we generate a tremendous amount of arrests, a tremendous amount of activity, we also have a great relationship with many of our citizens in our precinct. So to have me come into work this week and realize that now I am back to pretty much square one after eight years of being in this department, to pretty much as if I just got out of the academy yesterday. I've worked very hard for eight years, many of the guys that I work with have worked very hard for eight years.

Our patrol guys do a great job, they handle 911 calls, that's their job; our job as COPE officers was to handle any problems that you as Legislators had and any problems -- I picked up the phone yesterday and I had people calling the COPE office asking if we're still there. Now, I'm sitting there with my supervisor and there's two of us sitting in that office. As of yesterday, I didn't have to backfill any sector car, but tomorrow I might have to.

We went to a civic meeting yesterday in Bellport, the BHAP office, the BHAP Alliance groups, and they're asking questions that we don't have answers to. You know, we're going to take all their information down, we're going to do the best we can with the people that we have, but the bottom line is we don't have the man power that we once had. You give us a unit of six or seven guys and a supervisor, we can get a ton accomplished. You give us two guys and a supervisor, and some of the units don't even have a supervisor, and you can't get anything accomplished. And the 5th Precinct is a big precinct, we cover from Brookhaven in the Bellport area all the way to Oakdale. It's a tremendous precinct. We have people calling the office every single day about stop signs and drug activity in the neighborhood and we take pride in it, we sit on the blocks, we actually speak to people all the time and now we're not going to be able to do that.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you, Sean. Before you -- Legislator Gregory has a question, but before he does that, I just wanted to say that knowing you personally, and actually all seven of the officers, you've done an outstanding job with our community, I hear it all the time.

MR. NEKNEZ:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

And I apologize. I know what you're feeling and I'm sorry that that's happening, and we're going to talk more about this today at this meeting, obviously. But you've been doing a great job and tell the other officers that I do support them.

MR. NEKNEZ:

We're not here complaining about salaries, about the money and overtime and stuff like that. The bottom line is that you're not getting the quality of work that you once had and that's pretty much where we're at, and now morale is at an all-time low. And I'm very happy to come to work every day, but this is the lowest it's been in the eight years that I've been on this job.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I understand. Thank you.

MR. NEKNEZ:

You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you for coming here today. Your perspective is the exact perspective I think that we're looking for, coming as a former COPE officer or current COPE officer, however you want to term it. So am I to understand that you're being told that you're still assigned as a COPE officer but in a regular sector patrol?

MR. NEKNEZ:

From my understanding, like for most of us, I think things are changing every single day; I mean, we've heard numerous things. As of yesterday I walked in to my COPE office and I was on a notification saying -- a teletype saying that I was transferred to 5th Precinct Patrol, and I was standing there with my supervisor and there were no other members available because they were either backfilling or at some sort of training. But that was basically it, myself and a supervisor.

LEG. GREGORY:

But the sector that you were assigned to, was it within your COPE where you were when you were assigned and as a --

MR. NEKNEZ:

I particularly cover the North Bellport area. I work -- I'm fortunate to work with a partner every single day and we cover the North Bellport area, which we need to be in North Bellport. It's sad to say, but we're needed in there every single day, you know, and we're not -- I don't know that we're going to be in that area as much as we normally would be.

LEG. GREGORY:

So were you not assigned to that area previously or --

MR. NEKNEZ:

I've been assigned to North Bellport for two years as a COPE officer.

LEG. GREGORY:

Oh, okay. I just got confused when you said that you went to a meeting last night and you were going to try to resolve some issues; I thought you were dealing with people that you haven't dealt with before so you were in a --

MR. NEKNEZ:

No, I deal with people who are in an alliance group that are members of Bellport-Hagerman Fire Department and East Patchogue area and they have a community meeting every Tuesday, the first of the month or the end of the month. We get together and they pretty much voice their concerns with what's going on in the community and they know that they can rely on us. It's not something that's not going to be put on the back burner, we handle it that night, the following day, and it's something that we continue to work on every single day.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. So your concern was more you don't have the manpower, you think, to deal with some of the issues that you --

MR. NEKNEZ:

That's correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, thank you very much.

Applause

Would anyone else like to address the committee? Okay, come forward and identify yourself. I don't care who -- you can be next. You all get three minutes.

MR. BIENEMANN:

I'll go first, you can go next. Steve Bienemann, I'm from the 4th Precinct, I'm a Police Officer there on the midnight tour. I've been a Police Officer for almost 26 years now. I've never seen things as bad as they are right now as far as the morale with the Police Officers. You come to work every day -- the one thing that an officer needs in his life is consistency; we don't have that in Suffolk County right now. Every single day we come to work, we open up Newsday, we don't go in to see the bosses to find out what's going on because nobody knows what's going on; you open up Newsday and you read the stories. So we can only believe what's written in Newsday now, that's become our source for what happens in the Suffolk County Police Department. The consistency that we need is because of our own safety and the safety of the communities that we serve.

The other day in -- there was a story about the two young kids that were found in a pool. Thank God that those officers knew that area, that they were from that area and they got to that -- they got to that call immediately and were able to get those kids safely to the hospital. If that had been under the plan that this Police Department is planning to do now where they're taking officers from precincts that they've been working in for many years and moving them as a wholistic assignment, as it's been called, and have them work now in an area that they're unfamiliar with, the response times for that officer to get to those calls, they don't know the area, it would take them longer, it will be a safety factor not only for the public but for the officers working around them.

And an officer working in a particular area, we talk about the COPE officers, well, there's steady sector officers also and they've been working in those sectors for many, many years. They're aware of the crime rate, they're aware of the crime patterns, they're aware of youth disturbances that are in the area and other things that are going on that the community relays to those officers also. So in effect, a steady officer who's been in that car for many years is also a COPE officer. Now, under this plan, I can only believe -- they can tell you what they want, but I can only believe that this department, that that is a form of harassment against officers in this department. It's the only reason it makes sense; it does not make sense under any other disguise --

Applause

-- any other thing, an absolute harassment of the rank and file of this Police Department. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to let you know that the reason we're having this meeting today and I asked the Commissioner to come is because we don't want to find out what's going on in the Police Department through Newsday either. So we're going to get that resolved today.

MR. BIENEMANN:

I absolutely agree.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

That's why we're going to have an open meeting and know what's going on. So thank you for your time. Next gentleman.

Applause

MR. RUSSO:

My name is Tom Russo, I'm assigned to the 1st Precinct Gang Unit. Mr. Gregory had a lot of questions, so I didn't plan on speaking but since he had so many questions I thought it was important for someone from his district to come forward and speak.

I was a former COPE officer, I'm currently assigned to the Gang Unit, I've worked very closely with the Weed & Seed, the Belmont Civic Association, I've been to their meetings. When I was in COPE, they had my phone number, they had my cell phone number, if they had a problem they could call me. If they needed something done, they could call me, any time, any day. When I was in COPE, we did have round the clock coverage; we had guys who were off steady Fridays and Saturdays and work Sundays and Mondays as well as guys who were off the additional Sundays and Mondays and worked Tuesday through Saturday. So like Jeff Frayler said earlier, they had the capability to have the coverage, they just -- over the years, COPE has become watered down and they just don't have the man power to have the coverage anymore, and that's a direct result of Patrol being watered down. There's not enough guys in Patrol, they don't have enough people to send to COPE, the Gang Unit, Crime Section and so on down the line.

I work very closely with Jim Avery and Terry Shelton, I used to go to Terry Shelton's house for meetings because they didn't have a place to have a meeting. I used to go on neighborhood patrol with them. They would have a radio, I would have a radio, me and my partner would patrol Wyandanch with them, hand-in-hand, if they had a problem, at that particular moment they would call me on the radio, we would handle it right there for them.

Right now, the way COPE is set up with them going back to the 110 command, patrol, you have what was six or seven guys per unit now down to three or four with no supervision and really not knowing what they were -- what they're going to do on a day-to-day basis. I knew exactly -- on a day-to-day basis, when I was in COPE, I knew what neighborhood meetings I had to go to, I knew who was going to be there, they knew me, they called -- they all know me as Tom, Tom the officer, Tom and Brendan, Brendan is my partner, they knew that if they had a problem, I was going to handle it for them. I was the Wyandanch officer in my COPE Unit, myself and my partner, and you're not going to have that anymore.

With three or four guys in a team, there's a lot. Even in the 1st Precinct, which is the smallest precinct in our district, there is a lot going on on a day-to-day basis, whether it's a parade or Babylon has a meeting, North Amityville has a meeting. We used to have officers in each team specifically assigned to each area that would handle those meetings, handle those community concerns; you're not going to have that with three or four guys per team per squad, assuming that

they're not backfilling Patrol that day. You know, I'm currently assigned to the Gang Unit and just this past week I worked five days, two or three of those days, I don't even remember, were in Patrol, I was backfilling sector cars. Because that's where we're at; in order to make the budget work where it is, we have to backfill cars. So on those three days, there's only three guys in my unit, all three of us were backfilling sector cars, there was nobody doing gang patrol on those particular days. And it's not -- it wasn't like that.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you very much. Legislator Gregory has a question for you.

MR. RUSSO:

I thought he might.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you for coming here today. You had said there's two or three guys without supervision; what do you really mean by that exactly?

MR. RUSSO:

The way the COPE teams used to be set up, there was two teams, one worked days, one worked nights, it was seven or eight guys per team and they each had a supervisor; there was one Sergeant assigned to each of those squads. He knew on a day-to-day basis what meetings were, he made sure that the officers that were assigned to those areas made those meetings; you don't have that anymore. Like the SOA said, those supervisors have been reassigned to the 10 command, they are now going to be, in my particular case, you know, 137, 138, 139. They're responsible for patrol. They're responsible for the five or six sectors that fall under their guidance, so they're not going to be able to go down to COPE, even with the three or four guys, if they're not backfilling cars and say, "We have A, B, C and D to do today"; those COPE officers don't have that anymore. And the other supervisors that are assigned to the Patrol command, they don't know what COPE does on a day-in and day-out basis, so they're not going to be able to assign the COPE guys because they just haven't done it. They don't know how the inner workings of COPE work, it's just simple. If you're not assigned to COPE, you don't know how the unit works.

LEG. GREGORY:

And we haven't heard the plan from the Commissioner yet, but my understanding, as it was presented to some of us in a meeting, was that COPE would stay as is, the unit -- not as is, but those personnel -- would remain under COPE per se, but they would be reassigned to Patrol but they would still do their COPE duties. But what you're saying is that they're more likely to do sector patrol duties.

MR. RUSSO:

If there's an instance where there's overtime or there's manpower issues inside the sector, inside the squad, those COPE officers will backfill Patrol before they do their COPE duties.

LEG. GREGORY:

But you're even saying that their supervision has been taken away.

MR. RUSSO:

Well, there's not -- there's no more COPE supervisors, they have been sent back to Patrol, at least in the 1st precinct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. So at least from the first instance, COPE is not what it was because supervision has been taken away.

MR. RUSSO:

Absolutely.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. And those who are supervising those former, quote/unquote, COPE officers have no experience working with the leaders and the community leaders, the civic leaders or whoever they may be within the communities; is that what you're saying?

MR. RUSSO:

Yes, that would be accurate.

LEG. GREGORY:

So there's no relationship?

MR. RUSSO:

No.

LEG. GREGORY:

So as a former COPE officer, I Joe citizen would call to have an issue, who would I speak to, from your understanding?

MR. RUSSO:

If there was no one in the COPE office on that particular day, you would speak to the desk Sergeant or the officer or possibly the Lieutenant, the officer in charge for the day.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Then you would just get a regular -- you know, just any officer who was on patrol that day to come by or respond to that complaint?

MR. RUSSO:

Well, they would probably take your name and your number and any information you might have and they would forward it to the COPE officers, and at their earliest convenience they would try and follow-up whatever problem or situation that you had.

LEG. GREGORY:

Oh, okay. All right. Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay, thank you very much. We have another gentleman who wants to speak? Okay. Identify yourself, please.

MR. GRAHAM:

Yes, sir. My name is Ed Graham, I am currently the Chairman of Public Safety for the Belmont Lake Civic Association. We're located in the northwest section of North Babylon, we represent approximately fourteen hundred homeowners and approximately -- close to 5,000 registered voters in that area.

I am here today on behalf of those four to 5,000 registered voters in my area. We had an emergency meeting regarding this concern, regarding the COPE Unit in the 1st Precinct. We live in the confines of the 1st Precinct. For the last six or seven years, we have worked very, very closely with the 1st Precinct, and I have to commend the Commissioner and the Police Officers in the 1st Precinct, they have been working together with Lieutenant Kelly and the whole administration there and the front-line Police Officers. We have been able to literally bring down a potential crime rate in our little section.

I have to commend the administration there because they've worked very, very closely with the community, specifically the COPE Unit. I remember when Lieutenant Kelly was the Commanding

Officer of the COPE Unit, he -- community policing was very high on accountability. He -- his responsibility to get out in the community, he met the people, the COPE officers were there. We have a relationship with the COPE officers, that it's critically important. It is important that we have consistency in our communities, that those Police Officers that have been a part of our community family, we trust them, we need them to consistently be there when we have problems in the community.

Now, my community is very concerned about this, and I addressed this to the Inspector this Tuesday at a community forum. That we're combating, we're working with the Police to combat gangs, drugs, all type of offenses that are going on throughout Long Island and specifically within the 1st Precinct. I'm not saying it is a bad precinct, but like everywhere else, we have crime. The communities need the consistency of the COPE Unit, we need to know who they are, they need to know us. We need to continue to enhance that relationship, because that relationship is tied to the reduction of crime in our area.

Now, I do understand manpower. I do understand moving people around, this, that and the other. But if it is going cause a public safety issue, just like I addressed on Tuesday to the Inspector, then we can't afford that cost. As I said, we are dealing with a number of crimes right now that affect the quality of life in our community and we need the consistency of the steady COPE officers there to inter-react with the community and the community feels confident with the COPE officers. I'm not saying that we don't have a relationship with the Patrol, but COPE Unit is set up to interface directly with civic representatives and community leaders.

In closing, I would just like to say this. We ask these Police Officers to go out to do a very challenging job every day. My community wants the Legislature to know that just like they support us on a day-to-day basis and put their lives on the line, we support them and we're asking -- not only for the community, but also for the consistency of them and their families -- that we need this consistency to stay in place, to keep that relationship because that relationship is also tied to the reduction of crime and also to public safety in our communities. Thank you very much.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you. Legislator Gregory has a question for you. Just hang out.

LEG. GREGORY:

Good morning, Ed. Thank you for coming out today.

MR. GRAHAM:

You're quite welcome.

LEG. GREGORY:

What he hasn't told you is I think you're a former -- you're a retired law enforcement officer yourself.

MR. GRAHAM:

Retired, yes.

LEG. GREGORY:

So he has a particular understanding of how this matter will effect the community. I know that earlier this year, the Belmont Lake area, they had a rash of home invasions, you had probably about 23 in a four-week period, something like that, six-week period? And the Commissioner -- it was by circumstance, I had a meeting with the Commissioner and we brought him in right away and we were able to resolve that within a few weeks. So the administration is responsive and they have worked with us. But still, and I agree with the Commissioner on some things and I disagree with the Commissioner on some things, but this particular issue, as I voiced to -- through an e-mail, through some of my community members as well as civics, is that I'm concerned about some of the things

that you spoke about, the consistency or the continuity of that relationship. Because historically, our communities, and let's be honest about it, our communities had a distrust with law enforcement. And through COPE, we've built a bridge that wasn't there in the past. And so for me, I'm concerned that that bridge may be broken, as well as I hear those same sentiments and your comments.

So I think this is not something that we look at lightly, but something that, you know, we look at with deep concern because, you know, our people are living in terrorism. You know, we had a member of the gangs here earlier and there was an incident the other week, somebody got shot and killed and there were three officers that got hurt with a melee. You know, we have some real issues in our community and this -- and the COPE Unit is our connection to the Police Department and we've built some comfort there. It's not perfect, but I think we're going in the right direction.

So thank you for coming out today and expressing those concerns, not only on behalf of just me, but your community, more importantly, and our community as a whole. Okay? Thank you.

MR. GRAHAM:

I would just like to say, before I go, we've had a great relationship with Commissioner Dormer and his staff. The 1st Precinct, Lieutenant Kelly, the Inspector, going back a number of Inspectors, it has been an excellent relationship in my little community that represents 5,000 homeowners -- twelve -- fourteen hundred homeowners and 5,000 voters.

But once again, it is about an established relationship, and you can't put a price on that because that is directly tied to public safety. And it is important that the community residents feel safe and they feel comfortable with the Police Officers, specifically the COPE Officers and our community. And I have to say this before I close out, the COPE Unit in the 1st Precinct has done an outstanding job in enhancing community relationship in my area. And it is really unheard of, the type of relationship that we have with the COPE, and if we lose that, we feel that our public safety will be -- will infringe on our public safety. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you very much.

Applause

Okay, let me try this again. Is there anybody else that would like to address the committee? Yes? Okay, come forward and identify yourself.

MR. VLACICK:

Good morning. Police Officer Vlacick from the 4th Precinct. I just want to touch on an incident briefly that happened on the 15th. There was a home invasion in Lake Grove, four men with guns, they beat the guy's head in, blood everywhere. Luckily we weren't far, all the officers that were working that night were steady operators in the area. The first officer on scene I've worked with for the last six years. When he got there and said, "There's blood on the front steps, I need more units," I knew it was serious. The last time he asked for an assist was the homicide in Nesconset; I've never heard him call for another unit, he's more than capable to handle himself. Luckily that night he was there quick, we were able to set up perimeter, everybody was able -- there was pursuits going on in several directions, you had five people fleeing, there was four gunmen and a female driver. The female driver was stopped short, close to the area, the first officer was in a foot pursuit. A call came over 2 Winn Place, luckily I knew exactly where it was, I got there quickly, Aviation was up. I was able to get in a foot pursuit, I was going over fences. I came out on a street and I was able to look around and I knew where I was; if I was in a neighborhood I wasn't familiar with, I wouldn't be able to tell other officers where I was. They got there quickly, we ended up apprehending four of the five and knew who the fifth person was. They had a van with multiple proceeds from burglaries in the past, these guys, it wasn't their first night out, they've been doing home invasions and burglaries for a good while. And we were able to catch them based on we knew the area, and even more important than that, because we all knew the area, everyone went home

safe that night, all the officers, the community, everybody out there in the street. The people that live there on these streets were coming up to me because they knew me from seeing me at the pizza place having a slice of pizza or just driving through the neighborhood waving to the kids on a Sunday morning, they came over and thanked us because they knew how important it was we catch these guys to get them out of the neighborhood.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you very much. Yes, come forward and identify yourself.

MS. THOMAS:

My name is Sandra Thomas, I'm the President of the Concerned Taxpayers of Wheatley Heights, Dix Hills Civic Association, Inc. Good morning. I'm here on behalf of the 1st Precinct's COPE Unit. We at the Concerned Taxpayers are extremely concerned about the fact that this unit may be disbanded. We feel that our quality of life and our safety and our community is at risk. We meet monthly with the COPE Officers, we have direct access to Lieutenant {Kane}, and prior to him Lieutenant Kelly. We have been able to spot for the Police and dialogue with them about drug dealing in our community, prostitution and possible gang activity, and because of their response and their diligence, those things are followed up on.

We feel that although the sector cars do their jobs, we feel that the elimination of the COPE Unit would decrease our public safety, would decrease our ability to have a decent quality of life. We feel that that direct access and that direct relationship and that personalized relationship is extremely important for a community. We are suspicious that the reason for this is to make up for Police attrition, and our recommendation is is that you need to open up your list and hire new Police Officers.

Applause

We feel that by diminishing the COPE Unit, that the policing in Suffolk County will also be at risk. We feel that these problems are problems that have continued. The COPE unit was established to deal with quality of life issues, to address them immediately and personally and to make communities safer. So we feel that that unit should stay in place and we feel that we have to bite the bullet and hire additional Police Officers. Thank you very much.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Could you just say for one question, please, Miss? One question from Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Good morning, Sandy. How are you?

MS. THOMAS:

Good morning, DuWayne.

LEG. GREGORY:

Good. So you're -- I know, and I've worked with your civic and I know that a call from Sandy Thomas deserves a call right back, right away. So you're concerned with the relationship as a community leader that you won't have a response, or at least attentiveness of the Police Department and responding to some of the quality of life issues that you had mentioned?

MS. THOMAS:

That's correct.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you.

MS. THOMAS:

We feel that -- what happens is is that the Police Officers rotate their shifts in the sector cars. The sector cars deal with emergencies and immediate response situations. The COPE Unit supports the sector cars in those emergencies and immediate response situations, however the COPE Unit, in addition, addresses those issues immediately and goes out and works on them. And we feel that that kind of attentiveness and that kind of personal stuff would not be done, and therefore a lot of things would not be followed up on, that we would call and complain and nothing would happen, unless we all go down to the precinct and meet with Inspector Cassane, and then his hands are tied because he has a diminished staff.

We are very concerned about this because we know that the COPE Unit was started to deal with quality of life issues, and they have decreased criminal activity in our community. We're a nice community, we're over 5,000 residents, we vote and we pay taxes and we're not ashamed to say that there needs to be a Police hiring. This is not a way to beef up your Police force by diminishing service. And that's how I feel.

Applause

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Is there anybody else that wanted to address the committee?

One more person, okay. Anybody else after him so I'll be prepared? No? Okay, you got it.

MR. SANTAMARIA:

Hi. And thank you for letting us come up and speak. My name is Donald Santamaria, I've been a Police Officer for 20 years. I was a New York City --

MS. MAHONEY:

Can you speak closer into the mike, please?

MR. SANTAMARIA:

I was a New York City Police Officer for six years and I've been a Suffolk County Police Officer for 14 years. I was assigned to the 1st Precinct for nine years and I'm currently assigned to the 7th Precinct for the balance of my time.

I'm speaking to you as a Patrol Officer. Most of the guys that have come up here have been from specialized units, from Highway, from COPE. And I'd like to say that the last speaker, as a civilian, I'm impressed that she knows the workings of the Police Department, because most civilians don't understand how diverse our job is and she realizes that a Patrol Officer can't possibly perform the duties as a COPE Officer. There are nights when you're running from call-to-call, and as a Patrol Officer you do have a rapport with your community, in your sector that you've learned over the years, and you'd like to get back and follow-up on a call but you just possibly -- you simply can't do it. There's nights when I have to finish my paperwork the next tour because I didn't have time to finish it. So to think that a Patrol Officer could perform the duties as a COPE Officer is absolutely impossible.

There's reasons why everything is in place in a Police Department, why we work steady tours. The guys -- I'm a midnight officer and have been a midnight officer for approximately 17 years of my career, and the guys that work the two-tour deal with totally different things that we do. We relieve each other and we tell them what went on and they give me information that doesn't relate to my tour and I give them information that they're not going to handle. You know, they deal with different suspects, different crimes, we'll deal with different things as well. But there's a reason

everything is in place, there's a reason guys work steady midnight tours, because they know that tour and they're able to work it; there's a reason guys work steady two-tour, because they know that tour and they're able to work it, and there's a reason why we have all those resources available to us.

When I first got -- when I was a New York City Police Officer, we had every possible resource available to us and I was proud of that. You had -- you could handle any situation, you had Emergency Service, Aviation, Marine Bureau. And coming here, I was proud that we had all those resources also, and there was a time where we didn't have Emergency Service on midnights and we'd have to wait two tours if we needed Emergency Service and now we have that. And there's a reason why these units are there, for the public, and if you want to start taking units away, it just simply doesn't make sense.

You have trained professionals who we spent thousands of dollars on training and now you're taking them out of their positions and putting them back on patrol. And who are you going to train? You're going to spend thousands of dollars to train somebody else to do that job? It just makes no sense, I can't understand why this is happening. You just can't run a Police Department with the Patrol Division with no specialized units. It's impossible for the Patrol Officer to handle the job of every specialized unit. And over the years, we built up this Police Department and there was a reason for that, and the people of Suffolk County are getting a great service and now they're going to be losing out on it and they're not going to get the same service that they once had.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you very much.

Applause

Okay. We're going to go to the agenda and we'll start with ***Tabled Resolution, IR 1028-09 - Establishing new procedures for housing homeless sex offenders (Schneiderman).***

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to table by Legislator Browning.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator --

LEG. BARRAGA:

Barraga.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Barraga, sorry. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Opposed.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

One opposed. ***Tabled (VOTE: 4-1-0-0 Opposed: Legislator Losquadro).***

1312-09 - Amending the 2009 Capital Program and Budget and appropriating funds for the purchase of furniture and equipment for the New Fourth Precinct (CP 3184) (Nowick).

I'll make a motion to table.

LEG. GREGORY:
Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
Second by Legislator Gregory. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

IR 1314-09 - Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Local Law to authorize a County Registry for Domestic Violence Offenders (Gregory).

LEG. GREGORY:
Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
Motion to table by Legislator Gregory, second by Legislator Barraga. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Introductory Resolutions

1468-09 - Approving the appointment of Robert Varese to the Suffolk County Citizens Corp. Council (County Executive). And I believe the gentleman is present. Would you just come forward? Thank you.

CHIEF VARESE:
Good morning. Chief Robert Varese.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
Just give us a little intro.

CHIEF VARESE:
A little info, I've been 35 years in the fire service, 21 years as a career fire fighter in New York City. I'm currently a Chief in the Northport Fire Department and also 1st Vice-President of Huntington Chiefs Council. I was, I don't know, asked to come here and talk to you people. If you would like to ask me any questions --

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
I don't think so. We just wanted to get your background, that's great. I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. GREGORY:
Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
Second by Legislator Gregory. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? Thank you for your service. ***Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

CHIEF VARESE:
Thank you.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:
IR 1469-09 - Approving the reappointment of Michael (sic) T. DelMonte as a member of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission (County Executive).

MS. ORTIZ:

Michele.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Michele.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Michele; I'm sorry, Michele. All those in favor?

LEG. GREGORY:

You didn't make -- you need a motion.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Oh, motion to approve.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I'll second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Losquadro. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

IR 1470-09 - Approving the reappointment of Rajeshwar Prasad as a member of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission (County Executive). Same motion, same second. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

IR 1485-09 - Adopting Local Law No. -2009, A Charter Law to prevent double taxation for public safety services in certain towns and villages (Romaine). Motion to table I believe for public hearing.

LEG. GREGORY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Gregory. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

IR 1497-09 - Accepting and appropriating a grant in the amount of \$6,000 from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC FFY2009) Child Passenger Safety Program to support a Park Police Traffic Safety Initiative (County Executive). Motion to approve by --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Motion to approve and put on the Consent Calendar; I was double checking with Counsel to make sure it's 100% grant.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

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

LEG. GREGORY:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Gregory. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

1499-09 - Approving the reappointment of Augustus G. Mantia, M.D., as a member of the Suffolk County Human Rights Commission (County Executive). I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Barraga. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

IR 1500-09 - Increasing the amount of Imprest Fund, 001-1165-4770, for the Suffolk County District Attorney, Special Services Account (County Executive).

LEG. GREGORY:

Motion to approve.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to approve by Legislator Gregory. Second -- I'll second that. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? **Approved (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).**

IR 1501-09 - Accepting and appropriating a grant in the amount of \$8,500 from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC FFY2009) Child Passenger Safety Program to support a Sheriff's Traffic Safety Initiative (County Executive).

LEG. GREGORY:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to approve by Legislator Gregory and place on the Consent Calendar.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Mr. Chairman, I just want to make sure I'm reading this correctly. This money has to be expended by the end of September of this year?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Is that correct?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

And the department is prepared to, I guess, implement this with -- I'm assuming that the upcoming summer months we'll be able to put this money in place in that period of time?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I'm assuming you're correct. We can -- I don't know if the --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Is there someone from the Sheriff's Department here?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Yeah. You want to come forward just to comment on that? Are you prepared to --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I just want to make sure, the money is set to -- this grant is set to expire September 30th of this year. I'm assuming with the summer months coming up, you have something in place that you want to expend this money on in that period of time.

CHIEF SHARKEY:

This is not a new grant, this is a repetitive grant, and it's mostly in the form of equipment which is purchasing the child safety seats. So yes, we would be able to expend it.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. So we have a motion and a second from Legislator Losquadro and put it on the Consent Calendar. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Approved and placed on the Consent Calendar (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Okay. ***Home Rule Message No. 13-2009 - Home Rule Message requesting the State of New York to amend the Tax Law in relation to requiring a revenue distribution agreement for equitable allocation within Suffolk County for public safety purposes on Sales and Compensating Use Tax. (Senate Bill S.2272 and Assembly Bill A.4789)(Schneiderman).***

LEG. GREGORY:

Motion to table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to table by Legislator Gregory.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Second.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Second by Legislator Barraga. All those in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***Tabled (VOTE: 5-0-0-0).***

Okay. I believe that takes care of our agenda.

All right, then let's -- Red Light Camera implementation, why don't we have that presentation.

CHIEF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAGUARDIA:

Good morning.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Good morning.

CHIEF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAGUARDIA:

I would like to introduce Danny Dresch, the Director of Traffic Safety for the Department of Public Works. He's going to make the presentation this morning, and afterwards we would be glad to answer any questions.

MR. DRESCH:

Good morning. I'm going to briefly give a quick overview of the history of the Suffolk County demonstration project for red light cameras, a quick perimeter on their operation and where we're going to go from here forward as we deploy this system.

As you know, the main gist behind the Red Light Camera Program is to promote safety. Approximately a thousand people every year are killed in right-angle accidents where one driver was running red lights -- a red light. The economic impact to the United States is approximately \$14

billion a year. Main cities nationwide, obviously New York City right down the road, have implemented Red Light Camera programs and have seen a decrease in approximately 20 to 80% of total accidents, and specifically 30 to 50% in the red light running category. Our primary aim is to modify driver behavior through not only these systems but through public outreach of, letting them know that they are now implemented here in Suffolk County. They are supported by the Insurance Institute of Highway Safety as well as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

As many of you know, since 2001, the Suffolk County Legislature has been pursuing authorization from New York State for red light cameras here in Suffolk County. It's been a subject of repeated Home Rule Messages since, and the demonstration project was authorized by the New York State Legislature in April of this year, and just last week the Suffolk County Legislature amended Local Law 18-2001 to reflect the adopted legislation.

Some highlights of the legislation include obviously the County is now authorized to install and operate these systems. They are limited to 50 intersections. The evidence is typically photographs or video of the violations and there are provisions to protect the privacy of the drivers, where no images of the drivers, passengers or contents of the vehicles should be shown in these images. A violation is not considered a conviction. There are no points against either the driver or the owner of the vehicle. The monetary liability, however, is on the vehicle's owner; the maximum penalty being \$50 and the maximum late fee being 25. There are provisions in the law allowing the owner of the vehicle to go after the operator to recoup those costs. And most importantly, the authorization for this demonstration program expires in December of 2014.

Typically red light cameras work by taking multiple still photographs or video; in 2009, it is standard that it's in digital format. There is a physical connection between the red light camera cabinet and the traffic signal controller cabinet that is not only power but also electrical outputs from the yellow and red intervals as the traffic signal cycles. When that traffic signal goes into a yellow clearance and then the all red clearance, it is then hot, the system is now hot and it uses the traditional inductance loops or video detection or lasers to then look for violating vehicles. Here's a schematic showing a red light camera deployment, red light camera being in the back-end of the vehicle, loops in the roadway and also a vehicle that would then be a violator in the middle of the intersection.

The systems, as I said, typically use digital technology to capture the images of the vehicles that are offending or violating the red light. The images and associated information are transmitted to the vendor using secured, encrypted, broad-ban connection. The vendor then does the first quality check of the video image or still camera image to identify the violators at a particular site. That information is then uploaded to a website via the internet for Suffolk County PD to give final review. Those locations or those violations that are approved by Suffolk County PD are then sent notices of violation by the vendor. Some of the information that will be on the ticket will be the site and date, the intersection, site reference number, the date and time of the offense and the offence numbers associated; also, the yellow and red clearance times, the time into the red clearance, and also the time in between the images. Because there are images as the vehicle approaches the intersection, as you'll see in some of these samples, as the vehicle approaches the intersection and then there are also images as they are actually in the intersection violating the red light.

There are several defenses against a violation under the Red Light Camera Demonstration Program. Vehicles yielding to emergency vehicles, times when vehicles are ordered to pass through a red light by a law enforcement official, a vehicle that was reported stolen at the time of the violation, obviously a traffic signal malfunction, and also if a driver received a summons from a Police Officer.

The adjudication process, during the adjudication process, the vendor will actually represent the accuracy and the veracity of the digital evidence. There are -- as many of you may know, there are many traffic violations, jurisdictions County-wide, most prominently the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles Traffic Violations Bureau which primarily handles the Suffolk County PD district. There are also the five eastern towns as well as the numerous villages County-wide.

Right now our staff, we're continuing to evaluate the appropriate locations for deployment of this -- these demonstration systems. We're also working with the County Attorney to establish an adjudication process and we are drafting the RFP, the Requests For Proposals, to seek a vendor. We are allowing the vendor to come back to us with their proposal for the type of technology, obviously there's a revenue model between the vendor and the County. However, we are laying out that the vendor shall pay the operating expenses associated with these systems that includes system maintenance as well as the violation notifications.

We are seeking to secure the professional services to handle the multiple phases of this demonstration project. They include the planning, the design, the bidding, the implementation, the operations, the maintenance and the overall management of the system. We anticipate receiving proposals from vertical teams consisting of engineering firms to handle primarily the design, the red light camera vendors who are most familiar with their particular technology as well as electrical contractors who will be responsible not necessarily for the installation, but most importantly for the long-term maintenance of these systems. Building off of that, in accordance with General Municipal Law, one of three, we will be letting the construction side of this project separately. And most importantly, there will be no capital outlays by the County.

As I mentioned earlier, we are continuing to assemble an initial pool of potential sites for red light cameras. We use our Suffolk County DPW's database known as {DRIVE}, we also have access to New York State's {ALICE} system and as well as Suffolk County PD empirical data, we've reached out to the seven precincts and have gotten the information back from them. As you will note, there is no anecdotal data associated with this, it's all based on either law enforcement experience or hard accident data.

What we are keen on in this analysis are the right-angle type accidents. As I said earlier, they're usually indicative that one driver disregarding a red light. Currently we have approximately 66 locations identified. Using this crash in empirical data --

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Excuse me one second. I'm going to just ask the crowd to either quiet in the back or we'll have to close the doors, because we're having a little trouble hearing. Thank you. Go ahead.

MR. DRESCH:

Thank you. Using this crash and empirical data, we anticipate identifying under a phase I approximately 12 locations that we deem as prime for the initial deployment. There may be secondary tertiary sites that may be subject to continued surveillance by our staff and the vending team, their staff, before final installation. Also, the RFP will allow provisions to explore the possibility of the portability of equipment to allow future relocation from perhaps mitigated sites to other intersections that may need a demonstration project deployment.

To maximize the effectiveness, there will be additional site analysis by the vendor in conjunction with our staff. These include field observations, driving behavior, lighting conditions, the intersection geometrics, as well as the experiences of the vendor with the particular traffic signal controller technology that we have out in the field.

There is an important element in the deployment of this demonstration project and as our relationship with New York State, the towns and the villages. New York State DOT has expressed support for the installation of red light camera equipment at their owned and maintained intersections in Suffolk County. New York City and Nassau County have jurisdiction over all non New York State DOT traffic signals within their borders; Suffolk County does not. Suffolk County DPW designs and builds traffic signals on County highways. However, under maintenance agreements with each town and village, we transfer ownership and by extension maintenance responsibilities to the towns and villages.

Therefore, for the effective and expeditious roll out of this demonstration project, what we are doing

is we are identifying the appropriate locations which are under the jurisdiction of the Suffolk County Police Department District. This allows us to quickly establish an adjudication process through New York State DMV's Traffic Violations Bureau. These intersections will comprise of two State Highways or State and County Highways. This will also allow the vendor's team to secure highway work permits through New York State DOT.

Under a future expansion of the demonstration project, we will be pursuing standard Memorandums of Understanding with each town and village to facilitate red light cameras at town-owned and maintained traffic signals on County Highways. In addition, we will establish an adjudication process within the eastern five towns and village courts County-wide.

There are a few responsibilities that the County will take on, as well as the vendor, during the operation of this demonstration program. That is each June the vendor shall furnish the Suffolk County Police Department with an annual report that quantifies the demonstration project's impact on red light running. The Police Department shall forward these copies to -- copies of these reports to the Governor, the temporary President of the Senate, if we have one, and the Speaker of the Assembly. They will include the description of locations, the number, type and severity of the crashes both before the red light cameras and after the deployment of the demonstration project.

Here I've listed an estimated time line of where we go from here. We anticipate in the month of July we will be preparing the RFP documents, during August we'll be advertising an RFP, and in September selecting a vendor. During the month of October, we will be executing the contract and anticipate the design and build of the prime sites during the months of November, December. The activation of those prime sites should be around January of 2010. And as noted at the bottom, we are looking forward to a complete deployment within 12 to 18 months. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Excellent. Any questions, anybody? Just one question by Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

I'm sorry; what was your name again?

MR. DRESCH:

Dan.

LEG. GREGORY:

Dan? Okay. Do you have an idea how the appeal process would go at this point?

MR. DRESCH:

I'm sorry?

LEG. GREGORY:

The appeals process?

MR. DRESCH:

The appeals process, the adjudication process you're speaking of, will be through the Traffic Violations Bureau of the Department of Motor Vehicles, as in other traffic violations that's cited within the Suffolk County Police Department District.

LEG. GREGORY:

So we would pretty much be hands off. It would be the operation of the vendor, we won't have any input at all, it would go through the vendor and then through the Traffic Violations Bureau.

MR. DRESCH:

Yes. The vendor would initially identify violators, they would be approved by Suffolk County Police

Department and then the process of notification of the vehicle's owner would then commence by the vendor.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Thank you very much for the presentation, it was very enlightening.

CHIEF DEPUTY COMMISSIONER LAGUARDIA:

You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. I want to thank the Police Commissioner for coming today and for sitting here all this time. And I want to today make sure that you get the last word. But before I ask you to come up, I'm just going to elaborate on a couple of things and then Legislator Gregory has a letter to read.

As Chairman of the Public Safety Committee, and as -- with my committee, we really are responsible to oversee the safety of our citizens, and that's the intent. For my tenure in four years, I've tried to be fair, open and objective when dealing with my peers, the Executive Branch and the County work force. But there seems to be a mentality of "You're either for me or against me" that exists. No one truly wants us to be fair, they want us to be on their side, and you don't pick a side, everybody's angry with you; at least I'm speaking for how I feel.

I reread parts of the "Fifteen/Thirteen Book" Nicolo Malaveli, the Prince, for some guidance. And he talks about the end justifies the means and winning any way is justified and deceit, fear, threats and punishment ruled in Florence with those days, and truth and justice are the casualties of that philosophy. I believe that what you do and what you say and how you do it and how you say it is extremely important. I've been trying to look at this situation and I always try to use personal experience and I have none when it comes to the Police, unless you count two years as a shore patrolman in the Navy. But I did work for a school district for 30 years and I do see some similarities, because we had a tax pac group come in in 1993 and decided that they were going to decimate the teaching profession and targeted them. However, the teacher's union happened to be the strongest union, so they then looked at other ways to attack the teachers, so they picked secondary targets. And what I saw was administrators, the number of administrators reduced and double and triple assignments, and then transferring all the principals around to eliminate, I guess, whatever could have been power-based, and custodial staff cut back and supplies in personnel, eliminations of classroom aides, increased class size, cuts of special programs, mostly on the high school level. The demand for teacher union givebacks, the refusal to grant new teachers tenure and administrators tenure. Then public humiliation, in the press and in mailings and putting out the salaries of teachers and having kids question it, and the demands for givebacks. And then when the union did give back, they refused to negotiate for three years, so it was now even more, it was a zero increase for three years.

In Suffolk County, all unions have experienced unfilled staff positions, cut backs in existing staff, renegotiating of contracts, and now in this economic crisis lag pay commitment. And I understand that almost all unions have become part of the agreement, the Sheriffs I found out are close, they're closer today than they were yesterday. And then we look at the Suffolk County Police Department, and I try to look from their perspective because I could just say, this and that.

I've looked at from my tenure civilianization and redeployment, the termination of DARE, which I supported because there was a Health Smart program and the Police were going to be involved, but now I see a great program by the Sheriff's department in there, and I don't know what's happening with Health Smart. I see backfill, overtime cuts to COPE and gang units using -- being used to fill sector cars, 390 hours of overtime eliminated, the Marine Bureau was three and two boats on the coast, then it was two and one, now I don't know what the staffing is and that's what we're going to

hear, I think, today a little bit. Highway Patrol replaced -- obviously was replaced by the Sheriff's Department on the Long Island and the Sunrise Highway, Highway Patrol reassigned to precincts, Marine Bureau 1 assignment changed, moved east on Fire Island, the 1st Precinct, now responsibilities are expanded. COPE now transferred to patrol; you can call it expanded or disbanded, I don't care about semantics, they're not going to be doing what they used to do. And then we hear of cross-training and unfilled, unfunded positions, 365 to be eliminated, seven active positions to be terminated. And we have a slew of Chiefs retiring; I mean, I can count, I think, five in the last couple of years. That -- I mean, that scares me.

And now I've heard the wholistic approach to policing, transferring top cops in squads to new precincts. This is how I see all this now. I see that there is a war in Afghanistan, there is a war in Iraq and there's a war here in Suffolk County between the Executive Branch of government and the PBA leadership and the Suffolk County Police Department. The battle ground has been the radio, TV and printed media. I want it to end, I want it to cease. Its affecting our community. We're hearing it every day and we're hearing it today.

I want on either side any Makaveli philosophy to be replaced with honesty, open communication and negotiations to continue daily if it has to be. I want this resolved by our next Public Safety meeting in August, I want there to be an agreement; I know there can be.

There is an economic crisis in our country, in our State and our County. All must join in to help. Some have given more than others, but all must give. I haven't heard anybody refuse to give. It's really about how much, that's it, and everybody can't give the same. We have to move forward with trust and trust has to be established. There is no trust, so you can communicate forever but you're not going to have -- if you don't have trust, it's not going to be resolved. You don't have to be a social worker to figure this out. Guarantees must be given to establish trust. If I keep hearing, "We can't give any guarantees," then you're not going to establish trust because trust isn't there. If you don't realize it, I'm telling you, it's not there. Egos must be put aside.

Now, I'm prepared to request subpoena, make necessary members of the negotiation team to testify before this committee on what the progress is, what the road blocks are and the prognosis for agreement. I want to hear straight what's going on. I don't want to hear one side telling me and then the other side telling me that the other side is not telling us the truth. We're very frustrated, I hope you can understand that, because we've talked and everybody asked for the straight scoop. That's what I hope I'm going to get today. But if I hear I'm not getting it from either side, we will bring people in here under subpoena and we will swear you in. So we can do that and I will do it to get the truth. I want the truth out here, I want it open and I want this issue resolved in a timely fashion. I don't want to see six years go by with more fighting and stuff.

So that's where I am. I think I've been clear. Probably both sides will be mad at me again, I don't care. This has to be resolved. Look around; we've got people that are responsible for public safety, they're dragging because of their morale. We have to do something, we have to do it now. I understand this is real -- you know, I'm not trying to say that this isn't a real problem, that we have a big deficit. We need to solve this problem. We can't have people laughing at us in Texas saying, "Listen to what they're doing with the radio ads. Call the PBA and listen to what -- when you're on hold what's being said." I want this over. And today we're going to hear the view of the top cop of what the vision is and where they're going, and then -- then we're going to negotiate. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. How do I follow Makaveli? I don't know. I just have a letter that I want to read into the record from a member of -- she was a civic leader in the Wyandanch community. She couldn't be here today so she addressed it before the committee and she asked me to read it into the record. And it states to the Public Safety Committee, "Dear Legislators, Dear Commissioner Dormer and County Executive Levy, on behalf of the Wyandanch Day-Care Center, Inc., staff, children and their families, we're asking that you reconsider your present plan to combine COPE Officers with the normal Patrol sector rotation."

"While the plan has its merits, our community feels that it would diminish the special relationship with COPE that has been painstakingly established from the genesis of COPE. It has taken patience and time to form an amicable relationships with our peace officers. We need to continue to strengthen and shore up this bond. I am in full agreement with the statement that change is imminent, but remember, so is death. One does everything one can to prolong life. Thank you for your consideration to air and share our position with you. Your Truly, Louise Hamlet, Executive Director." Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. Anyone else? All right, Commissioner? We'll let the Commissioner do his thing. You want to join us? Okay. And I know while you're discussing this, the audience is going to be listening very carefully with no comments. Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

You have to hold the button down.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Okay, I think I got it.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

No, you have to hold it down.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Hold it down?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

That's an attempt to keep us quiet.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Okay, this is going to be --

MR. LIPP:

A challenge.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank the committee for giving us a chance to come in today. And, you know, after listening to all the comments on the changes that we've made over the past week, it gives us an opportunity, it gives me an opportunity to clarify some issues and give our position on this, and I think reassure the community and the committee that this is not a detrimental move and it's not going to negatively impact Police response to community concerns. In fact, it's -- in our estimation, it's going to enhance our response to the community.

And I should say that it goes without saying that change is not something that people buy into right away, and we understand that.

Any time we change something in the Police Department we get response, something like this. I remember when we changed the patrol chart to 7-3/3-11, rather than 8-4/4-12 to address issues that were occurring at 7 AM in the morning; I got tremendous push back on that. But I did have the authority for -- to do that, it wasn't a contractual issue and we did it and now it's working very well. Our held-over calls in the AM, which were substantial when we did that, have diminished to almost zero. As you can imagine, somebody calling at seven o'clock in the morning because they had an issue at their home when they got up and they were ready to go to work and we were holding calls over to the day shift came in for to avoid overtime. That person couldn't go to work, they had to wait for a Police Officer; very frustrating and really not customer service at its best. We changed the work chart of our officers, 7-3/3-11, and now we're serving the public more efficiently and more

effectively.

So I understand that change creates a lot of unrest, anxiety, and I understand that and I appreciate that. I mean, I was there, I was on the street as a cop and had things change around me, and whether it was my sector car, my area of patrol, and I didn't take it very lightly; it's just the nature of the business. But we feel it's the right thing to do.

And I want to mention that, again, to dispel and some of the myths and the rumors that are out there, and about the COPE change. We're not eliminating COPE. And Legislator Gregory mentioned that, that he had a conversation, he and I had a conversation about that and I reiterated to him and to other Legislators and to everybody who I had a chance to talk to that COPE was not being eliminated. What we did is change the COPE chart from a five day a week operation, working 9-5 in some precincts and 8-4 in some other precincts, to everybody working seven days a week, 7-3/3-11. None of the officers are going to be removed from COPE, they're just going to be stretched out over seven days rather than five.

Now, I have to tell you that -- and this is a very obvious observation, that policing is a seven day a week enterprise; it's not a Tuesday through Saturday. We have a lot of things happen on weekends and we don't have our COPE people. A lot of community events occur on a Sunday and on a Monday, if it's a holiday, and we don't have COPE. If the Commander needs COPE, and a lot of times they do, they have to call them in on overtime, which is very expensive, by the way. That's just the way, the nature of the business. For example, if an officer is called in on overtime, it's \$1,000 for that officer for a minimum recall; over a course of a year, that comes to about \$24 million in overtime. Budget can verify these figures if somebody tells you that that's not accurate.

Why the changes? I think I've covered that. And I've also mentioned that -- and again, I make no excuses for this, it will save money. I want to give you an example of June 7th when we had -- that's a Sunday, we had a lot of events in Suffolk County; and if you bear with me a second, I will find the list. And this is not an atypical weekend Sunday. We had the Adelante Parade in Brentwood; we had the event at the Shrine in the 7th Precinct, a visiting faith healer was showing up; we had Governor Palin in the 4th Precinct; we had a festival in the 4th Precinct; we had two 5-K runs in the 4th Precinct; we had a breast cancer walk that we had to police. For example, that Sunday, the Adelante Parade cost \$22,000 in overtime. The 4th Precinct had to call in a Sergeant and four COPE Officers on overtime just to supplement the regular patrol officers in the 4th. And as I know you know, that we sometimes have to pull our sector cars off regular patrol for to police these events if we don't have COPE available. Having COPE seven days week means that we do have officers available now on a weekend, on Sunday in particular and of course Monday, if it's a holiday, is also a very busy day.

Will the school officer -- Resource Officer Program be eliminated? The answer is no, we're going to continue our commitment to School Resource Officer Program. Will the gang units be eliminated? No, the gang units will continue to operate, they're not being disbanded, eliminated.

And by the way, it was mentioned about when COPE was first formed. It was first started in June of '88 by Commissioner Dan Guido as six officers and a Sergeant in each precinct, that was six cops and a Sergeant in each precinct, in six precincts. It was disbanded in September of 88, so it just ran from June to September and it was disbanded. It was then started up again in January of '89, disbanded in March of '91, again under Commissioner Guido. And then it started again in December of '93 and it is now up to the present, continuous up to the present.

You know, I understand, I understand the frustration of the officers and their concerns and I've listened to them very carefully. But having said that, it's not doom's day in law enforcement in Suffolk County or in public safety. Since we came on board in 2004, and I know that people -- some people don't like to hear the facts, but I'm going to give them to you. We created five new sectors since we came on board in 2004; you won't hear anybody mention that, but I'm mentioning it. We have more cops on patrol, that means in the patrol sectors, sector cars, there's 143 more today than January 1, 2004. That's not counting COPE; COPE is still separate, a separate unit.

We also, in addition to the 143 more, we have a Special Operations Team with 18 officers and supervisors that is directed to patrol hot spots, especially to target gun violence in communities. Legislators that are sitting in front of me on Public Safety here have been the beneficiaries of this unit. In the 1st Precinct, in the sector car operation we have 23 more cops today than we did January 1st, 2004. And by the way, I think anybody with any experience in the Police business will tell you that you the primary function of the Police Department is to keep the patrol, or the 10 command as we call it in Suffolk County, fully staffed. It's the most important response unit in policing. Because when somebody calls 911 and they have a problem, they should get a car responding. We haven't diminished; in fact, we've enhanced the numbers because of civilianization and redeployment. And also, of course we have our summer redeployment going on right now where our headquarters people are out on the street as I speak patrolling; it never happened before until this administration came on board.

Crime is down, over five years. Violent crime is down almost 10%, and that, again, is because of the excellent policing of our Police Officers and Detectives on the street. That's not the brass bringing crime down, that's the cops and the Detectives, and we tell people that all the time. Property crime is down. We kept costs under control. We are working within our budget; as a Police Commissioner, as a department head, I'm required to do that. I don't print money, I work within the budget. Is it difficult at times? Do people get upset? Yes, that's the nature of the business today. It's unfortunate, and people can read whatever they want into it.

By the way, I should mention that this change with COPE, their chart, has nothing to do with negotiations with the PBA. This is something that I have had on my radar since I came on board, because of the disharmony between the work charts. And I should mention, by the way, that there are charts in the COPE operation that will give you 7-3/3 -- 11, but it doesn't keep the COPE officers working together, the way it would be staggered, so cops would be separated from each other; we want them to work together. And by the way, we're willing to talk to the PBA and have them work out a chart that's 7-3/3-11 and keeps the cops together in COPE and keep them in COPE, I'm willing to do that. And that would make the officers happier, fine.

The other issue that has come up is the backfilling by COPE Officers in sector cars. That has gone on for years, long before I came back as Police Commissioner. They were backfilling COPE Officers and other officers into sector cars; that's a fact, so it's nothing new. And it's appropriate utilization of your personnel. I mentioned the overtime, by the way; \$24 million in overtime plus -- that's in our operating budget, plus six million in grants from the State. Our total overtime for a year is \$30 million. I'm not saying the cops didn't work for it, I'm not saying they didn't deserve it, but that's a big chunk of money.

The COPE Officers are not being taken out of their precincts, they're going to stay in the precincts. What you had last week you have this week. When we made changes in PAL, the desk officers, public information, DARE, you heard doom's day, the sky was going to fall, public safety would be negatively impacted; it hasn't happened. We manage this very carefully and prudently to make sure that it's done right. I also have told this committee, and I tell everybody, we review these changes as we move along and if we have to adjust, we will, and we will do that with the COPE operation.

You know, I equate the policing business to the military all the time, they're very similar in the way they operate. And I just think about the cops out there in patrol, in the 10 command, working 7-3/3-11, seven days a week, and their support units are working Tuesday through Saturday, 9-5/8-4. By the way, not the cops' fault, management's fault. We have corrected that. And we know we'll have COPE supporting the sector car operation, as it should; they should be working hand-in-hand, not as separate units. Over specialization in our policing business, and really not done right.

Why didn't we do this before? Well, because any time I talked about COPE to Legislators and people in the Police Department even, people would cringe. They didn't want changes; "Oh, my God, you're

going to change COPE. You're going to get hammered," and finally I decided that we would do something about it. When looked at the overtime figures for a weekend, when we had the parades, and I mentioned it. And that \$22,000, by the way, was only one parade; you could double that because of all the other events. That's real money. It adds up to real money that we cannot eliminate, but certainly manage better than we're managing it.

The Marine Bureau staffing, that has been an issue for a couple of years. Historically, in the summer, 20 Police Officers would be transferred from Patrol and sent over to Marine Bureau for to supplement patrols on Fire Island. Last year we sat down with the Commander, with the Chiefs in Patrol and the Commander from the Marine Bureau, and we said, "Look, can you manage without the 20 officers? We need them in Patrol for the summer." That's a legitimate question. And the Commander came back and said, "No, I need some officers."

"How many do you need?" "Well, how about ten, and we'll see ten works out," and we transferred ten officers to the Marine Bureau. And we told the Commander over there, the Inspector, to let us know if he needed any changes, and I would check with him regularly, "Do you need changes?" Was it tight? Yes, as was described by some of the officers. That's the nature of the business, but they managed, they got through the summer.

This year, the same issue came up and we were going to send ten officers. Now, that would be ten officers from your sectors, in your community. And I again sat down with them and said, "Is there a better way of supplementing the patrols on Fire Island without taking ten officers from the streets of our downtown areas, our foot posts, bicycle patrol, that kind of thing." And we came up with a plan where we would move that 1st Precinct sector, which was in the 1st Precinct at one time, and give it to the 1st Precinct, let them staff it with the extra officers that they have, not taking away their foot posts or any of their extra officers that take care of their downtowns. Use the seven officers that patrol that sector, leave them in Marine Bureau, leave these seven cops with the Commander and transfer five cops from the precincts instead of ten, so they got 12 officers where they normally would get ten.

I talked to the Commander from the Marine Bureau a couple of days ago, I said, "How is it going? Make sure you let us know if there are any issues." And he said, "No, we're managing. The boats are being manned, Fire Island is being manned." It is busy over there, but that's the summer, that has not changed in 30 years. But we want to do as much as we can to maximize our officers on the streets of our downtown areas.

By the way, let me give you one example that a Precinct Commander mentioned to me that's a big plus with the change in the COPE operation. For example, your downtown areas, whether it's Sayville, it's Port Jefferson, Huntington, Babylon, wherever, on a Sunday, extremely busy. People crowd in to these downtown areas. We don't have any COPE, we don't have our COPE people on bicycles. They can work there 7-3; the Precinct Commander says, "I can keep the 7-3 tour over for two hours overtime and just pay two hours overtime, call the 3-11's in two hours early for the same operation, just two hours"; that's prudent management of your overtime budget. That is the smart way to do the policing.

Now, it was also mentioned about training some people in the 10 command, these are the sector car operators. We would like to -- and in fact, I have already directed that the academy set up a training program for COPE. And officers in Patrol will be trained in COPE operations; how to ride the bike, how to take care of a community meeting, be a problem solver. And when we have extra people, these people would work as COPE, they can work the parades, the festivals, other quality of life issues that communities have. So that's our idea of enhancing the COPE operation and getting more numbers into COPE. But I make no excuses, and everybody should hear this, by utilizing COPE to backfill in sector cars; Precinct Commanders have been given that authority. And as a Commander, you have to be able to utilize your people whatever way you feel it's appropriate. I have all the confidence in these folk to do that.

Now, the Chair, by the way, mentioned the retirements. Retirement in the Police business are,

again, just like the military, it happens all the time. As I mentioned to a Newsday reporter, don't read anything into it. We have officers retire two times a year, January and July, that's the two big retirement months. There's nothing new with that. They have -- Chiefs you're talking about, over 30 years of serving the people of Suffolk County; outstanding individuals, by the way. And I mentioned to the Chair and to other Legislators that we're going to be making promotions this week, a Chief's promotion, an Inspector and so on, for to fill in these ranks where people have retired. We're not leaving these ranks unfilled, that's not the way we do the business. So we can continue to make sure that this is done.

I just want to mention, I asked some of the precinct Commanders yesterday, I said, "Give me your input. I'm going before Public Safety tomorrow and it's going to be a contentious type of a meeting and I want to get your sense or your feelings into the record about this change in COPE. What do you see? Send it up to me. Be honest, tell me what you're feeling." And by the way, contrary to what you hear, they have the ability to do that, and any boss should listen to his people, to the people that work for them and get their input. This is what they said, and I broke them into certain points and I hope you'll bear with me.

"COPE was formally limited to Tuesday through Saturday, 16 hours a day. Thus COPE was unavailable for Sundays and Monday when their services could have been used to provide Police coverage of community events that tend to take place on Sundays and Monday. With the new development or deployment", I'm sorry, "COPE personnel are now available seven days per week and thus available for many community events that take place on these two days."

"COPE formerly began operations as early as 0800 hours, that's 8 AM, and as late as 0900, 7pm. Some of them were 9 AM, or 0900. This eliminated the availability of COPE to address community needs as rush hour peaked, peak levels, and as school transportation and educational operations would commence earlier that day." Traffic problems, by the way, that's what the Commander is pointing out, start at seven o'clock in the morning, and we don't have COPE available.

"COPE has been a valuable resource for dealing with school issues and school events. Our ongoing efforts to partner with educational institutions often involve the deploying of COPE to address school incidents, school sporting events, rumors of fights, actual fights taking place, on or off school grounds, suspicious persons lurking in or about school properties."

"Since COPE is now operational as of 0700 hours, personnel are available to cover the early morning time gap that previously existed." Again, I'm going to repeat, traffic problems that occur in the early hours, rush hour, negatively impact the rest of the morning commute. When you have a crash, it ties up people going to work.

"As skillful deployment of COPE personnel to address rush hour traffic issue could play a part in minimizing traffic delays caused by bad motorist behavior. We need COPE out there." And the officers, by the way, from COPE that presented to you today mentioned how important they are for traffic enforcement.

"Enhanced COPE is now available to enforce school zone speed restrictions during the time of the day, early morning, when the traffic volume and school transportation operations are most likely to lead to motorists and school transportation encounters." We, by the way, would like to be able to assign COPE at 7 AM to a school zone, to passing school buses and this kind of an operation, and we get a lot of that, rather than taking a sector car who may be busy answering other calls during the early morning hours.

It says here it's very easy to enforce school speed zones at 11 AM in the morning, but that's not the critical time. The kids are in school, the teachers are in school, that's not when you have the safety issues. 0700, our COPE deployment facilitates Police coverage of other events like picketing, where we have pickets lined up outside a work site, a sector car operator has to do that. We can utilize

COPE. During the year and holiday season, shopping related activities tend to peak. Sunday is a big shopping day. We didn't have COPE available to go into our shopping centers, to patrol on bicycle.

Now, somebody mentioned supervision of COPE. We are going to -- we have put the COPE officers into the 10 command which is commanded, by the way, by a Lieutenant and Sergeants. There will be adequate supervision. A Lieutenant will give assignments to the COPE Officers. And one of the officers mentioned, by the way, if a citizen does call and the COPE answering machine is on, they will call the desk, it will go to the Lieutenant or the Sergeant. They will now deploy their COPE people to respond to that citizen complaint. Supervision is going to be even better than it was with COPE, and I need all the supervisors involved in supervising everybody in the 10 command, that's the way they should do it. They should all be responsible for the troops that are working for them on that particular tour.

"Enhanced COPE would provide a greater pool of officers skilled in the use of radar, the license plate reader, bicycles, ATV." I mentioned training the 10 command officers. Chief Weber was directed to get the academy geared up, we're going to be doing that after the summer is over. We're not going to do it during the summer, we'll do it when things quiet down.

"A critical incident can take place at any time at any place. A personal, intensive, critical incident obviously requires personnel. Usually, the first deployed are COPE officers so that basic patrol can continue. COPE will respond, especially on Sunday and Monday."

Also, to wrap up, and I thank you for your indulgence, I wanted to get that into the record. You know, again, I thought it was important. Look at the record, crime has been under control since 2003, we came in 2004, violent crime. Do we have incidents that occur, unfortunate incidents that have occurred over time, and unfortunately will continue to occur. We address these incidents, we have this gun unit, and Legislator Gregory and I have talked about this unit and they -- he's reached out to us for assistance and other communities, by the way, we'll continue to do that. We're not going to forget about our community leaders, the people that -- our connection with the community, and some of them were heard here today; it's very important that we have a good relationship with them. And as you heard, they do have a good relationship with precinct staff of every rank and the Commissioner staff of every rank. We're going to continue that; our outreach to the community will continue. I hope that this clarified some of the misconceptions and gives you a better sense of what we're doing and why we're doing it.

As I wrap up here, and I know there will probably a couple of questions, I directed the Chief of Support Services, Chief Weber, to reach out to Civil Service and get the certified Civil Service list for Police Officer hiring. As you know, and if you don't know I will put it on the record, we have put in for stimulus money for to hire cops, to hire 80 cops. If we get that stimulus money for to hire the officers, we have to be prepared to put them on as quickly as possible. That means we have to start doing the background at this point, because it takes six months for to do full background on everybody. So I directed that the Chief reach out through the Candidate Investigations Unit to Civil Service today, get that list and we're going to start working on getting the candidates ready in anticipation of the stimulus money.

A cautionary note, there's no guarantee that we're going to get any money, that they're going to give us the money; I think everybody knows that. There is a limited amount of money for a very large request throughout the country and we're in that pot, but we have to be prepared for to hire the cops. And so we're being proactive and responsible. It's not a job offer, the paper work that will be given to these candidates will state that very clearly, you know, so that we don't run into problems down the road if we don't -- if we can't hire. But once we get that stimulus money, if we get it -- and again, a cautionary note -- we will be ready to go. We have to start right now.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

You have me on the list, Jack?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

And I think that that's something. Now, I mentioned the change in the Precinct Commander in the 3rd Precinct. Inspector Cuff who has been in the 3rd Precinct has done an outstanding job, is being promoted to 1-Star Chief in the Chief of Patrol's Office. And Jan Rios, a Deputy Inspector in the 5th Precinct, is going to be an Inspector assigned to the 3rd Precinct. There are other promotions in the works, but these are the two biggies and I just wanted to mention that to the Public Safety Committee. Thank you very much. And if you have any questions --

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Yeah, I think we might. Legislator Browning? We'll go ladies first.

LEG. BROWNING:

Thank you. Actually, I have quite a few questions and comments to make. But while you're on the issue of promotions, you say you're going to hire -- you're going to promote Chiefs? Because I believe we have -- I think within the past couple of months we're losing three Chiefs; correct?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No, we had two Chiefs retire, they retired over the last couple of months, two Chief positions, Deputy Chiefs positions, 1-star; I eliminated one of them. The other one, we're filling that position because it's needed in Patrol.

This operation doesn't run without bosses, especially at this critical time, you need people to run a large Police Department such as this. And it's critical that we get them into place while the other Chiefs are still there so that we have a transition and, you know, a seamless transition so that you and your community will not be negatively impacted. Because you know yourself, and I know you reach out to the Chiefs on a regular basis and a Chief can get things done in the Police Department. Rank does count, it means something.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Well, let me get to this. You're going to promote Inspectors to Chiefs, so obviously Deputy Inspectors to Inspectors, so you kind of have to backfill. One of the things that -- I know we've had conversations about how important it is to have bosses and supervision. And my question is you need Sergeants. You know my husband is a city cop and I can tell you right now, my husband always tells me it's necessary to have the Sergeants that are out there supervising the patrol officers; how many Sergeant promotions are you doing?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

On this particular one, none.

*(*Laughter From Audience*)*

Well, we make that decision -- by the way, that is still one of the things that I can do, decide who is going to get promoted and at what ranks. If we promote Sergeants -- and by the way, we look at that regularly. We have enough Sergeants on the street right now in Patrol, we're fine. We have enough Lieutenants, we just promoted five Lieutenants two weeks ago, and we're adequately supervised.

By the way, I should mention that since 2004, since I came on board, I have eliminated 13 Superior Officer ranks, brass; that is a savings of over \$2 million. We looked at it very critically, so we just didn't look at the lower ranks when we look at the policing business, we look at the whole operation. And 13 Superior Officer ranks were eliminated and it's not doom's day, we're operating very efficient and effectively today.

LEG. BROWNING:

So when does the Sergeant's list expire?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Oh, I don't know. I don't know the answer to that.

*(*Laughter From Audience*)*

UNKNOWN AUDIENCE MEMBER:

November.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Because it was my understanding there was a Lieutenant list that recently expired and there were no promotions to that Lieutenant list, so are you working off a new list?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yes, that was a new list. And by the way, that's not unusual, we've had lists expire before where either nobody was made from the list or maybe one or two people were made from the list. That's not unusual. You know, again, that's a management decision that I make in consultation with the staff and we're adequately supervised. I have no issue with it. We look at it all the time. I mean, we run it like a business. I understand. I understand the people that are on the Civil Service list being concerned and upset that they're not getting promoted, I understand that, but it's just the way things happen.

It's not personal, nobody is trying to, you know, mess with somebody's career, that's not the issue here. It's if we need them we'll promote them. And you know yourself that in Patrol, you mentioned it, all the Patrol Chiefs are leaving, three of them.

LEG. BROWNING:

I have other questions, but I don't know if you want to come back to me or let me finish up?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

You know what, why don't we do that. I will go and come back. Legislator Losquadro, we will try to limit it to a couple of questions at a time.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Okay. Commissioner, the face of this department as we've known it has changed a great deal, between DARE, Highway Patrol, PAL, Marine Bureau, now COPE in its -- you know, in its segregated function that it formally had. You talked a bit about the Police Department being like a military, and I point to September 11th. We had a time prior to September 11th when things were good and a lot of people in government thought it was a good idea to scale back; they called it streamlining the military. The CIA was too expensive to have those human resources on the ground, and it really put us in a position, when something really bad did happen to us, that we had to scramble to try to rebuild it all at once. I'm not saying this is directly analogous to that, but I think that we have been living on some of these national trends of decreases in crime rates. And I think it's very prudent to maintain the state of readiness that we once had and not to just continue on a path of reducing our staffing.

Now, this body has requested additional staffing for the department on many occasions over the past five years. We have gotten some of it, other times we have not. We had an 80 officer Police class in for this year, we know we're looking for that stimulus money to get that.

Specifically to the COPE issue. We're talking about revenue here; everything comes back to budget. I'll be honest with you, my concern is that these COPE functions are just going to disappear into the Patrol command, just going to disappear into Patrol command. We need people to patrol, to perform those basic patrol functions, as you've said, and we just don't have enough bodies to do that; it's a simple fact. I mean, I can't tell you how many times I've asked for specific information, you even have come to my office a couple of times saying that information was going to be forthcoming and I still have yet to receive any of it on specific staffing or transfers within units, within the Police

Department.

You know, I heard you mention the number again, 143 more cops on precinct patrol. And I'll reiterate the same thing that I said, I can't tell you how many times and I keep getting the same answer, that information is going to be forthcoming and I never get it, and that is this is basic accounting. You have 143 more on precinct patrol, you have a hundred and fifty some-odd less since 2004. Well, that equals almost 300 people -- it's basic accounting, plus plus -- about 300 people which have been reassigned or transferred, and I still haven't gotten an accurate accounting of where those individuals are within the Police Department.

Like I said, you even came so far as to come to my office and discuss that and said, "Well, it's very complicated. We have multiple transfers taking place at any given time." I still haven't received that information. It seems pretty basic. I think it would give all of us a greater sense of comfort that the functions that we are asking about here repeatedly are still being handled in an effective manner. And quite frankly, I do not have that sense of comfort right now because all I keep hearing is that we have to maintain precinct patrol. Well, that's one component of the Police Department, but we all know it is not the only function of the Police Department.

I know we're going to go back and forth with a lot of questions here, but I just want to make one comment and ask you this question specifically. You talked about COPE and the fact that you're willing to work on a change in the -- a chart change. Why wasn't that done before this announcement was made and before those individuals were just summarily transferred, by teletype, out of the unit and told they're going to report to the 10 command? Why wasn't an effort made to make that chart change prior to doing this? It seems like we're always reactionary here with things that are coming out of the department, and by the time we hear about it, you know, we can, you know, blank and moan and nothing seems to change; it seems to be etched in stone by the time we get it.

So I'll ask you specifically, why was the effort not made to make that chart change, which you're saying could be done, you're willing to do without actually transferring those officers?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Okay, there's a couple of things you brought up, but let me answer the chart thing. When the President of the PBA made his presentation, he talked about the chart and they were there, the existing charts. I was aware of that, but they didn't work for us. These charts would not have the same officers working together, they would switch off, and I mentioned that when I gave my presentation. And I thought to myself and I mentioned to Ben Zwirn, I said, "Ben, I'm going to offer to reach out to the PBA, sit down and see if we can work out a 7-3/3-11 chart that fits our prerogatives where they're all working together." The officers stay together, which we think is important, and we can sit down and talk about that.

MR. FRAYLER:

It's done.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

So that only occurred to you after you made the transfer, not prior to?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Well, we have asked the PBA on a number of occasions to --

MR. FRAYLER:

Not once. Not once.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

If I could finish. Mr. Chair?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Go ahead, I'm not interrupting.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

To work out charts, not this one, with negative response. And I'm not going to get into any personal issues here today, this is a business, we've got to make sure that we run --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

So the short answer to the question is no, you did not --

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No. I just told you --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

-- make an attempt to change the chart before you made the transfers.

Applause

Guys, please, please, please. You know, we want to keep this dialogue without any input from the audience. I appreciate everyone being here and taking your time, but we have to handle this with proper decorum.

So again, I mean, you know, we're having very lengthy explanations to very short questions. The attempt to make the change in the chart was not made prior to the transfer taking place; correct?

***(*The following was transcribed by
Kimberly Castiglione - Legislative Secretary*)***

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

I already answered that, I said no.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Fine. Well, would you be agreeable to -- if a chart change could be worked out to have COPE remain a separate unit? Because as I said, and I was at two civic associations last night, there's a great deal of concern on the part of the public, and myself included, that these functions are just going to disappear into the patrol command. I have to tell you, we're talking about revenue here, you want to talk about shooting ourselves in the foot? Our patrol guys are very busy. COPE writes the vast majority of the paper. They bring in the revenue for us. If these guys start doing more of that function I think it's going to seriously impact our revenue. Seriously I -- listen, I'm sure we have guys who write paper and other functions, but I can tell you from experience in my district, the two precincts, my COPE guys when they're out doing those patrol checks are just hammering away and writing a ton of paper for people who are violating the traffic laws. So I think that is an unanticipated, very dangerous side effect of these officers flowing into patrol and not having the time to fulfill those same patrol check functions. That's my concern. I'm sure we're going to disagree on their -- the time they will have to actually perform those functions, but that's something I am very concerned about, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Could I clear that up, Mr. Chair?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Please.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Sure.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

That's a myth, by the way, that every summons that we write we put --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I did not say every.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

That every summons that COPE writes puts money in the coffers of Suffolk County. That's a myth. That money goes to the State of New York. We get few pennies back on every dollar that's paid for a guilty fine. We all know that, by the way, that's well-known.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Right.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

We don't get the money back from Albany on the efforts of our officers on the street.

MR. ZWIRN:

That's true.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

In fact, we would like to get that money back.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Right.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

I agree with Legislator Losquadro that we should be getting that money. We are not getting it.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I understand. I think we all --

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

So there is going to be no diminution in budget money because COPE was put 7-3, 3-11. You are going to see more activity when the streets of Suffolk County are busy, which is 7 AM in the morning.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. So rather than just go over that again --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Keep going.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Let's make sure that -- I want to check this off now, that in the negotiations, very quickly, the chart is going to be discussed for COPE.

MR. ZWIRN:

We're -- Mr. Chairman, I don't know -- I don't really want get into the midst of this --

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

That's fine. You don't have to.

MR. ZWIRN:

But I think that the negotiation should be done by the negotiators.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

You know, they're doing a great job. Nothing's happening.

*(*Laughter From Audience*)*

That's why we're here today. We are here today because there has been no trust and you can't negotiate. You can negotiate for seven years, but if people don't trust one another it's going to stall and stall and that's why I'm just hearing now that we're agreeing that this chart issue will be discussed. That's all -- that's what I heard, that's what I want to make sure.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

That's not what I said.

MR. TEMPERA:

Well, let me just address at least the comment you just made. I think we are making progress. We've got eight out of nine agreements done, that's progress. We have got over \$23 million of the \$30 million this Legislature has asked us to reach agreements and save. How come we can get agreements with every other union but not this one? We're working towards an agreement.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Let me ask you. Why don't you --

MR. TEMPERA:

We are trying to negotiate.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Why don't you answer that question, then?

MR. TEMPERA:

Answer what question?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

The question you just said. Why? Why do you think you can't get an agreement?

MR. TEMPERA:

I have been trying to get them to the table for the last couple of days. You have all got a letter from me saying I am prepared to sit and negotiate yesterday, today, tomorrow, Monday, whatever it takes. I've got no response. So you tell me how I negotiate an agreement without a response.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Okay. All right. Wait a minute.

MR. FRAYLER:

That letter came yesterday and I knew I was going to see Mr. Tempera here today, and I'm here and we have been available from day one whenever he wants. That's the first call we got from him.

MR. TEMPERA:

Let's do it right now.

MR. FRAYLER:

Okay. I'll tell you what. You got the COPE chart? You want a COPE chart? It's right here. You know how to do it. You know you can ingest a chart and you know they had the right to do it from day one.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

All right. Hold on.

MR. FRAYLER:

That's why it doesn't work, because they are dishonest at the table.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

That's going to be dealt with today then. That will be dealt with. He's here, you're here. When you leave here, go back there. Don't leave, sit with him and get it done then. That's one --

MR. TEMPERA:

That offer is available to solve the entire problem. The COPE charts can be dealt with separately.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yeah.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I don't care if you do one issue at a time or do it all. I don't care. But what I don't want to have is what we are having here.

MR. ZWIRN:

I think we agree. But I think that Mr. Tempera and Mr. Frayler would be better suited today to be sitting outside this room and getting to work on behalf of the residents of the County.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Hopefully that will happen very shortly. Again, we have to establish some type of trust and I think maybe that's where we're going to start. That -- with this chart issue. Get it done, negotiate openly and maybe other things will happen. That's what I'm hoping and I'm expecting. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I have to say that I -- that some of the concerns that Legislator Losquadro expressed I totally agree with, that I have a fear, as well as you heard some of the people that came from my district earlier today and some others that didn't come from my district, that feel that the functions of COPE are going to disappear. I know that's not what you are saying, Commissioner, but you have to respect the fact that people have an honest and earnest fear that that may happen.

I know you speak a lot about enhancing the COPE functions, but what I've heard is a lot of talk about enhancing the budget, because you spoke a lot about overtime. Now, I will verify the 24 million for you because I knew I was coming to the meeting today, I looked in BRO's analysis of the police recommended budget last year, and yes, it's \$24 million. But of that how much of it is overtime and COPE? And when you talk about overtime, is your concern the overtime for COPE or overtime in general?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No, it's overtime throughout the department. Twenty-four million dollars is spread throughout the department. That's a huge chunk of money. I can remember years ago there was no overtime like that and it's suddenly -- it's the way we operate is overtime. When I look at economizing that's the only way that we can economize in the Police Department. We can only take so much out of equipment and supplies, but everything else is fixed cost, so overtime is obviously a place that looking at it from a business point of view that you would have to economize. And, you know, I hope that Jeff -- the two Jeffs get together and settle this issue and so we can go on. Because if it's not settled, by the way, we'll be back here talking about other changes in the way the Police Department operates if we don't get the concessions from the union, from the PBA.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay. I got you.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yeah. There will be other changes coming, yeah.

LEG. GREGORY:

Now I'm more confused than ever, because initially when you brought this to us I thought that you were concerned about the overtime in COPE because of the hours that they work, Tuesday through Saturday; if there is a parade on Sunday and Monday you have to call those same officers in on overtime and those are going to obviously increase the cost.

But now what I'm hearing you saying is that you are concerned about overtime for sector patrol.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No, I didn't say sector patrol. No, I didn't say that. I said throughout the police --

LEG. GREGORY:

I said are you concerned about overtime with COPE or the overtime in general.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Overtime in general.

LEG. GREGORY:

Well, that would include sector control, wouldn't it?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

There's three divisions and Support Services Division is a large Police Division, patrol is another division which is large, the Detective Division is large, so when we look at the Police Department -- when I look at it, I look at the whole. COPE, as I gave examples where we could make changes and still retain COPE, and that's what we're doing and that's what we did. I understand the concerns of folks who think that it's going to be absorbed into the 10 Command. That's not the intention. They're going to backfill into sector cars as we have done for years, not just this administration, but other administrations, and that will continue. That's a prudent and responsible way to manage your assets.

LEG. GREGORY:

Absolutely. But when you use terms like backfill and the person that it's going to use are COPE officers, to me that's an easy interpretation of we don't have enough officers so we're going to complement or supplement with COPE officers.

Applause

And the real concern is overtime in the Patrol Division, not overtime in COPE. So I've been adamant supporter that we need a police class, we need more officers on the street. That's a separate issue, but my concern is with this plan as we, you know, whatever you want to call, we move COPE officers into the regular patrol, that we're going to lose an important element of our police service, and that's prevention, because we're talking about quality of life issues, we're talking about interpersonal relationships with community leaders, that there's going to be a real possibility that we become more of a reactive force as opposed to a proactive force. I have community leaders call me all the time, "There's a neighbor across the street, I think he may be dealing drugs. There's a lot of, you know, come and go traffic." Whatever the case may be. They call Lieutenant {Kane}, his guys in COPE, and they address it before it becomes an even bigger issue.

Now, I mean, I'm not trying to take anything away from our regular patrol guys or any officers. They're sworn officers, they are sworn to do their best and protect and serve us, but when you have a particular relationship with the community the communication is there. I think that's something that's invaluable that you can't really put a dollar amount on. And overtime to me is not necessarily the overwhelming factor, particularly when you have an aspect of police services that may be lost.

And the community has spoken. They said, you know, this is something that we're going to lose. You know, one day we're going to have Officer Zwirn and Officer Dormer and Officer Browning. Where's the consistency? Where's the relationship? Where's the bond that you build that's there already? You are not going to have that and I think that's what you are hearing today. I think that's all I have for now.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Just before I ask Legislator Barraga, I don't know if you felt the reaction or heard the reaction when you said that if the two Jeffs don't get together you're fearful of more changes. You see, that kind of bothers me because that's like let's sit down and I have this stick and I'm only going to hit you if you don't agree with me, you know what I mean?

Applause

That's what I'm talking about. I understand how -- I mean, I understand negotiations are tough, but I don't want to hear the threats. I want to -- I want open and honest communication because it's -- you just can't get honest. You are going to get somebody that's going to be now adamant to break your chops because you're threatening them. So I don't want to hear that kind of stuff. I don't want it to exist, but I certainly don't want to hear it. So, you know, I'm hoping that we can move forward and avoid any more of that from either side. Legislator Barraga.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Mr. Chair, may I respond to that, please?

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

You know what? I don't think you need to.

Applause

Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

In fairness to you, Commissioner, if you want to respond; respond.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Thank you, Mr. Legislator. I appreciate that very much. I was not threatening anybody. There is a resolution on the table, okay, that takes another five and a half million dollars from the overtime budget. That's a reality that I have to deal with as a Commander, as the boss, because that's my mandate. That's what I meant. I wasn't threatening anybody. I'm just saying it's the reality. Get this thing settled, get them together and settle this thing so we won't be talking about it. But I'm certainly not threatening anybody. I don't do that.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

You know what? I just want to have this dialogue with you for a minute. I guess I wasn't clear. I'm not saying your intention is to threaten. You see, that's the problem. I'm saying how other people perceive what you are saying. You've got to be aware of how it could be interpreted. I don't think you are a person that uses threats, I don't think you have to, but I'm concerned with the perception because that's what they're responding to. I guess I'm just not making myself clear. I'm not saying people are this and that; I'm saying this is how people perceive it and we have to be aware of it. That's all. I'm sorry if it comes off like I'm calling people names. I'm try to say this is what I'm hearing.

Thank you. Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Commissioner, good morning. I've been sitting here rather attentively listening to the testimony this morning. I think if you're objective and you're sitting there you see these officers coming up; I

call them line officers. They are right on the line, they are doing the job, whether they be COPE or Marine officers. And you have to ask the question, you know, from a management perspective. You were talking about the military. The last time I was in active duty was with II MEF, the II Marine Expeditionary Force a couple of years ago. I had to give presentation and I was a two star, and I walked into a room; I had to give a presentation on a wounded warrior unit. The Marine Corps has the philosophy that they always bring people who are actually performing the function day-to-day in the room because the General or Colonel often is far away from what's happening on a day-to-day basis out on the field. I remember giving that presentation and about 25 people in the room, and I knew I sold 24 of them, except one Lieutenant over in the corner who was -- he had an injured support unit. He began to speak and after five minutes of listening to him I realized I made a big mistake and we changed the whole strategy, the whole approach. We went in a different direction.

I guess my question is to you, you are the Commissioner of the Police Department. You are the general in charge, and you are -- you have your own hierarchy around you. The question is when you make a decision how far down do you go before that final decision is made? Do you actually bring in line officers, somebody who has been out doing COPE for 10 or 15 years; somebody who has been in the Marine Bureau for 10 or 15 years, to find out what their input is before you make that decision? The reason I ask is that sometimes if you just go to your commanders, they're going to tell you what you want to hear.

Applause

They know exactly where you are coming from. They are not foolish. They want the next star on the shoulder, they want to move up. That's just the way it is. It's the politics of things that we do in life. Do you go down that far? Because I think if you did go down that far and you were getting input from some of these officers, I'm not so sure you would have made the same decisions with Marine and COPE that you have. Would you like to respond on that?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Well, you know, I hear what you are saying, and getting input from the operational level is very critical in a lot of instances. But there are some decisions, by the way, that I have to retain at my level; it's just the way the business is. Otherwise, I wouldn't get anything done. I have to look at this in a completely different view than an officer that's actually operating in COPE. I had to look at this from the overall picture dealing with the community, the availability of the officers, the overtime issue. And I mention that, by the way, on this Sunday-Monday issue which is a big issue for us as I mentioned, the monies. And Legislator Gregory agrees that it's 24 million, and that's not all of it.

Again, I'm not saying that the officers don't work hard for that overtime, never said that, but it's management's prerogative and it has to be in these trying times. We're in different times right now where you have to make command decisions, you know exactly what I'm talking about, and this was one of them. And as Police Commissioner I have to make the tough decisions. I knew I was going to get flack on this. I had that since 2004. It comes with the territory. And I understand it. Change is not welcomed. It's not liked, there's going to be push back, and of course there are other things swirling around that are influencing this, this decision on COPE. I understand that.

And the other thing I'd like to mention, if I may, is that I -- if we do discuss the chart, if the PBA sits down and discusses the chart so we can keep the officers together, I don't want it linked to other issues. It should be the chart with the COPE and let's see if we can work this out.

LEG. BARRAGA:

The only other comment I will make, just for the record, is legislation going forward now with reference to eliminating certain police personnel, the question of jobs that haven't been filled, and I have no intention of supporting that legislation. And the reason I'm not supporting it has nothing to do with the legislation. All these types of legislation I don't think have ever been necessary, just for the record, because we have \$135 million rainy day fund and that should be utilized.

Applause

These lag payroll scenarios will save 30 million. If the County Executive had come in and advocated going into that rainy day fund, not 30 million, but 60 million, none of this, none of this, would have happened.

Applause

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. A couple of comments that were just made, I'd like to talk about for a minute. One of the things that I asked at the last Public Safety Committee meeting of Chief Moore was for the complete plan of how the Police Department, like other departments, were asked to put forward a savings plan, a set amount of money how they were going to deal with that. And if the situation arose, that that money was not going to be available. We don't -- we certainly don't want to be in the middle of a collective bargaining process here or influencing it in any way, but it was just a simple statement; if this money is not available through some means, this is how these departments are going to have to handle that. That forced us to make some very difficult decisions and we saw it would have meant a certain number of layoffs in each department, the total set dollar amount of how we were going to deal with that.

Well, we haven't seen that forthcoming for the Police Department. We heard at the last meeting, well it's a start. Well, I -- to me that's no way to deal with public safety. You know, we hear we want to strike five and a half million dollars from overtime. I don't know if we want to get into it with Budget Review right now, but, I mean, that could create a structural problem in even having enough money to pay salaries in terms of the type of money we have appropriated. Very serious problems with the way this legislation that's going to be before the full body is written, and I think it would put everybody in a better position, Labor Relations, the department, the officers, to sit -- to truly sit down and negotiate if there was an actual set plan. As I've said a million times, you are probably sick of hearing me say it, if X then Y.

MR. ZWIRN:

If I could --

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

This is the amount of money and if we don't have that, well this is going to be the impact. And I don't want to keep hearing well, we're going to enhance our response with this transfer. No, let's talk turkey here; there's going to be reduced services. There's going to be cuts in this area, there's going to be -- there's not going to be as many people available to do certain other functions within the department. If we can start with, as the Chairman has asked, if we can start with that type of honesty instead of, you know, talking about embellishing and enhancing different functions, you know, when I see letters going out to civic associations, if we can just start with the honesty of saying it's going to require cuts in service and this is where it's going to be, I think we would all get a lot further along in this process instead of sitting here talking about, you know, moving within and try to find ways of dealing with that. I think we need to start with that sort of plan and that sort of honesty.

MR. ZWIRN:

If I might.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Excuse me. I asked the Commissioner that, not you, Mr. Zwirn.

MR. ZWIRN:

Yeah, but some of this has to do with the County Executive's budget, and I have appeared before the Budget and Safety Committee on IR 1296.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

If you can give the Commissioner the budget, then let him deal with how he's going to handle that within his department.

MR. ZWIRN:

Because I think we're referring to IR 1296 that was in the Budget Committee, which is a bill that calls for the elimination of 365 vacancies, which I might add are not funded, they are not funded positions. They have been there and carried along.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

We heard this in the Budget & Finance Committee.

MR. ZWIRN:

Yes, but the Public Safety Committee hasn't heard it and I think it is relevant.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

And we will debate that on the floor of the full Legislature.

MR. ZWIRN:

If I might, Mr. Chairman. We treat the Police Department differently. There's no question. We have overtime, we have tried to say -- put a bill in to say we're going to cut overtime. As I said in Budget Safety Committee, if there's an emergency, we send the troops.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Precisely. That's why I'm saying it's not a plan.

MR. ZWIRN:

But it is a plan.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

No, it's not.

MR. ZWIRN:

We have done this with every bargaining unit that we have dealt with, in all fairness.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

And I hear you. What Legislator Losquadro is saying, it's not a plan for him, he doesn't have the plan. You may have the plan and you may have communicated it, but it hasn't been transmitted adequately for Legislator Losquadro. So rather than have you have to spend a lot of time doing it, you need to communicate. In fact, maybe what we should do at another meeting, probably Tuesday, will be to make sure you are there to communicate it clearly to all of us. Because really, and I don't know if the Commissioner has the plan, I think we're seeing it little by little, I don't know how Newsday is able to get all this information before we do, but they seem to be right on.

*(*Laughter From Audience*)*

MR. ZWIRN:

The Legislature has authorized the County Executive to find savings in all departments, including the Police Department. What we have heard so far is that there has to be a willingness on the part of the Legislature to work together to try to make sure we do that. Otherwise we carve out the Police Department and say every other unit, bargaining unit, including police units, the SOA and the Detective Associations, our Police Officers, and they reached an agreement.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

As you started your discussion, that they are unique and different. So, I mean, we're not all talking apples and oranges. We're talking a unique service, public safety, the troops, the line troops as the other Legislator said. So it is a unique situation, you know what I mean? So I think there has -- again, I think we just have to have honesty and truth, not threats and not, you know, leaks here and there. Just if we don't have this much money this is what we're going to be able to do; if we have this much money, this is what we're going to have to do. And just say it as it is. I think everybody could handle it. I for one think the PBA would appreciate just give it to me straight. I mean, that's what they seem to want, not like --

MR. ZWIRN:

We're trying to do everything not to lay people off in every department in this County, but the bulk of our expenses comes from personnel costs. If you are going to save them -- we can't agree on laying off seven Police Officers, seven positions in the Police Department out of approximately 1700 PO's that are in the budget and working right now. So I don't know how do we go farther than that.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

I think you can understand that on this side of the table we want 80 more. So when you say laying off seven, do you understand what's going on in our head.

Applause

Whoa, we're going in the wrong direction, so.

MR. ZWIRN:

That's why we went in for stimulus money for those 80 Police Officers. If the Legislature determines that they need more, then you are going to have to raise the Police District taxes and fund them.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Right. Well, thank you for your recommendation and we'll take it under advisement. Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

And to that we did raise the Police District tax.

LEG. GREGORY:

Every year.

LEG. BROWNING:

Yes, every year. You know, I will tell you the Mastic residents here, I go to your Neighborhood Watch. My Legislative Aide was there before I got there, and a Police Officer shows up. It wasn't the Police Officer who was assigned to go to that meeting because things changed that day, and so of course that Police Officer that shows up was not prepared. Terapin, I have three homes within that specific area that have major problems and I know that COPE is working on it. I know that the call comes in, 911 call, a Police Officer responds to the call. I get the calls from the people in the community about the problem. And I know that when I call the precinct and I say listen, what's going on with this and I need your help, we're going to put COPE on it. Because they're the people who follow through and continually work with the people in the community to resolve that issue.

I can tell you, you know, the County Executive didn't go to that meeting and meet with those 25 people who were very angry to find out that they were not sure if they're going to have a regular COPE officer. I have residents on Bonnie who have a COPE officer that works with them on a regular basis with the ongoing problem in their neighborhood. We started a Neighborhood Watch in South Haven and Mastic. They were going to have their own COPE officer who will work with them and

know their issues, know their block, know what's going on. Terapin, the shooter from the William Floyd High School, lived in one of those homes. There's still drug activity going on. There is another home on their block with major problems. The residents here have their windows shot at. Around the corner there's another home with major drug problems.

I want to know I'm going to have COPE officers. I know that I think there is approximately four COPE officers per shift who respond to these ongoing problems. I know that maybe some communities don't need COPE the way I need it in my district. I have Gordon Heights, I have North Bellport; the gentleman was here to talk about North Bellport. He went to the meeting; they are wondering what's going on. I have Shirley, Mastic, and Mastic Beach. We have the civic leaders who know when they have their civic meetings that they know that they have their COPE officer that they can call that can come and respond to any questions about any issues in their community.

I'm very concerned about the fact that you've just arbitrarily just taken COPE and said we're just going to throw them in with the squads and you are going to get the same service. I really don't think so; I really don't believe so. In fact, one of the COPE officers that I have dealt with on a regular basis is telling me he's not doing COPE work anymore. He won't be doing COPE work anymore. It's my understanding there's going to be one COPE officer per squad, and that's just not sufficient for the district that I represent. It may be okay in certain communities. I know that Legislator Gregory, you know, he has Wyandanch. I know Montano is not here, you have Central Islip, you have Brentwood. There's many, many communities that need that COPE presence and they need those Police Officers.

COPE officers, they get to know the community, they get to know the people in their communities, and those are their people who can respond to them, tell them this is what we know what's going on. They give them information to help them to catch the bad guys in the community. They're the people who help. They have just -- they melted in with the community. They know everybody. They stop on the street, they talk to the kids. I know our sector cars do the same thing, but they don't have the time. They are constantly calling.

I did a ride along in my district. I did it in the 5th, the 6th and the 7th Precinct and I see how a sector car responds. He doesn't have time to sit and talk to anybody for too long because the calls just kept coming in time and time again. As soon as he's done with that call, he had to go to another call. So we need -- we need COPE and we need it to stay the way it is.

I understand what you are saying about the overtime and the weekends and the Sunday thing. Yes, I had two events in my district where we needed the COPE officers there, but I'm looking at you are trying to come up with concessions. We have a fiscal crisis, we do need them to come up with concessions, but the issue is is that you have things going on within the department, you know, you've taken the Marine Bureau. You're moving things around in the Marine Bureau; they're not happy with that. Now you are doing this with COPE. They feel like they're being threatened, they feel like they're being beat over the head, and personally if somebody was doing that to me I'd be going like this and I wouldn't want to talk to you either.

So, you know, let's work with them on concessions. Sit down and talk with them, but don't beat them over their head and say we're pulling this and we're pulling that and then expect them to work with you. It just doesn't work that way. You catch more flies with honey's, that's what I've always been taught, and that's how you get things done. You don't beat people up and then expect them to work with you. It just doesn't happen.

I do want to talk about the issue with the layoffs. You're talking about laying off Police Officers and, you know, what I see is you're putting COPE into squads and I -- there is a gentleman here talking about the Gang Unit that he's in and that's his speciality right now, is working with the Gang Unit, but he had to backfill in a sector car. And the only reason I can see it is because there wasn't enough Police Officers to do that job that day. So what's happening with the Gang Unit? Now you don't have somebody doing what he's supposed to be doing. I can't tell you how important, you

know yourself, that's an important issue for him to be working on.

So when you are talking about layoffs, and seven layoffs, I have real concerns about laying off Police Officers because we have numbers of retirements, but what Police Officers we have had to fill up those retirement? We're not doing that. So, Jeff, you can explain how you are going to do layoffs because is that going to fall down to patrol officers who are currently on probation?

MR. TEMPERA:

And again, we went through this at the Budget Committee a little bit. The intent here is not to layoff anyone, and it's right in the resolution. If we get our targeted goal of the approximately \$6.9 million I think the number is in terms of savings that's part of the resolution passed by the Legislature, there will be no layoffs. There will be no reductions. That's right in the resolution and it says no -- it will have no impact. We stop right there.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Let's just move forward like you don't get what you want. Who's laid off?

MR. TEMPERA:

Right in the resolution it says that, again, from Civil Service standpoint the people who wind up being actually laid off aren't the positions that are stated in the resolution. It most likely is going to be -- or it is the least -- the people with the least retention standing. There was a class hired a couple of years ago, the least senior people in that class are going to be the ones who will go out the door, but the resolution says that we will backfill into the Patrol Division. There will be no negative impact on the Patrol Division.

LEG. BROWNING:

So there is a possibility of Police Officer -- I think a little over a year ago we had a graduating class, so officers who may still be on probation from that class will be laid off; is that correct?

MR. TEMPERA:

That's a Civil Service decision. But, you know, they have got to be the least senior Police Officers.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. Because one of my concerns with that is, is so now you are talking about the patrol officers and you are going to do a bump system, so you are going to keep that number of patrol. You know, Suffolk County we work with say, for example, the 69th came back and we were working them. We have a veterans -- Suffolk County veterans and we're helping soldiers who are coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan to get jobs. You might want to be checking to see that these Police Officers who are still on probation, because I know one exactly who just returned from I think Iraq about three weeks ago, so here's a soldier who left his job to become a Police Officer and by no choice of his own, he was deployed and now he's facing a layoff. That's what I'm hearing today.

MR. TEMPERA:

Well, again, I can't tell you who would be the impacted individual, the same way we couldn't tell you --

LEG. BROWNING:

He's low man on totem pole, so we're going to possibly lay off Iraq veterans. Thank you.

MR. TEMPERA:

I think there's 54 that are in the same class, so I don't know who it would be. That's up to Civil Service to do the analysis of who is the least senior individuals. When they're done with that analysis they will pass it on to the Police Department, but the hope and the goal is never to get there.

LEG. BROWNING:

All I can tell you is that that's what I know, is that we have Iraq veterans who have returned. They're still on probation because they left immediately after the academy and shame on us to do that.

MR. ZWIRN:

Nobody is suggesting that.

Applause

In every piece of legislation that we had trying to do this budget management and the budget reduction there was a threat of layoffs and without the intention of laying off one person, and so far that has been the goal and it has been achieved. And that has been the case especially in the Police Department. So if we can just to get where you authorize us to go then we won't have to be doing this anymore and that would be a pleasure for all of us.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you. Commissioner, I really do -- I don't feel sorry for you, but I know you are in a tough spot. You know, we don't always agree but I think I agree with you most of the time on some of the things that you do. I really appreciate the comments that Legislator Barraga had mentioned earlier. As a former officer myself in the Army I remember my Brigade Commander, who is actually the Commanding General, he is a two star in Iraq now, he would come up to me often, as well as my fellow Second and First Lieutenants and ask us, what do you think about the operation, what do you think's going on. He actually listened to our feedback and I'm sure and I hope that he's doing that today. That's more of a leadership style. I'm not telling you to do that, but I think those officers that may not feel that comfort or freedom to speak to you I think they're hoping that us as Legislators and representatives to express their concerns for them, and that's what we're trying to do today.

I seem to hear at least a willingness to change the chart or negotiate a chart for the COPE officers, so that's, I think, a step in a positive direction. But I would like to hear more from you about -- you had mentioned cross training and cross training the regular patrol officers as they are to COPE functions and what's the plan with that.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

I have directed the Police Academy to set up a training program for selected officers that now ride in patrol cars in the precincts. They'll be selected by their Precinct Commander, as they always do, for COPE training. They will be able to backfill into COPE for -- to help COPE out when they have an event or something that requires manpower, there's manpower intensive, they're trained to do it. Also, down the road COPE people get promoted, they move on, they have to be backfilled in the COPE operation, you know. We promised to do that and so we got to have trained personnel do that. You just can't put somebody into COPE without giving them training and it's going to be a plus for our precinct officers who are now in regular patrol go to a community meeting. We'll now get some insight in how to deal with a community meeting. For example, how to gather information before they go to the meeting, anticipate the questions, the issues that are going on. And they should be familiar with their issues in their sector, by the way, I mean, because that's their sector. If they go to a community meeting they should know what the issues are in that community.

But, again, I want to reiterate that COPE is going to be continued. I understand the concerns that it would be absorbed and disappear. That is not the intention. We're not going to do that. They're still going to be doing COPE functions and we never meant to change that.

LEG. GREGORY:

When does -- I don't mean to cut you off. But when is this training that you are talking about?

When is that slated to commence?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

It will be the end of the summer. Obviously I'm not going to do the training in the summer.

LEG. GREGORY:

Why is that obvious?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Well, because this is a busy time. I don't want to take officers off the street to put them in the Police Academy in July and August.

LEG. GREGORY:

Is that because the officers in Academy are on the patrols?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yeah, they're out on patrol too, in your community, Legislator Gregory, and doing a heck of a job today as we speak walking in the downtowns, extra patrols, and that's an innovation that we put in place in 2004. It was never done before. Again, everybody said that training would be impacted negatively; it hasn't. We tried to minimize our training during the summer. There are certain training we have to do in the summer, EMT training, range training, EVOC training, Emergency Vehicle Operation, and training like that that's required and is year-round. It make sense to put our training officers out in the trenches, so to speak, and they get familiarized again with what's happening in the communities out there. When they come back in and they're teaching our young officers and our in service people, they now have credibility and they have a good sense of what's going on in the communities.

If I may, Mr. Chair, could I comment on Legislator Browning's issues?

LEG. GREGORY:

I want to respond real quick.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

I'm sorry, Legislator.

LEG. GREGORY:

So the enhancement, quote/unquote, that you -- that this plan is professing, is actually going to happen two or three months down the road when historically -- and correct me, feel free to correct me -- crime increases, at least in certain areas, during the summer. So what are we really enhancing?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No. When I said we were enhancing COPE, we're -- a couple of things that we meant by that or I meant by that. Number one, their availability was going to enhance the operation and we have already gone over that. The hours changed and the days changed, but also training our sector operators, who by the way, have given up a lot of these responsibilities to COPE over the years.

LEG. GREGORY:

But you are not going to train those sector operators until at least the Fall because --

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

I explained that, yeah.

LEG. GREGORY:

So this enhancement, or at least part of this enhancement, is not going to be in effect until two or three months down the road.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yeah, and that's a managerial decision and it makes sense operationally to do that. We're not going to take people off the streets to train them during the summer. COPE is going to be operating at full strength. They are going to be out there in the precincts, the same officers working together, so that's not going to change. In fact, it's going to be enhanced as I mentioned, because it's seven days and the hours changed. These are the two major changes.

LEG. GREGORY:

So you are having the same seven, let's use that as a standard number, of personnel in COPE, instead of working Tuesday to Saturday, Sunday through Monday or whatever it is, seven days a week.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Well, they are working seven days a week. They'll rotate like the sector car squads rotate now, where they drop off a day and they rotate around and so they get experience seven days a week.

LEG. GREGORY:

Okay, I'm going leave it at that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Commissioner, you wanted to answer Legislator Browning's question?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Yeah, she brought up some points and she would agree with this I'm sure. When we came on board in 2004 the 7th Precinct was a skeleton precinct.

LEG. BROWNING:

Right.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

We put extra patrols we made 7th Precinct. We made the precinct a full service; hadn't been done before. We created a Gang Unit in the 7th Precinct; they didn't have that before. And we created new sectors in the 7th precinct; they didn't have that before. And I wanted to point out that John Meehan, who was the Inspector in that precinct, does an excellent outstanding job with the officers and the Detectives in that precinct over the last five years. And Legislator Browning has mentioned that to me on a number of occasions, so I would like to put on the record that the officers and commanders and bosses in that 7th Precinct are doing an outstanding job dealing with the community on a daily basis.

LEG. BROWNING:

And I absolutely agree with you. However, I did mention that, you know, you have a number of retirements and we have hired classes, but our retirements are exceeding how many we're hiring. So, yes, we had 25 because it was a skeleton staff, it was seriously understaffed, but the issue is, is that as time has going by, I feel like we're losing. Yes, we did civilianization, but we even hear that civilianization they're understaffed now with the civilians. So at some point when we are not hiring to replace the people who leave, we're going back to the good old days of not having enough.

And, you know, I talk to the Police Officers on the street and, you know, I know the Gang Units are backfilling. I know that certain ones are backfilling when there's not enough to cover the sector cars. So, you know, in my community I hear -- I still hear we need more cops on the street. Some people say they do see a difference. Yes, there is a difference, but they're still saying we need more. Violent crime is down, however, anyone in Suffolk County there are certain crimes that are up. I have right here in front of me, let me see if I can find it. Suffolk County it says property, burglary, larceny, 6.3% for property, 22.6 in burglary and larceny is 5%. They're all up in Suffolk County. Violent crime is not up, it is down. Murder is the same as what it has been. So while you

say crime is down, yeah, certain crime is down, other crime is up. And these are the crimes where you heard about the home robberies. These are the things that are going up and we need to make sure that we have a police force who can continue to do the job they're doing. And I do talk to the Police Officers and I do hear that there is a shortage.

And while I know that certain guys from the Gang Unit had to go into the sector cars because of the shortage, and there's not one Police Officer will tell me look, I have to do my job and I will do my job to the best of my ability with what we have got, and that's what I always hear. So I certainly appreciate what the Police Officers do in my district. They work hard and they will always say, you know, we also hear do more with less. But when it comes to the public safety sometimes you just can't put a price on it.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Losquadro.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Thank you. And I'll follow-up on what Legislator Browning said.

And the one thing that's been disheartening is, you know, many times, whether it's in the newspaper or wherever, some people just assume that we get a lot of information from the PBA. And when I say this it's probably going to raise some eyebrows from the guys in PBA, because I certainly didn't get it from them. Like Legislator Browning, I speak to a lot of officers who are on patrol. And one of the reasons why I've been very concerned and expressed my concern to you about a lot of these functions out of necessity within patrol disappearing into the 10 Command is because I hear things like dispatch is checking in with officers every 30 minutes to check on their status when they're on like a domestic violence call, and this is something I've never heard before, and this is becoming a routine occurrence.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

May I respond to that?

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Please do.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

That's a normal safety procedure that our dispatchers have been doing for years.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Not on just domestic. I used domestic as an example because that's something that can take longer, but this has become a routine occurrence now just checking on status of all calls. I just wanted you to comment on that.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No, I have no idea that they're doing that on all calls. That doesn't make sense. But I can tell you that if it's a serious call for years dispatchers will check on the officer. If they haven't heard from them within ten minutes.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

I've been hearing, just telling you, again, these are the things that we hear, is that this has now become the normal course of business because calls are stacked up and guys have to get from one call to another so they're cutting short, you know, conversations, or follow-ups that they may have been able to have in the past. So, you know, when I hear things like that about response time, when I hear guys are just, you know, hopping from one call to another to another to another, it concerns me when I hear that a function like COPE is going into the 10 Command, because that tells me there's an obvious shortage in that command and that these guys are going to wind up doing

more and more of this work. That's where part of my concern with this comes from.

And, again, I can't ask for it -- I can't think of a new way to ask for it, because we've sat down face to face, we've sat across from each other in these committees. If I could get that information that I've been requesting for quite some time as to where these transfers and staffing changes are taking place, because it's a huge number. It represents more than 10% of our workforce if the numbers that we're hearing are accurate. I just want to be able to see this plan on paper. I know all of us have asked for this so we can just see a clear indication of where things are moving within the department.

And, again, I reiterate my suggestion to you that we have that clear plan in place because, I don't want to tell you how to manage your department, but I have to tell you, just listening to all this, the banter back and forth, I'm reminded of that pirate tee-shirt that you see a lot of people wearing that says "The beatings will continue until morale improves."

I don't think we're in a good place right now. I think we need a clear, concise plan that we can look at, that the officers in the department and the union representatives can look at, so we have a clear idea of where we're moving, given option A and option B.

Thank you for coming today, Mr. Commissioner. I know this is a very difficult time for any department head to work through, and I hope you take these suggestions that we're giving you and we can build upon that and come to a consensus as to what is best moving forward. So thank you.

CHAIRMAN. EDDINGTON:

Legislator Barraga.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Just a question. And I'm not so sure you'd be in a position to answer it. But, Ben, would the administration along with the Commissioner consider, consider, dropping the changes in COPE and the Marine Bureau if a negotiated agreement comes about between the administration and the union on the seven million dollars savings?

MR. TEMPERA:

You know what, I'm not going to put any restrictions on negotiations. Anything's possible. We haven't restricted anything and that continues to be the case.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Legislator Browning.

LEG. BROWNING:

One last thing on a totally separate issue. Commissioner, maybe you can answer that this. North Bellport, the North Bellport Coalition, we were scheduling a meeting with the 5th Precinct. I'd like to know what the policy is when community leaders call my office and say they would like to meet with the 5th Precinct. Do they have to contact you in order to get permission to do this? Because -- you're saying no?

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

No.

LEG. BROWNING:

Okay. I can tell you, what happened is the Coalition requested a meeting with the Fifth Precinct. It turned out to be a meeting on the 12th Floor with the County Executive. I was -- it was made very

clear to my civic leaders that I was not invited to come to that meeting. When my civic leader insisted that I come, the meeting was canceled. And then I find out about a week or two later that there was a meeting and I was not informed. I would like to know from here on in, so when my community leaders request a meeting, you're telling me that they don't have to work through you to get this meeting scheduled. Because I can tell you, I was very annoyed that the work that I've done with the people in that community were told that I'm not invited to come to your meeting. And I can tell you that I want in the future, if there's a meeting being scheduled with civic leaders, community groups and my community, that I am notified, whether I'm invited or not, that there's a meeting occurring, because I understand there was three meetings that day. And I believe another Legislator had no idea that that meeting was occurring for his district either.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Well, I guess you could just say yes, you'll let us know, right? I mean --
*(*Laughter*)*

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

By the way, I just get invited to the meetings. I don't know who is coming until I get there, so that's not unusual. The communities call a meeting and they invite the Police Commissioner and I go.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Well, I guess --

LEG. BROWNING:

I was invited too, but then --

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Let me just be wild and say, okay, if that does happen, you'll call Legislator Browning and say, "Hey, are you going to that meeting?" Because, I mean, that could solve that problem, right? We don't have to go through Jeff to get this done, we could just decide it right now.

COMMISSIONER DORMER:

Well, I'm assuming she has very close relationship with the community, I mean, they would invite her.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Well, obviously, something happened. Something happened, so we'll just make sure that we communicate a little bit better.

LEG. BROWNING:

Like I said, I was not invited.

MR. ZWIRN:

I don't know who called the meeting.

LEG. BROWNING:

The meeting was canceled, because --

MR. ZWIRN:

I'll check into it.

LEG. BROWNING:

-- they insisted my attendance. So I just want to make sure in future reference -- for future reference, that I'm made aware.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

It doesn't have to be you to make the phone call. Mr. Zwirn, that would be wonderful. Just keep us in a loop, that's all we're saying. All right?

Well, silence must mean that the meeting is coming to an end. I want to thank you all for coming. I think we did get some concrete stuff here, even if it only starts with the building of trust. I think for the future, it's going to really make a difference. And I appreciate you coming and your willingness to meet with the PBA very shortly, and, hopefully, nobody will be forced to come to our Committee in August to tell us why this isn't working. Okay. Thank you very much for being here. If there's no other business, I'll take a motion.

LEG. LOSQUADRO:

Motion.

CHAIRMAN EDDINGTON:

Motion to adjourn by Legislator Losquadro, second by Legislator Gregory. Thank you very much.

[THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:55 P.M.]