

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, October 4, 2012 at 10:00 a.m.

Members Present:

Legislator Kate Browning - Chairperson
Robert Calarco - Vice-Chair
Legislator DuWayne Gregory - Member
Legislator William Spencer - Member
Legislator Kara Hahn - Member
Legislator Lou D'Amaro - Member

Also In Attendance:

Presiding Officer Bill Lindsay - District #8
Deputy Presiding Officer Wayne Horsley - District #14
George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson - Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Renee Ortiz - Chief Deputy Clerk/Suffolk County Legislature
John Ortiz - Budget Analyst/Legislative Budget Review Office
Josh Slaughter - Aide to Legislator Browning
Bobby Knight - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Michael Pitcher - Aide to Presiding Officer Lindsay
Lora Gellerstein - Aide to Legislator Spencer
Paul Perillie - Aide to Legislator Gregory
Alyssa Turano - Aide to Legislator Hahn
Ali Nazir - Aide to Legislator Kennedy
Tom Vaughn - County Executive Assistant
Marie Berkoski - County Executive Assistant
Risco Mention-Lewis - Deputy Commissioner/Suffolk County Police Dept
Tedd Nieves - Deputy Inspector/Suffolk County Police Department
Tracy Pollak - Headquarters/Suffolk County Police Department
Todd Guthy - Detective/Suffolk County Police Department
Mike Sharkey - Chief of Staff/Suffolk County Sheriff's Office
Russ McCormick - Sergeant-at-Arms/Suffolk Detective's Association
Hank Mulligan - 2nd Vice-President/Superior Officer's Association
Anthony Prudenti – President/Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Association
Arthur Sanchez – Deputy Sheriffs Police Benevolent Association
Peter Dykeman - Delegate/Suffolk County Probation Officer's Association
Shirley Glover - Supervisor-Automation Unit/SC Probation Department
Janet Quirk – Senior Program Analyst/Suffolk County Probation Department
Laura Ahearn - Executive Director/Parents for Megan's Law
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken By:

Alison Mahoney - Court Reporter

*(*The meeting was called to order at 9:36 A.M. *)*

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Good morning. We will start our Public Safety meeting. If everyone could please stand for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Legislator Hahn.

Salutation

And we'll have a brief moment of silence for those people who served our country

Moment of Silence Observed

Thank you. Okay, good morning. We do have a presentation, and we have some cards here. I only have one card. I don't know if -- Shirley Glover, if you would like to -- if you're here for the presentation or if you'd like to speak beforehand. I know sometimes we have -- people like to see the presentations first. But if you would like to speak before the presentation, you'd be welcome to come up.

MS. GLOVER:

Good morning. I'm Shirley Glover, I'm the Supervisor of the Automation Unit of the Probation Department. I'd like to discuss the federated approach to information technology proposed in the 2013 recommended budget. This federated approach proposes to transfer 42 Information Technology positions to the County IT budget. Included in this transfer would be six Probation automation positions. There are several issues of importance if this federated approach takes place.

The Probation Department is the only criminal justice agency included in the federated approach to IT. Prompt response to Probation Officers' needs is paramount to their safety, as well as the safety of the public. If the Automation Unit is moved from the Probation budget to the County IT budget, discretion about priorities and issues of importance would be relegated to IT management rather than Probation administration.

The Probation Department supervises over 11,000 offenders, much of the same population dealt with by the Police and the Sheriff's Department, and for a longer period of time. These include sex offenders, gang members, those sentenced to probation as an alternative to incarceration, and offenders who are under electronic surveillance monitoring. Probation Officers and supervisors need to have access to important critical information while in the field, as well as in the office, and the Probation Automation Unit provides prompt attention to ensure that automated systems are operational.

Probation Automation staff have had background checks and security clearance. We are not an interchangeable staff. We have years of experience working with criminal justice and probation department automation systems. Although it is purported that the IT positions will not be moved from their respective departments, the wording in the 2013 recommended budget states that staff will, for the most part, remain stationed at their current work stations. Planning, policy and certain work activities will be coordinated through central IT.

For a criminal justice agency, the administration of that agency should have sole control of the work activities of their automation unit for the safety of not only their staff but the public as well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. You know, I find this interesting. I know that the Performance Management Team has been looking at different departments, and I believe there are -- I'm not entirely knowledgeable about everything that you do in your IT department, I know a little bit, and I know you have State

mandates --

MS. GLOVER:
Right.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
-- that you have to comply with.

MS. GLOVER:
That's correct.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
So do you think that this is going to have an effect on the State mandates as far as time -- the time that you have in requiring to report, or what exactly are your mandates?

MS. GLOVER:
Well, I just think that the onus is no longer going to be directly to the Probation Department. It will be, you know, kind of going through central IT and adding another layer and maybe not as prompt. I mean, we sometimes get mandates that have to be -- you know, we have a month or something to make the changes and get that into place. So if there's another layer where we may not have our priorities be the Probation Department, it could affect that.

*(*Legislator Spencer entered the meeting at 9:42 A.M. *)*

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Okay. Does anyone have any questions? Okay. I know --

LEG. KENNEDY:
Kate?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:
Yeah. I know that the union reached out to me about this, that they have some concerns about it. So I think we'll certainly be following up with some concerns of theirs. John, go ahead.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Yes, good morning. And I'm sorry, I didn't get your name.

MS. GLOVER:
I'm Shirley Glover.

LEG. KENNEDY:
Yes, okay. So you did write a letter, as a matter of fact, I saw it and went through it. Tell me, Shirley, how -- what goes on there in Probation with the IT function is different than what we would see in some of the other departments that are going to be subject to this consolidation. Do you have like -- do you have victims information in what you --

MS. GLOVER:
Yes, we have confidential victim information. We have restitution information.

LEG. KENNEDY:
OP locations, things like that?

MS. GLOVER:
Yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

All right. And so based on that and the way the database is set up at this point, I would assume that there are a very few individuals that actually have the ability to interface, access or input with it?

MS. GLOVER:

To get the clearance, yes.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Well, I mean -- okay. So Probation Officers probably have the ability to go in to check. But how many people do you have that actually work the database, or input with it? You have a couple of clerks? How do you maintain it?

MS. GLOVER:

You mean to actually do the data entry?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah.

MS. GLOVER:

It's clerical staff. It's Probation Officers. There are approximately 255 peace officers that could make entries and make changes. They make contacts, if they've gone out into the field they enter contacts in. They take web -- pictures of the offenders, mug shots, and they include that into the offender record as well.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Who scans it for accuracy or verification or anything like that? If you have data entry operators that are inputting, somebody is doing a scanning function on that to determine, you know, that all the letters wound up in the right fields and everything like that.

MS. GLOVER:

Well, there are checks and balances. I mean, data entry, there are checks right on the screen. It won't allow you to enter anything that doesn't fit in with the parameters.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Yeah.

MS. GLOVER:

And beyond that, if you enter in something, there are -- it follows through where the Probation Officer -- if the Clerk entered it, the Probation Officer would see anomalies, the supervisor would see anomalies. So it is -- there are checks and balances throughout.

LEG. KENNEDY:

And that's Clerk Typists or DEOs? Who's doing that actual data entry? We used to have a whole pool of them out in the Clerk's Office.

MS. GLOVER:

It's uni-clerks.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay.

MS. GLOVER:

There's a clerk assigned to each different unit.

LEG. KENNEDY:

And the database itself holds information on approximately how many Probation Officers?

MS. GLOVER:

Well, we have over 11,000 currently. But, I mean, we're talking about a hundred, over a hundred thousand that we've had over the course of the last 25 years.

LEG. KENNEDY:

And you keep that; that's a historical database? You don't purge?

MS. GLOVER:

We keep that information. They become closed records in archive, but we do have that information to go back to, and we have had to go back to them.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. And your concern is that if this were to go through, this reassignment, somehow some of that autonomy or integrity that you keep with that database would be compromised or diminished somehow?

MS. GLOVER:

Yes. We also work with the State, and we have been a pilot County on several different automation projects.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Our software or theirs?

MS. GLOVER:

I'm sorry?

LEG. KENNEDY:

Our software or theirs? In other words, do they, you know, load or input a State-based piece of software for us?

MS. GLOVER:

No, it's our -- it's our software, but it's -- it can be modified by us. It has been modified to deal with the mandates of Suffolk County and the court systems here and the judges and we do those changes, but it is a Statewide system. And we have -- we're in the process right now of setting up a PSI repository, and that will be across the State. We're a pilot County for that. Our Automation Unit is working with the State to set up to a PSI template and a repository to have that available to the courts as well as the jails.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. Madam Chair, can I just ask BRO to see -- John, are they an offset function at all in Probation? Do they get any reimbursement associated with the data support?

MR. ORTIZ:

I don't believe so, but I'll double check.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. All right. Thank you.

MS. GLOVER:

Well, we do have State aid that is -- we do get State aid reimbursement.

LEG. KENNEDY:

For your function; for the data entry function and for the maintenance?

MS. GLOVER:

For the employees -- yeah. For the employees of the Probation Department, yes

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. All right.

MS. GLOVER:

At the current time, it's over 11%.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. All right. Well, thank you very much for coming to speak. Thank you, Madam Chair.

MS. GLOVER:

Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you. And we have one last card, Peter Dykeman.

MR. DYKEMAN:

Good morning.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Good morning.

MR. DYKEMAN:

The first time I spoke before this committee, I verbally took us on a trip to the supermarket to show how we're all losing on a little bit of orange juice and ice cream. Well, I must return to the supermarket today to continue with that analogy.

When we see items of value on sale, like name-brand orange juice or ice cream, we would usually buy those items, perhaps even by multiples of those items. I remember watching my grandparents, who were young children in the 1930's, stock up on canned goods and even freeze things like juice, milk and loaves of bread. They, as many in that great generation, had learned from experience that in tough economic times, stretching every dollar by investing in cost efficiency could be the key to survival.

The County Executive's budget for 2013 calls for a two-and-a-half million dollar cut to the Suffolk County Probation Department budget, including the transfer of a Probation Automation, or IT, Information Technology Unit, to Countywide Information Technology. All law enforcement agencies in Suffolk County do have their own IT divisions due to the very sensitive and specific needs of those agencies. The Automation Unit of the Probation Department is no different, as it is responsible for a very unique set of tasks which ensure continued, efficient and safe operation.

The most integral software programs used by Probation Officers every day are in place by New York State mandates. Programs like the Caseload Explorer or COMPAS, spelled with one S for purpose of the minutes, are in place at the behest of Albany and require their own dedicated workforce. The Suffolk County Probation Department is required to use these to produce State-mandated reports and to even be audited by Albany. In effect, Albany has mandated that the Suffolk County Department of Probation retain its Automation Unit.

Further, as a delegate on the Board of Directors of the Suffolk County Probation Officers Association, and as a Suffolk County Probation Officer who supervises a caseload and relies heavily on my laptop, air card and various department County and State databases, in the course of my field supervision, I can easily state to this committee that the lack of a dedicated department-specific automation unit would, at best, decrease efficiency and productivity, and at worst, be a safety hazard for the Suffolk County Probation Officer.

Over the past few months, we've discussed a few points here in this forum. The number of Probation Officers serving this County is at its lowest level it has been in my six years as a Probation Officer, and likely longer than that. State mandates have implemented new mandatory software programs where we're required the use of those programs to produce mandated reports and allow for audits by Albany, and overall has increased the work load for Suffolk County Probation Officers.

The addressed drastic cut in the Suffolk County Probation budget and the associated reallocation of its Automation Unit would leave the Suffolk County Probation Department as the only Suffolk County law enforcement agency without its own IT division. Such a change would potentially leave the Suffolk County Probation Department open to sanction by New York State for failure to abide by their caseload management and risk assessment mandates. Perhaps most importantly, Probation Officer safety, and ultimately Public Safety, could be comprised if the Probation Officer did not have access to the most up-to-date, real-time information regarding an offender.

In reviewing the County Executive's budget, I implore you to remember the lessons taught us by past generations; that in tough economic times, it is imperative to watch every dollar and to stretch it as far as possible. Investing in the most cost-efficient option is not only practical, it's essential. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Thank you. Do we have any questions? No? Okay. Well, Peter, I guess I'd like to follow-up with you after the meeting --

MR. DYKEMAN:

Sure.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

-- so we can talk about this. I am on the Budget Working Group and I think there's a few of my colleagues sitting here who are also. And obviously public safety's important and we shouldn't shortchange public Safety ever, no matter what department it is. And I'm pretty sure IT and the Police Department is staying in the Police Department, so, as with any other law enforcement department, so I'm not understanding why they would do that in Probation. So we will follow-up and have a further conversation. If you can call my office, maybe we can sit down and talk about it.

MR. DYKEMAN:

Very well. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay? Thank you.

LEG. HAHN:

Is the Director coming today, or acting, whatever he is?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I don't think so.

LEG. CALARCO:

It doesn't look like it.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

It's not looking like it right now.

MR. DYKEMAN:

I believe he said he'd be available if needed, if somebody wanted to call him. I think he could be here before the committee is out.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Yeah. I think we -- we have a presentation, I don't know that he's going to make it in time, but we'll reach out to him.

We have no more cards. Is there anyone else who would like to speak in the public portion? No. Okay. With that, we will go to the presentation.

We have "*Implementing More Effective Crime-Fighting Strategies in Violence-Impacted Communities.*" The presentation is the Deputy Police Commissioner, Risco Mention-Lewis.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you. Hello, everyone.

LEG. HAHN:

Welcome back.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Good morning, everyone.

LEG. HAHN:

Good morning.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

It's good to meet everyone and it's exciting to see everyone again and do this presentation to show not only how these strategies don't -- won't just necessarily be just for crime-impacted communities, but really can work for any community that has a particular issue that needs to be addressed. I'll begin when you are ready.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

When you're ready, go ahead.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Okay. Thank you.

First, I would like you to know, I've been a prosecutor for 19 years. I graduated from Hofstra Law School. And in my work as a prosecutor, in the first 10 years or so I tried a lot of cases, from Traffic Court to attempted murder cases. And in my final case, an attempted murder trial, I saw a young -- a lot of young people, my witnesses actually going to jail, in addition to my other defendants. And that's when I thought to myself that we really need to do better, and I believed -- I thought we could do better because I had a lot of conversations with my witnesses during the time, and to see two boys on their way to college actually then ending up in jail and me having to get them out of jail to testify was very disappointing. So I thought to myself that we can do better than this, and I know we can, in all of the communities, not just the crime-impacted communities.

So at that time, you know, humorously as it may be, I was about nine months pregnant when I was doing that trial. So I went on maternity leave and I was thinking to myself, what can I do, what will I do? Because I didn't know the prosecution office could do the intervention that I thought needed to be done because it was too late, the person was already going to jail or had a case when we got them. But strangely enough, while I was out Dennis Dillon gave me a phone call and asked me if I wanted to come back and go and work part of the time in the neighborhoods, and so that's exactly what I did.

And what I learned in my experience of nine years on the streets and in the courtroom together, 19 total, is that we can reduce violence. We can reduce crime. And when we think about -- well, I like to say two trains leaving the station, the suppression train and the intervention train working together, you actually can lower costs to taxpayers. Because if you have people going in and out of jail to the tune of, I think in New York State, \$60,000 a person per year, that's a big cost. Now, if you have them going for five years and then ten years and two years and one year -- actually, I know a gentleman in the organization we run called COTA that he did about 14 years, two years at a time. So it's very costly to taxpayers. And the people who are committing these crimes are taken away from the community. They're not adding back into the community, and they're really a drain on society, a drain that we can no longer truly afford. And the other thing is once you have these people recycled, in a sense, they're a part of the community and they're productive within the community.

Now, the first thing is what the Police force has already been doing under the new administration is intelligence-led policing. And what that says is in any community, whether it's the most affluent community or the less affluent community, it's saying where exactly does the problem exist? Who exactly is committing the problem? You do that through data, data-driven analysis. And then you focus on those particular people and that particular problem versus just blanketing with resources. Sort of, I like to say, a laser beam approach versus a flood light approach.

So the second part is community-led policing which is officers being a part of the community as opposed to a force that's called in when the problems exist, so you have to do both in terms of suppression. When there's a media problem, they have to be brought in, but also, police as an organization, understanding that they are a part of the community, that the community can call on them and help brainstorm situations, so that we're not just doing the suppression portion but helping organizations come together to talk about the intervention that we can do as a community, meaning Police being a part of the community, meaning Probation, Parole being a part of the community, meaning the local bodega being a part of the community, meaning the -- you know, whatever organization being a part of the community versus everybody staying in their lanes and basically a lot falling between the cracks. And so by redefining community with the Suffolk Police Department being a part of the community, you reduce violence community-wide, you define the community inclusively is the first step, making even the ex-offender understand that they are part of the community. So when we treat them as not a part of the community, what do they do? They continue to prey on the community. And so when you bring them in, it changes the -- it changes -- you lower cost to society, and they're now a resource and an asset for the community. And also, they can identify some of the problems and who the problem people are.

The way we do this is by achieving, first achieving community buy-in. So a part of what I've been doing lately is visiting communities, different organizations, individuals where people say are the influentials. So you identify and meet the official and unofficial leaders. You create a joint existing community collaborative. So I just went with Legislator Calarco, we went to the Gordon Heights Fire Department. We met a lot of the religious leaders. We meet different people there. I've gone into Wyandanch and what -- and it's not that I won't go to other places. It's just that right now some of my focus has been on violence. And if I'm invited, of course, I'll come to any community, because that's the goal, was to get a good understanding and ask ourselves how can we use both trains in the community, the suppression train and become a part of the intervention train.

So we want to meet with the communities on a regular basis and that's why in all of the precincts, they're having community meetings and getting to understand what the particular issues of each community are so you can address them in particular.

And one of the things I found in my own personal work, and I stuck that up there, is because I found when we go into communities, a lot of times the first question, "Well, you know, how much money do you have?" And so I found that the best way to start the conversation is by staying, "*There's no money on the table*"; that way, the people who are there for the money will leave quickly and we can get down to business.

(*Laughter*)

So community policing is an important part of that. But in the most violent communities, remember, the goal is to reclaim what I like -- well, the ex-offender, the previously incarcerated. And one of the things, to give you the best example of how this is working right now with these call-ins, a call-in says that the people who are causing you the most problems, across the country they're finding you can bring them into a conversation, literally hand them letters with someone that they trust, with the police involved, and you would hand them letters and you invite -- now, you could also command some because some of them are out on Probation or Parole, but that is not the preference that you command. The preference is that you invite them. And then you simply give them a choice. You say, "*There's two trains leaving the station; the suppression train and the intervention train.*" Now, the suppression train is well lit. If you're in this room, most likely you're on the tracks; this meeting is the whistle-blowing and the light's on you.

Now you can't get on the suppression train, but you can get under the suppression train. However, there's a very well stop, another train they call the intervention train, and that's why we have to know the resources within a particular community so that we can tell them there's another train leaving the station, that's the intervention train. You can get on that train and you can be a part of the train. You can be a part of the solution as opposed to being part of the problem. And then you bring them into this inclusive community, the ones who are willing to be a part of the community and the ones that are not. Frankly, some people do have to go to jail. Next.

The other part is in -- or when you do bring them in for that intervention train, you have to know the existing resources within the community. So I can give a good example of when we went to Gordon Heights Civic Association meeting. The issue was a lot of -- many of the sober homes who had 35, 30 people in the house, they were concerned about the high number of sex offenders, they were concerned about the drug selling, the drug usage. And what we said was there may be a lot of houses, but all of the houses are the problem, that's the first thing. And the other thing is you -- so that's intelligence-led policing. And intelligence communities where you want to focus on the particular houses that are the worst, most egregious. Now we're not having a blanket conversation, we're focusing on the one, two, three, four that have 35 people, some have 35 people in a single-family home where there's cardboards cutting up the rooms, you focus on those houses. And when we focus, we ask ourselves what are the resources to bring to bear on that, where we have zoning, we have police, we have service providers such as drug and alcohol initiatives. We can invite the people in the house to a meeting, the 35 in the building, and give them ideas about, "You deserve to live better than this," and, "You need to report how you're living because it's not legal."

So now the people who live in the house don't want to live that way. Hopefully the homeowner understands that we're focusing on them. The community is a part of the solution because they're identifying the houses that give you the most problem, and we're not blanking our resources on 30, 40 houses, where really we're focusing -- the problem is one or two. You're also going to find, once you do this, intelligence-led, community-based intervention/suppression, the other houses sometimes will fall in line (*laughter*), because they don't want the attention that first house just got.

So they say, "Okay, we need to figure out a better way to do what we're doing."

The other thing is -- so the County Executive has committed that he will help us pool our resources together to make sure that when a community says we want to intervene in a particular area and suppress a particular problem, that we can bring the resources to bear to do that for the community.

The other thing is the ex-offenders who are in these houses or the ex-offenders on the street, or even the ex-offenders right now, we have a situation in Wyandanch with a lot of shootings going back and forth between two groups. What we're saying is we're going to call them into a meeting to have a conversation with this group. We've taken the opportunity to go to their houses and talk to them, and we know who the influentials are toward them, the basketball coaches, the social studies teacher. And what we're going to do is call them to a meeting and have these people help deliver the letters, and then bring these young people in. Because we're talking 16 to 22, 23-year olds with guns, and bring them in and say, *"Look, this is unacceptable. There's two trains leaving the station and we suggest you get on the intervention train, and we're going to help you do that."* But a part of that also is looking at the community and saying what resources are not here that are also leading to these problems?

And so, you know, we're not saying, *"Look, if you stop committing crimes we'll do this for you"*, because that is not the solution. *"Stop committing crimes because it is the right thing to do. And by the way, we know you deserve a better life and we'll help you connect to the resources to do it."* So prior to the meeting, we're going to know what the resources are and bring the resources into the room with these young men and not -- that won't be the only meeting. We'll meet with them more than once. So you'll have the police and the community, because the community will be speaking at the meeting, and you have the resources all at the same table talking to these young men at the same time. And the men and women who are influential with them in the room saying, *"Look, take this opportunity."* Where we call people who might be on their board of advisors who have been in the past.

One of the things we've done in some of the most violent-impacted communities, one in particular is the Village of Hempstead, is I started this organization called the Council of Thought & Action. And so what happens is a lot of times people get arrested or they're coming home, some of these neighborhoods have a high number of people coming home, but when they're coming home or they're in the community, they really don't have a place to change. So when they come home over time, they keep doing what they did because they don't have a place to change. And so what I found when I started the meeting with these men is I'd have 12 in a room, then 25 would show up the next week, and we're averaging now in the Village of Hempstead 29 men and women coming in, mainly men, predominantly ex-offenders, to the tune of 90%; on probation, on parole, not mandated, just coming to meetings on their own.

Through this process, we've welcomed them back to the community as productive citizens. They participate in community service projects. So what COTA, this Council on Thought & Action, does is for the most troubled community, and maybe some of the communities are not so troubled, because some of the other communities that you're seeing drug problems in, kids are disconnected also and that's a part of their problem.

So basically when you think about the old fashion of just having conversations, because a lot of families are working very hard to take care of their houses right now or their families, they're not home. Parents aren't home like they used to be, and school districts are shut down, sometimes because of economics, in the evening. But maybe some of these community resources can have these nightly or once a week or twice a week meetings where kids or young adults, ex-offenders and the Council of Thought and Action in particular come in just to talk and talk about the struggles they have, where they can help brainstorm with one another. So COTA brings them back into the community. It gives returning citizens a new positive social network, because gangs are a social

network. We see it with the internet, we see them hanging on the corner together. What we're doing is giving them an alternative social network.

We also give them a 45-day plan for their lives. If you want to change, let's start with the next 45 days. What do you want to accomplish in the next 45 days? See, I can come back and say I want to change, or I can get clean and come out of treatment and say I want to change, but who has sat down with me and given me a written plan or help me write my own written plan for change? If I don't have a written plan for change, you know, I basically have planned to fail.

The other thing is making sure we have the access through resources. And what COTA does is give members an influential, highly regarded organization. In COTA, it's a highly regarded organization. The Mayor comes, the Police come, Probation -- yeah, Probation members who are part of COTA. The interesting thing is Federal Probation Officers have started coming on their own and now they're a part of COTA, because they've seen some of their caseloads, the most, you know, horrific people, they thought, "There's no way this guy's staying out," transition and some are going to college. We have people going to college. We have people doing community service, working in sports programs. So what it does is it gives them a new social network where they can say, "I am a productive citizen. We can all work together and we are part of the solution to the problem."

Now what COTA gives the community is dedicated volunteers. I send out a morning text, and we can send out morning -- whatever the new community member that will run these meetings for the community can send out a morning text to keep people positive. But also, that text list, because this is how kids communicate, that Facebook page can also say, "Hey, look. You know, Faith Baptist Church," or, you know, "the local Catholic church needs 20 volunteers, or the basketball league needs a hole -- some holes dug to put in a planting, can some of you show up?" And what we have found, where we can get up to 20 volunteers, 24 volunteers with an hour's text. Because some people aren't working but they want to do something positive, they don't want to be hanging out, and so you can text them and ask them to do positive things.

You also, once they start working and they will start working because they stay dedicated to plan A versus flipping into plan B due to hopelessness because they're encouraging one another, is you have new taxpayers.

And the third part you have, the community gets, is reformed offenders that can spread the word that, *"Yeah, we can make it. You know, we can be a part of the community. You don't have to keep doing what you did. You can be a part of this new community we're building."*

Now, what the Council of Thought & Action does in terms of the actual program itself or a format -- and COTA doesn't call itself a program, it's a movement that anybody can join, from anywhere. They do a corporate plan, a 45-day plan, a one-year lifetime plan. They look at the systems in their life that no longer work for them, and then they talk about higher ideals, meaning what can we do for this community that we've taken away from? See, this is a flip on the theory that a lot of times we think of -- if you Google "offenders," "ex-offenders," or whatever, it will say -- it always talks about what resources do they need. And my position is, and our position should be, what are the resources that they can provide, because they've taken and now it's time for them to give back. And giving back, as we all know, changes people, it changes the community. So the higher ideals portion makes people realize, *"You're going to be a part of the solution now and not a part of the problem."* Go ahead.

So this -- although this system was designed for communities that are most violent and beset by drugs, and the cycle of violence and incarceration that hurt the communities and the tax base, this idea of community policing, intelligence-led policing, and also these talking groups can be beneficial in any community. This can work in any community. And this comprehensive crime reduction study would reduce violence, it reduces recidivism for sure and it lowers the cost to taxpayers.

When you create a safer community, because the ex-offenders aren't going back to jail and they're taking care of their families and they're talking to the younger children whose parents are incarcerated, what you're doing is you have fewer police calls and you have more taxpayers and you have healthier children.

In the US, I just read the statistics, one-in-nine African-American children has an incarcerated parent. And so when you have -- when you redeem a community, you have parents taking care of their own children, but you also have members who are productive creating programs and working voluntarily to assist children whose parents are not around or cannot be around. Now we have a new -- in a sense, a new aura where those people who are on the outside taking can now be a part of the giving.

Now, COTA members in Hempstead, we volunteer with more charities, run a basketball league, and members in 2009 were employed 69% of the time. We haven't done the statistics in the last two years, mainly because we had another issue with running statistics in terms of staff. But we also -- we do know, because we can run the {NICE's}, we have a 10% recidivism rate compared with the national average of 60% and the State average of about 40% over three years. And we've been in existence since 2008, and over that time over 943, I think, as of last week, offenders have come through the room to the tune of the average 29 a night on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The meetings usually start at 6:30, but they run till 9:30, 10 o'clock at night because everybody gets to talk. We have -- now, you can turn that now.

So if you look at it, you say -- once you have a new and closer community, including Probation, Parole, Police, businesses, formerly incarcerated, you want to bring them in. But before you bring them in, we as a community talk and say, "Where is the problem existing," like we did in the Gordon Heights community. Then we say to the community, "Okay, what are the solutions? Can we call the problem people in and have a conversation with them, because maybe we can help them solve their problems so they can solve our problem." So we do the call-in to say, "Look, this is no longer going to be accepted. We need you to change, but we want you to be a part of the solution."

In the more -- in the violence community, violent communities, you certainly want to start these COTAs because they absolutely -- I can tell you absolute do work. A part of the process I'm doing right now is doing kind of a canvassing of the communities, understanding the different communities, what's going on. I know we had a discussion about Port Jefferson. I've driven through there. I still live in Coram, I've gone to Port Jefferson. So, you know, it really is doing a canvassing of each community to find out what exactly is the community saying the problem is and pinpointing the communities. All right? You then identify the resources in the community and then you identify the disconnected and misguided and you work with them.

Now, this is a funny slide you see. So, you bring the community together, you do the call-in, you build the relationships in the community where people know that you're no longer on the outside and those people then become a part of the resources, right? They also identify the other misguided people and they also become a part of the community. Just Friday, let me tell you, last week Wednesday there was a shooting in Nassau County. COTA members called and said, "*The cousin of the person wants to retaliate. The cousin is in this particular car, this color. The two main people in the car will have these outfits on and they're coming to a different neighborhood to do a shooting.*"

I was able to get that information to the police, and also out to other COTA members to say, "If you know these people, call them on the phone and tell them to stop." (*Laughter*). And I know that sounds insanity, but it actually was done twice last week, because the COTA members over time have said, "We've got to do more. It's not enough that we're working with the 12 and under group. It's not enough that we're doing basketball leagues. It's not enough because it's not stopping the shootings. We've got to stop the shootings." And so they made a commitment to try and stop the

shootings.

Now, if you have ex-offenders committing to stopping shootings, they're on the ground working alongside the police. You can't beat that in any society where everyone is working to solve the problem. We all know murder, right, is one -- is one crime we certainly would like to eliminate? And I'm sure -- I believe -- I know that this system can work for other communities for other things. And I'll be honest with you, when I came to the meeting on the sober home, I was sitting there thinking, "I don't know if I have an idea for this one." But when we went through the process, it actually worked, the community felt good about it. They left knowing what they were going to do. Sometimes when we leave a meeting, "Oh, you're not going to do anything for us," or "What have you done for us?" But they knew what they were going to do to change their community, knowing that we were still going to meet with them to assist them with the resources that we have. Thank you.

This here is the last slide I threw up there only because all of these gentlemen have records, all of these gentlemen run a basketball league of 60 players we had, all right? The young man who has the trophy got a character award, because that's the award we give in basketball league is the character award. The gentleman on the left in the brown, you'll see they have the brown shirts which is the Council of Thought & Action shirts, the gentleman on the left, Dea, I want to tell you about him because he came from Federal Probation. He had an -- he was on Federal Probation, State Parole, he had -- he was on house arrest when he came to us, and now in September he started the college and he runs the middle school mentoring program with us and the basketball program. And so all of these gentlemen, the one on the right, the plaid shirt, he came to COTA and now he is an operating engineer. He is an apprentice in the Operating Engineers; we had a training program and he got into the Operating Engineers. And so this is what's possible. You want people not only to change their life, but you want them to come back to the community and give back, because we can't -- the Police can't do it without help from the community, but the Police have to be a part of the community. And Probation and Parole can't do it just by monitoring.

The community has to come forth and say, "How can we all do suppression," meaning identifying people who are going out and shooting people, and intervention, meaning bringing other people into the meeting to say, "Look, we want you to change just like we just changed." So that's it. Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you. I guess a question?

LEG. CALARCO:

Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay.

LEG. CALARCO:

More of a comment.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator Calarco.

LEG. CALARCO:

Deputy Commissioner, I want to thank you for coming. And thank you for coming to Gordon Heights for our coalition meeting. Legislator Browning, who has represented the area, is very aware of the problems we've been dealing with there. And I think you were able to bring a new approach that was sorely needed for our community by empowering them and letting them know that we have

to -- and I think the most interesting thing you said, and you mentioned it today, is that the people who we're all really talking about, the offenders, the folks that are in those homes, they -- when you said it at the meeting, I think the community kind of took it aback, but you said they're going to be your partners in this. They're going to be the ones that are going to help you accomplish what you're looking to accomplish, and I think that's the type of approach we've got to take. I think our community is seeing that, and I think that when we reach out to those people that are in those homes and say, "Hey look, you don't like living like this any better than we like you living in our community like this. Why don't you help us change it to be effective?" So thank you very much and I appreciate that.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you very much for inviting me.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Hahn.

LEG. HAHN:

Thank you. As a social worker (*laughter*) -- I'll take on Jack Eddington's role.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I think that's the first time we heard that.

*(*Laughter*)*

LEG. CALARCO:

I think that was Jack's seat.

*(*Laughter*)*

LEG. HAHN:

I really, really admire this approach. I'm really excited about what you're doing. I mean, a piece of me is sceptical; I hate to even admit that, you know, because it seems so far out.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Unreal.

*(*Legislator Gregory entered the meeting at 10:21 A.M. *)*

LEG. HAHN:

Yeah, unreal that that could happen. And I'm just thrilled to hear that it's happening and it will happen now in Suffolk County. Port Jeff Station, uptown Port Jefferson area, needs this kind of intervention. We've been -- since I've become a Legislator -- which, you know, it's only been nine months now -- you know, we've been holding meetings of all kinds of players in the community and I would just welcome your organization of ideas in our meetings and hope that you can participate. I do think the Port Jeff Station, upper Port area is certainly -- should be a target in one of the communities, maybe not highest on your priority list, but certainly in need of intervention and, you know, I look forward to that.

I'm particularly interested in how do you focus and work on getting rid of the silos between departments, between municipalities, you know, between different organizations? You know, Probation Officers, I know we have a tremendous group of Probation Officers who are ready and willing, wanting to be a part of this kind of operation. I know we have -- in Port Jefferson Village we have public safety officers who, you know, will take in a homeless guy one night that might be a problem that night. You know, we have people who really want to see this happen. And it will

be -- I'd love to hear and just understand how you break down the silos between the different -- you know, different departments. I'm sure we have Deputy Sheriffs who want to be a part of this solution, and our Police Officers have done ride-alongs for different sectors and I know they want to -- you know, they want to be a part of this, too, as do the neighbors. So I'm really just excited about your wholistic vision for tackling the problem and I want to be a part of that solution as well. So thank you for coming and outlining that, and let us know what we as a Legislature can do to help inner agency collaboration. It's interesting, you talk about State Parole, Probation -- Federal Probation, State Parole, you know, breaking through all those barriers. I'm sure narcotics and, you know, mental health services and all of that has to be a piece of it and it's complicated. And so --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Can I say something? I don't really think -- you know, I guess I -- I don't -- I've never had the experience of the barriers. And I think when you meet people where they are and you meet with them one-on-one and, you know, you don't try to get them to do your job, you let them do their job, and I think that's part of the situation. I had a young man who works in the community talking about police and I explained to him, you know, you're -- that's not their job. So sometimes we try to get people to do the job we want them to do versus the job that they naturally do, and so a part of this is letting people do what they do. It's just that where we cross lines we work together. It's not trying to get someone to be something they're not.

LEG. HAHN:

Absolutely. No, that's a very good point. And I think -- I think often there's a frustration at the community level that there's not a good understanding of, you know, what is the job for -- you know, Police, you know, in each instance of whatever a community is facing. It is complicated. It's complex. And the resident who's calling up to complain about the homeless individual who might be sleeping on their lawn or urinating on their lawn or whatever they're doing, doesn't quite understand whose role is what, they just want the problem solved. But I think coming together is so important in solving the problem and finding solutions.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Legislator Gregory.

LEG. GREGORY:

Thank you, Madam Chair, and Risco for being here today. I apologize for my tardiness, I had a meeting that I organized in one of my health centers. So I was a little late, but I had to be here, but I'm here. And I apologize for missing your presentation, but I'm somewhat familiar with what you do and I'm a believer, so you don't have to sell me anymore. And we've met just, I guess, a couple of weeks ago and we're certainly in-step with some things that have to be done and that are going to be difficult but necessary.

I really just -- I think it's worth stating, reiterating, you know, the Commissioner and the County Executive's approach to bringing you on and addressing recidivism. I think it's certainly a unique approach and it's out of the box, but it's certainly necessary. And I think without a doubt, you are the person to lead that charge and I'm here to tell you that I support your efforts one thousand percent and look forward to working with you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator Spencer.

LEG. SPENCER:

Thank you, Madam Chair. And thank you for introducing yourself. Your reputation definitely precedes you.

I am in the 18th District, which is Huntington, and I wanted to get your thoughts just with regards to the Huntington Station area where we've had an issue of an uptick in kind of gang violence over the last couple of years. And we have seen that just through the active intelligent policing and the community meetings, I've definitely appreciated a difference. This summer was dramatically better.

But one of the issues that I wanted to specifically talk to you about was the issue of substance abuse. My colleague, Legislator Hahn, introduced the Narcan Program and, you know, we've seen -- I'm just amazed at how successful it's been. But the idea that there's that much need and in my Legislative District, I have extremely affluent areas, I also have areas where there are those that are -- there's a high unemployment rate and there's -- and it seems that the drug use is high among youths in both of those communities. So I attended an event this Friday where over 750 people came out, and I was astonished to find out that on Long Island a young person is dying every day, on average, from substance abuse, and it doesn't seem to be limited to gangs or to those that have money. So I -- you know, we're searching for answers as we go through the budget season, but in terms of what are your thoughts and things that we can do to help attack this epidemic.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Well, one thing I have to say is one thing I don't really like talking off the cuff, because every community is different. Community-led policing means you go to the community, you speak to all the individuals one-on-one in the community, and then you bring them together as a collective to come up with a solution. And so that's what I would do. I wouldn't want to just say, "Well, here's the solution," because I don't know what it is.

One of the things would be talking to the young people, so I would want to bring all of the parties, talk to them one-on-one, you know, the different community members and then bring young people in in pockets to have a conversation with them to find what do you think the solutions are. Because that's one of the things I generally do, is I literally -- like I said, I went to the drug house that I know lives on a -- I mean the gang house, I go to the drug house and I ask questions, you know, "Why are you doing this? What also would you want to do? Are there other solutions for you?" And so I think -- a part of the thing is we never -- we never ask -- and I'm going to say this in a strange way; we never ask the problem, "What's your solution?" We usually meet without them in the room and come up with solutions, and when they don't do it we go, "Oh, why didn't it work?"

We need to ask the kids. And maybe that -- I'm sure that's going on, but I think we need to have more meetings and with the right influentials with kids, to have a discussion about the solution. Because, you know, no one is more creative nowadays than young people in terms of messaging, in terms of getting messages out, in terms of influencing their own culture. So what you're seeing, I believe, is a culture. And so how do we, our age, influence that culture? I don't know that that's going to happen unless we influence the influencers, in a sense. We bring them together and try to talk to them about, "Is this culture of what's happening acceptable to you? If not, will you help us come up with some solutions for this problem?" Because that's how I look at it, they have to -- we have to go to them for the solutions.

LEG. SPENCER:

What you're saying makes a lot of sense, and if I could put in one plug for a program that you all are doing. In one of my districts last year, the police came in with a program for parents and young people where they taught them to kind of identify different types of drugs and just the signs that parents should look for, and it was extremely effective. The issue was -- and I -- it's been offered to me again this year, was that I have six school districts and I had to choose one because of limited resources. If there's anything you could do where I could get that program to most of my districts

or all of my districts, it would be greatly appreciated. It was fantastic. Thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you very much. Good to hear that it was effective.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator Kennedy.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Thank you, Madam Chair. And welcome and good morning. And I'm pleased to see the presentation. We had some brief conversation and it looks to me like, you know, there seems to be a methodology that can have some good impact; as a matter of fact, it's had good impact already.

I was going to talk a little bit about similarly what Dr. Spencer brought up. I was happy to cosponsor that bill with Legislator Hahn on the Narcan pilot. And what you spoke about, I guess, with dealing with substance-abusing teens and people in their early 20s or whatever, it seems the Narcan interventions have a theme across them where it's individuals that are probably like in the 20-to-29 age range. There is a program that you have through the Police Department right now with the school intervention officers, and I may be mangling the term. I know right here in the 4th Precinct --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Resource officers.

LEG. KENNEDY:

-- we have an officer actually who goes into Smittown --

LEG. HAHN:

School resource?

LEG. KENNEDY:

School resource, that's it, school resource officers. And I'm wondering if what you're talking about with COTA may be something that has a tie-in with the work that the officers are doing in those particular school districts. Because the dialogue as you frame it seems to be something that helps with the community buy-in, then, that you can get, particularly with identifying what may be a select group of individuals that are either in the schools or approximate to the schools that are bringing the narcotics out in the first instance, that are selling the drugs. I hope that's something that may be, at least in my district, something we could talk about in conjunction with you. Because we have one resource officer; she does a great job, but, as usual, she's a finite resource. She's one officer. The other thing that I was just curious. In the Hempstead model where you kind of started, by and large, the gentlemen that we had in that picture there are gentlemen, as you mentioned, they've done State time, they've done Upstate time. How do they become aware that COTA is something that even exists as a resource to the community? How do you latch 'em? How do you hook 'em? How do you catch 'em?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Well, the interesting thing is the original group was just 13 people, and I thought I was just going to be 13 people. But when I started doing the 13, next week there were five extra people, and then the next week there were two more people.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Success brings success.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Exactly. And it's more -- you know, it's more -- so there's different ways you can advertise this. One, the department -- you know what happens is I kind of like working on the ground and letting the top hear about it later. So when we did COTA, we didn't advertise it, but the members advertised it. So say they go to Probation and Parole and they're talking about their success and they use a new language and the Probation Officer or someone says, you know, "What are you talking about?" And so then the Probation or Parole Officers have been coming down to COTA to see what is this all about? We did reach out to probation and Parole also and the District Attorney's Office to say, "You can send people to us." You know the saying -- what do they say, "Send us your weary," et cetera? We say, "Send us your violent," you know (*laughter*).

Anyways -- and so, the first step, I find, the most effective way has been word of mouth. But we do advertise in the Department of Social Services, so if there's a program -- for instance, there was a pre-apprentice class which they built on pre-apprentice with the unions which they're going to be starting with the Department of Labor. When you advertise that in say, DSS, or when you advertise it, you also say "*Come to the COTA to find out about it.*" Now they have to sit in the room before they go into the side room to do that corporate plan and they're learning about themselves, they're learning about COTA. And so a lot of the resources you bring into the room, it brings people into the room, too. But you also have people in Department of Social Services telling people to come down. You have people in Probation telling, you have people in Parole telling.

The interesting thing is just recently -- yesterday, as a matter of fact -- the Federal Parole, I have been training seven Federal Parole Officers because they were so interested in it, so I've been going every Wednesday for the past seven months teaching them how to do this, and because of that, the US Attorneys heard about the Federal Parole Officers (*laughter*), so they came down and I met with some US attorneys regarding it. So it really is kind of spreading word-of-mouth. And sometimes that -- for me, I think sometimes it's the best way, because then when people are walking in -- you know, we're getting people -- we got a letter from Upstate. We're getting letters from the local prison. I'm getting letters -- I have letters on my desk right now, three from Riverhead Jail. So the word is spreading because, remember, drug addicts socialize with drug addicts. Burglars may not socialize with burglars, but you get the idea.

And so the idea is people who doing certain things socialize with one another. So if one or two -- think of it like an infection, right? That's the theory. There's a book, a famous book called *The Tipping Point*, and what -- and this is my theory, is that we want to do a tipping point among those populations. See, drugs are popular now with kids, right? It is the culture. Who can perform a cultural tipping point with children? You can't, but they can. So you want to get a few of them in a sense, what we call in COTA, have them drink the cooler. We call that brainwashing; wash them of the other theories. Then they go back to their group and start talking the ideas, and over time you get a tipping point. That's how we did what, smoking in America. You know, when I was younger, obviously everybody smoked. People don't smoke like that anymore. Some do, but not like they used to because America has gotten a tipping point. And that's what you want to do with crime in crime neighborhoods, you want to get a tipping point. That's what you want to do with drugs and young people, you want to get a tipping point. Are you going to completely solve the problem? No, because some people are going to do what they do. But you can influence it as a culture, meaning it is the norm. A lot of these things are becoming the norm and that's the frightening thing. So we want to -- we want to influence young people or whoever is doing it so that we can pull back that tipping point.

LEG. KENNEDY:

Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much for being here.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Let me ask you, because I know Longwood School District and the Lifeline Mediation in my district, I don't know if you've had an opportunity go get to know them or meet any of them yet.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

I haven't, but my children used to go to Longwood.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Oh, did they?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Yeah.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. They have a program -- and actually, they did come to me saying they'd like to expand what they're doing and share it with the rest of the County. And I think it would be a good idea for you to meet with them, because clearly what they're talking about is similar to COTA.

Now, as far as COTA is concerned, is that strictly volunteer? Do you have people on staff that are paid? And does each -- so each community will create their own COTA?

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Correct. Right now, for instance in Wyandanch, there's a Fed -- one of the Federal Parole Officers, he has said he would like to run one. So we're going to have him partnered, since I've been training him seven months, there's a young man I've identified -- not so young, he's in the 30s, who works at the resource center, I want to train him. So the two of them will be trained to run the Wyandanch COTA. But I also bring COTA members from Hempstead to help, you know, spread the word, give the information out and help with the training. And so once you do that, then they'll run the COTA. The COTA in Hempstead right now, we have one paid person and that is through -- we have a Federal Impact Grant in the Nassau DA's Office, he's paid, but the job developer is one of the formerly incarcerated. The one -- the two that were on the middle school mentoring were formerly incarcerated. The two that were on the -- the two -- the Wednesday, we call it adolescents which is -- because we found that the 17 to 21-year olds, we were bringing them into the bigger room but they weren't moving because they needed more individual attention; they're babies, in a sense. They don't know they're babies, but they're babies and so we needed more one-on-one. So we meet with them on Wednesdays. So like there's two members that run -- that do the internships and stuff, getting them into school, getting them image ED's, you know. And so you also get your members to work for free, but you do -- you can have paid positions. And so there's already a person being paid at resource center and there's already -- the Federal Probation Officer, he also is being paid, so they want to run it, you see. So the idea is to get resources from the -- utilize the resources already in the community.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. So, because that's the first thing I'm thinking, if we have to start paying people to do this, where are we getting the money? But there is some --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

You remember my slide?

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Some grants.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

There's no money on the table.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Right.

*(*Laughter*)*

But, you know, it sounds good. And like Kara said, I hate to be sceptical, because when you have former convicted felons that are now involved in a program, you know, making sure that they're staying on the straight and narrow, that they're not kind of wavering and, you know, maybe taking advantage of the position that they're in to commit crime.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Do you continue to monitor them? Because, you know, I think about anywhere from somebody who's been a drug dealer to a sex offender, that they wouldn't take an opportunity to be in that position to reoffend.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Well, this is the thing. In any job in government, in the Police force, in maintenance, in bus drivers, you have people taking advantage to offend. But this is the thing, if we consider -- if we continue to see offenders as offenders, they might as well consider to see themselves as offenders. And so do we have people who are going to mess up? Absolutely. We have, like I said -- and I didn't tell you this part of the story. The young man who had -- he was on Federal -- he was on Federal Parole -- Federal Probation, State Parole and an ankle bracelet. He said the reason why he came to COTA is because he had a little bit of pot he wanted to sell in the afternoons (*laughter*). But once he came, he's clean. He's never been clean before. He's been in and out of institutions since he's nine years old. He's never been clean before. He's been clean for over six months. He's in college. He's working full-time, and he works in the afternoon on Wednesdays with the young people because he doesn't want them to go where he went. But are you going to have some people who are going to fall back? You are always going to have people fall back. But we can't afford to say, "Well, you know, let's just keep them over there," because they're not over there. You know, they're all among us, you know, they're all among us. They're at the supermarket, they're getting your credit card at Wendy's, they're all among us. And so the idea is to bring them in and teach them the -- and talk to them about their higher ideals of being better people.

Actually, I would say, in terms of COTA, if you -- and I invite everybody to come to COTA. You will see that the guys in COTA actually have a higher philosophy on life. They have a higher philosophy of obligation and duty to society that we don't generally have, because they volunteer more because they have a -- we've been drumming the idea of good character in, being a just person, being a point person, being a person of temperance and self-control, having fortitude.. that every obstacle in life that you have is just a lesson from the universe trying to teach you a new lesson.

So these are things for conversations, many of you probably might not even have with your children. Your siblings aren't having these conversations, but these gentlemen are having these conversations. Basically -- somebody said to me, I had a man who owns a construction company come in, because we're trying to get jobs in construction which we did get many jobs, and what he said was afterwards he was -- I overheard him talking on the phone. He said basically it's an advanced level philosophy class (*laughter*); and it is, I'm a philosophy major. And so, you know, when these guys go to prison, they're prolific readers. They read books, you know, {COT}, they read, what is it -- I can't remember all the names right now, but they do a lot of reading. And so this is right in line with the philosophies that they're reading about, is just saying now let's not just read about it in prison, let's practice it in the world when you get out.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. And when you talk about the sober homes, I have to say, I've got a few of them in my district. When you're saying that you can actually get into one and talk to the residents, I could name a few in my district where the residents are so afraid of the landlord.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Yes.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

He intimidates them. He's actually abused some of them. I would be very interested to sit down and talk with you and see how do we get to those people who are living there? Because I know that the conditions they're in is really bad, and to let them see that there's -- they don't have to live like that. And so we will follow up and chat about those things.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

And I know you have -- okay. Kara, you had a question?

LEG. HAHN:

Yeah. I just -- you know, when I use the term sceptical, please don't -- you know, I don't want it to be out there that I'm sceptical. There is that kernel in your mind that says --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

It's perfectly reasonable.

LEG. HAHN:

-- can this -- I know what you're describing can happen and should happen. That's, you know, what all my training is all about. It's the commitment of these bodies and your -- and you and the Department and getting it done correctly. And I know it can happen and I'm excited to hear that you're trying, and so I thank you.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

And it's not going to be perfect. It's going to take time. So let's not -- you know, I don't have a magic wand. It's going to take hard work from all of us and the community and the resources have to be there when we need them. But we can do a better job. We can -- we've done a lot in COTA with nothing. Imagine where we all sit as, you know, as a member of the Police force, with the County Executive and the Legislators backing what we do. We've done in Hempstead with nothing. We built a playground in 2009, a Kaboom Playground. We got a grant and then members went door-to-door and got over 200 volunteers to build a playground in three days, that still exists. So it can be done, but it's not going to happen overnight. Because, you know, I tell people, I'm a superhero but, you know, I just think I am (*laughter*).

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

I think, Legislator Horsley, you had a question?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Yeah. Thank you very much, Kate. Good morning. And, you know, you always -- your comments are insightful. You know, I -- when I first -- that whole concept of the tipping point, I always thought -- I've always thought it was an interesting issue of what gets to the point where you can change culture. And I thought the cigarette smoking was a perfect example, and I like that and you should use that often because that resonates. Good stuff.

But I want to just -- can I just take you a little away from the COTA issues? You were mentioning the culture of young people with texting and that is, you know, the method -- the common method of communication. I mean, even I've even gotten into it recently, so it takes a while. And several years ago I passed a law on text-to-tipping, and the Police was -- were very cordial about it, they thought it was a good idea. And I had done a lot of homework on, you know, how successful texting would be to -- if you had an anonymous texting from young people to the Police. I thought that was a very -- I thought that was very positive and it's been successful elsewhere.

I never really got a warm and fuzzy feeling that the Police accepted it, which is, you know, okay, I understand that. But the reality is -- and where I got the idea initially was actually from Hempstead. They had a melee in the Hempstead High School. And I was thinking, if someone had just texted the Police Department that there's a fight going on, the Police could have been there much earlier and we would have been able to stop it at an earlier point. And that seems to me a -- and then the County Executive at the time put a fine on it, or the Police did, you know, where you can get -- not a fine but a reward, if you text in a tip and it becomes -- it becomes true, you know, like a reward to snitch, and that word. And I didn't -- that was not ever my intention. My intention was that I think there are a lot of good citizens that would like to inform the Police, you know, if they can do it anonymously and are not -- and are not, you know, brought forth. And I -- it didn't seem to go anywhere. And as much as I've preached it over the years, you know, that it's working elsewhere, I just thought I wanted to get your feeling on that, if that's something that we should be expanding, looking at, utilizing. It's in the books and I get --

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

My thoughts on it is that I'd like to find out what -- if it didn't go anywhere, I would like to find out why, because I don't know. So I would like to find out why first, and that's it. My -- that's it.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

It's been on the books for about five years now. And as you can see, it was supposed to have been advertised, along with the COPS number and the like and I never see it, and though they say it is in publications and things like that, it just seems to have been pushed aside. And I think it might be because the reward aspect of it, I'm not -- that was never -- that never sat well with me.

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Good morning. Deputy Inspector Ted Nieves, Executive-Officer, Office of the Chief of Department. The texting, the tip/text, as you called it, Sir, was made part of the Crime Stoppers Program, and that's where the reward aspect came in. We felt that that would be an incentive for people, an added incentive for them to -- and it would give them another venue to inform the Police Department about problems or to give us information that we would need to do our jobs. When I get back to headquarters, I'll review -- I'll take a look at the status of the program as it exists right now and I will have somebody report back to you on --

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Just the fact that you don't know where it's at leads me to believe -- you know, it's really -- it's on the books, but it's not part of the program. And maybe it wasn't the right thing. But my suspicion is, is that I'm seeing it utilized across the country and this could have been used the last five years. I don't see it anywhere and the public doesn't know about it, so obviously you're not going to get any texts if no one knows to text when they see the problem.

DEPUTY INSPECTOR NIEVES:

Well, like I said, Sir, this actually, the status of it is it was made a component of the Crime Stoppers Program, but you seem to think that that was not the direction that it should have taken. So that was my point about reviewing how we are utilizing the idea. And you're right, Crime Stoppers may be the correct way to go or maybe, you know, there's a bigger idea that we need to look at.

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

That I'd appreciate. I think that's the attitude I was looking for. You know, just take a look at it, because I think it might be a useful tool for you guys to, you know, better monitor crime.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

And we will look at it, all right?

D.P.O. HORSLEY:

Thanks.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Okay. Well, thank you. It was a pleasure to meet you. I know that I've been working on trying to get you, but I've been away for a little bit. So we will work on getting together. I appreciate you coming and doing the presentation. It's very interesting, and again, there's no reason why it can't work and we can't do this. So thank you for your time, and I guess we'll move on to the agenda.

DEPUTY COMMISSIONER MENTION-LEWIS:

Thank you very much.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Thank you.

Okay. This should be quick.

Introductory Resolutions

1901-12 - Accepting and appropriating Federal funding in the amount of \$25,000 from the United States Department of Justice, Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF), for the Suffolk County Police Department's participation in OCDETF 2012 with 78.89% support (County Executive). I'll make a motion to approve.

LEG. CALARCO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Second by Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It's approved (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).***

1932-12 - Declaring September 19, 2012 as "Don't Text and Drive Awareness Day" in Suffolk County (Spencer). Motion, Legislator Spencer?

LEG. SPENCER:

Yes.

LEG. CALARCO:

I'll second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Legislator Spencer made that motion. Second, Legislator Calarco. All in favor? Opposed? Abstentions? ***It is approved (VOTE: 7-0-0-0).***

And with that, motion to adjourn.

LEG. CALARCO:

Second.

CHAIRPERSON BROWNING:

Second, Legislator Calarco. And we are adjourned.

*(*The meeting was adjourned at 10:54 AM*)*